

Former Memphian Dr. David Goldberger participates in music festival in Germany

Native Memphian Dr. David Goldberger, now of Hollywood, Florida, participated in a music festival in Schwerin, Germany.

According to Dr. Goldberger, an accomplished pianist, it was a very unusual festival in that the music was almost all written by composers who were either killed or driven into exile by the Nazis before or during the World War II. "When I learned that such a festival was taking place in Germany," said Dr. Goldberger, "I felt that I had to participate."

The festival, whose German title was "Festival Verfemte Musik 2008", took place from September 30 to October 5. Volker Ahmels, the organizer and director of the festival, is the head of the Conservatory in Schwerin, a city of nearly hundred thousand people between Hamburg and Berlin. Mr. Ahmels and his wife, Friederike Haufe, are a well-known piano-duo, although they did not perform at the festival. It was fascinating that Ahmels, who is not Jewish, travels to Israel every year with his wife and their 14-years-old son Richard and that they are studying Hebrew.

The featured composer was Artur Schnabel (1882-1951), who lived in Berlin from 1898 to 1933. During his lifetime Schnabel was known as one of the outstanding pianists on the international circuit, especially famous as the first to record the 32 piano sonatas of Beethoven. He left Berlin in 1933 with his wife and two sons shortly after the Nazis came to power. Dr. Goldberger had the honor and the pleasure of studying with Schnabel in

master classes which were held at the University of Michigan during the summers of the war years. "It was a lifetime of inspiration," says Dr. Goldberger today, over 60 years later. Artur Schnabel never performed his own works in public after the very successful premiere of his Piano Concerto with the Berlin Philharmonic when he was 19 years old. A few years later, he abandoned the late-romantic style of the concerto to compose in an ultra-modern 20th-century-style. The works were long considered difficult if not totally unplayable. However, at the distance of over a half century, they sound like standard music from the first half of the 20th century.



Dr. David Goldberger

As for the festival, Dr. Goldberger says, "It was really a good thing I went, since I was the only person who had really known Artur Schnabel. His granddaughter, Ann Schnabel Mottier, was also there with her husband, but she was a small child when her grandfather died and has only hazy memories of him. I was on several panels at the festival and also presented the film, *Con Brio*, devoted to the teaching of Karl Ulrich Schnabel, son of Artur Schnabel and a fine pianist in his own right. I studied with the younger Schnabel over a period of ten years and have reminded a close friend of the family."

In addition to the musical performances there was an exhibition of material on the life of Artur Schnabel. This material was lent by the Schnabel Archive at the Akademie der Künste (Academy of the Arts) in Berlin. Dr. Goldberger spoke at the opening of the Schnabel Archive in 2001, the 50th anniversary of Artur Schnabel's death and also the weekend before 9/11. Dr. Goldberger has also written numerous articles about Artur Schnabel and the master classes at the University of Michigan.

Other composers whose works were performed at the festival were Alfred Tokayer, who died in Sobibor in 1942, Hans Eisler, and Ernst Toch. There was also an evening of jazz in a nearby town performed by "Coco" Schumann, a guitarist who was also exiled during the World War II.

In addition to a week of the festival performances there was a competition for young soloists and chamber music groups where the repertoire was restricted to the works of composers persecuted by the Nazis. "I attended all the festival events and found that it was an inspiring week," said Dr. Goldberger.

Goldberger, who grew up in Memphis and graduated from Central High School, has performed in Memphis on numerous occasions as well as in New York at Carnegie Recital Hall, in Paris, in Italy, and many times in Mexico City, where he has also lectured at the University and at the National Conservatory.

In addition to his teaching and performing, Dr. Goldberger has edited over 50 volumes of music for piano solo and four-hands. "I have retired from teaching, but I still keep my other musical activities going," he says. He is the brother of the Memphians Samuel Goldberger and Emilie Ratner and has many cousins in Memphis. He comes to Memphis every year for Passover.

Dr. Goldberger taught at the Mannes Collage of Music in New York City for 40 years, at Long Island University for 15 years, and at Hunter Collage for five years. His principal residence is in Hollywood, Florida, although he still maintains an apartment in New York City. "After 50 years in New York," he says, "it is hard to give it up completely."