

Leonard Bernstein's daughter speaks at FAU



Jamie Bernstein, daughter of the iconic composer Leonard Bernstein, with Florida Atlantic University conductor Aaron Kula during "An Intimate Conversation with Jamie Bernstein" at FAU on June 21. (Submitted photo / June 30, 2014)

12:16 p.m. EDT, June 30, 2014

Jamie Bernstein, daughter of the iconic composer Leonard Bernstein, spoke at an intimate gathering at Wimberly Library at Florida Atlantic University in **Boca Raton** on Saturday evening June 21.

The event, titled "An Intimate Conversation with Jamie Bernstein," kicked off the inaugural, three-day Spirit of America Festival at FAU, which took place from June 21-23.

Jamie Bernstein — a noted speaker, broadcaster and concert narrator in her own right — was invited as a guest of Aaron Kula — director, conductor and composer with the Klezmer Company Orchestra, the professional ensemble-in-residence at FAU Libraries.

Jamie Bernstein used the gathering as an opportunity to speak about her life, her family and the legacy of her dad. Leonard Bernstein was a well-known activist for many causes, including being a huge supporter of Israel.

Jamie Bernstein explained her father's philosophy in a piece on the website <http://www.leonardbernstein.com> titled "My Father's Idealism."

An excerpt of the piece reads:

"My father, Leonard Bernstein, grew up in a world of stark political contrasts. From the Depression to Roosevelt and the New Deal, from Nazism to World War II and the dropping of the atom bomb on Hiroshima, young Bernstein witnessed a world full of evil that was occasionally tempered by powerful forces of good ... my father clung hard to the belief that by creating beauty, and by sharing it with as many people as possible, artists had the power to tip the earthly balance in favor of brotherhood and peace. After all, he reasoned, if humans could create and appreciate musical harmony, then surely they were capable of replicating that very same harmony in the world they lived in ... Leonard Bernstein was not shy about sharing his political beliefs with the world. Nor was he afraid of the various epithets — liberal, Jew, anti-war, radical chic, commie-pinko-queer — which over the years stuck to him like burrs on his coattails. He spoke out and fought doggedly for the causes he believed in. He donated fees, wrote letters and campaign songs, even entire musical works, in order to communicate his fervent hope for a better world."

Jamie Bernstein was also guest of honor during the Florida premiere of the concert version of her father's 1944 Broadway musical "On the Town," which Kula and his 50-member Klezmer Company Orchestra (joined by six guest opera singers) presented at FAU's Carole and Barry Kaye Performing Arts Auditorium on Sunday afternoon, June 23.