

"I have never experienced anything like it"



Martha Argerich playing in the crowded salon.

Great pianists in Gråbo

The Stora Lundby Konsertförening has arranged concerts since 1955 in Lerum, a small town close to Gothenburg. The former president, the enthusiast and force behind these series, Sophie Lökvik passed away some years ago. It was she who let rebuilt her private salon at



Vladimir Ashkenazy and his wife in Gråbo.

Villa Trollhagen in Gråbo to house some 300 people for these concerts. A rare and touching dedication to serious music. People like Sophie Lökvik are deeply missed today. Among the great pianists who played in Lerum we find such names as Fou Ts'ong (1968), John Ogdon (1975), Vladimir Ashkenazy (1976) and Bella Davidovich (1981).



Madame Sophie Lökvik with John Ogdon.

People sitting everywhere

Martha Argerich had just played a concert in Denmark when she arrived to play the Bechstein in the salon of Villa Trollhagen. Some 350 people came to hear her play solo. They would sit anywhere and everywhere to be able to hear her and hopefully to catch a glimpse of the beautiful young Argentinian and her famous fingerwork. People I spoke with who attended the recital still remember it as something very special.

Some of Argerich's best pieces

Argerich's program was quite short, but well balanced. It consisted of some of her best pieces: The Schumann Fantasie Op.17 and, after intervall, the Chopin Préludes

Op.28. But she began her recital with a rarity in her concert repertoire. The Mozart Sonata K.333, a piece she only seems to have played in recital for a few years in the early 1970's, to my knowledge in 1973 and 1974.



A happy smile after warm reception.

Earlier in 1973, on September 4 to be exact, Argerich had played both the Mozart Sonata and the Chopin Préludes in the Leith Town Hall during the Edinburgh Festival in Scotland. The broadcast recording from this concert amazes with some beautifully nuanced and very charming Mozart playing, together with some of her most intense Chopin readings.

But the audience at Villa Trollhagen experienced these pieces in the most intimate atmosphere, with the artist playing for them in a private salon.

"The large concert halls are not that important"

Martha Argerich was more than pleased with her recital in Gråbo. In a short interview she expressed her feelings.

"I have never experienced anything like it. All my nervousness disappeared when I entered the home of Sophie Lökvik, with its warmth and family atmosphere. I just sat down and played... Being an artist means flying from continent to continent giving of yourself to as many people as possible. And then, suddenly, you are among people who really have been longing to hear you and what you have to give. When I saw them sitting in the stairs, in the kitchen and in hallways, all was clear to me. The large concert halls are not that important. There has to be contact between people in spontaneous way!"

Among Argerich's recitals this is without doubt one of the most exclusive one. Also, it seems it made a very strong impact on the artist herself, many years after. Meeting Argerich in Lugano 2004, and showing her photos and the program from Gråbo brought back strong memories to her. She still remembered warm atmosphere. But she also remembered the feeling of having the audience a bit too close to her. She told me that she only gave two recitals like this in her career, the other one in her native Argentina. What are the odds for something like this, in a small country like Sweden? I wish I would have heard this recital. Sadly I wasn't even born in 1973.

Björn Östlund

Credits

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