

Garrick Ohlsson to make Oberlin Artist Recital Series Debut February 10

by Mike Telin



After winning the 1970 Chopin International Piano Competition, pianist Garrick Ohlsson has gone on to establish a reputation as a musician of magisterial interpretive and technical prowess. The celebrated pianist is certainly no stranger to area audiences: in addition to his frequent appearances as soloist with The Cleveland Orchestra, he has also presented recitals for Akron's Tuesday Musical Series, collaborated with the Takács Quartet for the Cleveland Chamber Music Society, and performed a benefit concert for ChamberFest Cleveland. Still, there is one Northeast Ohio series that has eluded him — the Oberlin Artist Recital Series.

Two and a half years ago, in an interview with *ClevelandClassical.com*, Ohlsson said that he looked forward to making his debut on the Oberlin Artists Recital Series on November 1, 2012. "I did play in Oberlin once on a run-out with The Cleveland Orchestra. It was one of those go out, try the piano, play the concert and go back to Cleveland. This will be a more profound experience because I will get to practice in the Chapel. So that's exciting."

However, hurricane Sandy had other ideas and forced the cancellation of that performance. His recital was rescheduled for February 12, 2013 — then, unfortunately, due to illness, the pianist was forced to withdraw.

As they say, "the third time's the charm." On Monday, February 10 at 8:00 pm in Finney Chapel, Garrick Ohlsson will make his Artist Recital Series debut with a concert featuring Beethoven's *Sonata No. 30 in E*, op. 109 and Schubert's *Fantasy in C*, "Der Wanderer," op. 15. In honor of the centenary of the death of Alexander Scriabin,

Ohlsson's program will also include Scriabin's *Désir*, op. 57, no. 1 — *Sonata No. 10*, op. 70 — *Etude in b-flat*, op. 8, no. 11 — *Etude in D-flat*, op. 8, no. 10 — *Fragilité*, op. 51, no. 1 — and *Sonata No. 5 in F-sharp*, op. 53.

In addition to Tuesday's concert, on Monday, February 9 at 7:00 pm in Kulas Recital Hall, piano professor Robert Shannon will moderate a question and answer session with Garrick Ohlsson. The event is free and open to the public.

Ohlsson is that rare artist who has the ability to speak about music as eloquently as he performs it. During a 2012 interview I asked him to give his thoughts on discussing music in a manner that is understandable to all.

Mike Telin: I listened to the question and answer session you gave at Cal Performances, and you have a wonderful way of talking about music; you make everything so easy to understand.

Garrick Ohlsson: I try. For me, music is such a visceral experience that when discussions get too intellectual, or technical, even I turn off. But I can have that intellectual discussion, because that is a part of music.

In any great work there is that other, more numinous level of experience, and it's fun when you can point out how a composer achieves something. In the case of Chopin, I'm just trying to show people that there is a real scientist at work. But I still don't know what his inspiration was. I'm not a composer, but it seems to me that inspiration has to precede all the technicality.

When I listen to music, I listen in great detail when necessary, but mostly I listen to that great thing called the flow. I tend not to be too concerned about things like, oh, he made the crescendo a little too early, or, this wasn't quite together. I can diagnose it if necessary, but I don't like to listen to music as if I'm the police watching for infractions.

MT: That's a great way of putting it, because we do tend to get caught up in that style of listening.

GO: Absolutely. But you as a critic and I as a musician — if we can't do that, we shouldn't be doing what we do. Sometimes we do miss the forest for the trees, but on the other hand, professionals have to be able to be very analytical.

When I am playing, I like to know the work so well that I can get beyond worrying about what the notes are, and whether or not I can play a certain passage. Some passages you never can play very well. (Laughing) There is a great story about Martha Argerich, whom I know hardly at all, but somebody said, "Martha, you know this piece so well, why keep

practicing?” And she said, “It’s not a question of that. I want to be able to enjoy it when I play it.” In other words, you have to get to such a level that you can abandon yourself to the music rather than worry about [the notes].”

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