



CELLIST MARIA KLIEGEL EXCELS AT THE AURORA FESTIVAL IN SWEDEN



The successful German cellist Maria Kliegel recently participated in the Swedish Aurora Winter Festival in Trollhättan, some 90 kilometres north of Gothenburg. The Aurora Festival is the first event ever dedicated to the Northern Lights and is a celebration of science, myths and life under the Aurora Borealis. It allows guests the chance to get involved with experiments and hands on activities covering everything from the source of the Northern Lights, to forecasting the aurora and the traditional Sami culture. The Aurora Festival in Trollhättan, has been organized for 10 years now, and each year there are about 3 to 4 festivals, which means

from the beginning until now about 30 festivals have altogether taken place, with many concerts. This year's Aurora Winter festival was held from the 19-28 of February. Maria Kliegel, who is nicknamed "The Cellissima", was invited by the organizers of the Aurora Festival, Artistic Director and cellist Per Nyström and General manager Ola Larsson, to play in two concerts, an invitation which she gladly accepted. Kliegel's performance was just one highlight in a sparkling programme. Maria enthuses: "I played three pieces in two concerts. First I played the Mendelssohn Octet, a beautiful piece, moreover because Mendelssohn was only 16 when he composed it. It was a piece for four violins, two violas and two cellos, it was fantastic, so youthful and powerful like the Midsummer Night's Dream Scherzo of Mendelssohn. It was sparkling music."

"It was a huge, international music festival."



"The Artistic Director Per Nyström was the other performing cellist. The piece is very famous, it is a violin concerto with 7 others. And the violin player Barnabas Kelemen, was just great. He was the first and leading violin player in Mendelssohn's Octet, actually a colleague of mine in Cologne, since two years. In the second concert I played the cello part in the famous 'Trout' Quintet by F. Schubert. The pianist in this quintet, standing at the right in the first row on the photo down below, is a Romanian student from Vienna, Adela Liculescu, who was selected because of her outstanding piano playing and musicianship to perform with us teachers. And in the same concert I played as a soloist with the Aurora Symphony Orchestra *Kol Nidrei*, a Hebrew composition for cello and orchestra by Max Bruch. I performed the Max Bruch composition also in November 2015 when I was in Cape town. There were several orchestras performing in the festival,

consisting of musical students (almost 200). It was a huge organisation. It was not my first time in Sweden. I have been in Sweden before, some 10 years ago I have been there to record for Naxos the cello concerto by Bo Linde, a Swedish composer. That was in the city of Gävle at the east coast."

"The Aurora Festival offered many concerts within four days to the public. But of course prior to those concerts all of us musicians, teachers and students, had to rehearse the repertoire we performed. Included in this schedule were masterclasses for all the 200 participating students. I had to teach the 20 cellists, which was in total about 40 lesson hours during the festival. It was a lot of work, but it was fun. The students came from all parts of the world, from South America, the United States, from Poland, Spain, from everywhere. It was a fantastic music festival with a big audience. We played in beautiful venues, like a church, and a also big concert hall and a Floor Chamber Music Hall for lunch concerts and late night concerts. There were students and music teachers all mixed up in various concerts. Sometimes only students were performing, sometimes students with teachers, sometimes only teachers."



The chamber music ensemble performing the Trout Quintet by Schubert. From left to right: Kristine Hook (doublebass), Barnabas Kelemen (violin), Maria Kliegel (cello), Maxim Rysanov (viola), Adela Liculescu (piano).

Focus on young talented artists

The focus of the festival was on young artists, offering opportunities to all the thousands of young artists (average age 23 years) from all over the world who meet continuously at the Aurora Festivals and masterclasses in Sweden. They are coached by the international Aurora professors and also give concerts together during the festival. Lots of new professional contacts are established, that in many cases develop into lasting interchange and cooperation all over national borders. Aurora Chamber Music (ACM) uses innovative and alternative methods in order to change the present conditions for musicians and create new possibilities and opportunities within the classical music genre. Maria: "They also have a special programme: Polar Stars for very young and promising Swedish musicians, who specially were selected to get some lessons with us professors during the festival, for free."



The Aurora Talks in the afternoons

Maria also loved the so-called Aurora Talks in the afternoons. She explains: "Every afternoon at 3 o'clock, we had special 'Aurora Talks', when professors, musicians talked with the audiences about for example how music communicates with people, how it connects people. So the public comes there to get a little more personal information about the teachers and artists. The audience can ask questions, and also they sing a canon., to illustrate that music is communication. They sing Swedish songs, so they were really involved in this, you know, it was lovely." "I was telling my 'Mandela story' in one of my talks."

The 'Mandela story' of Maria Kliegel

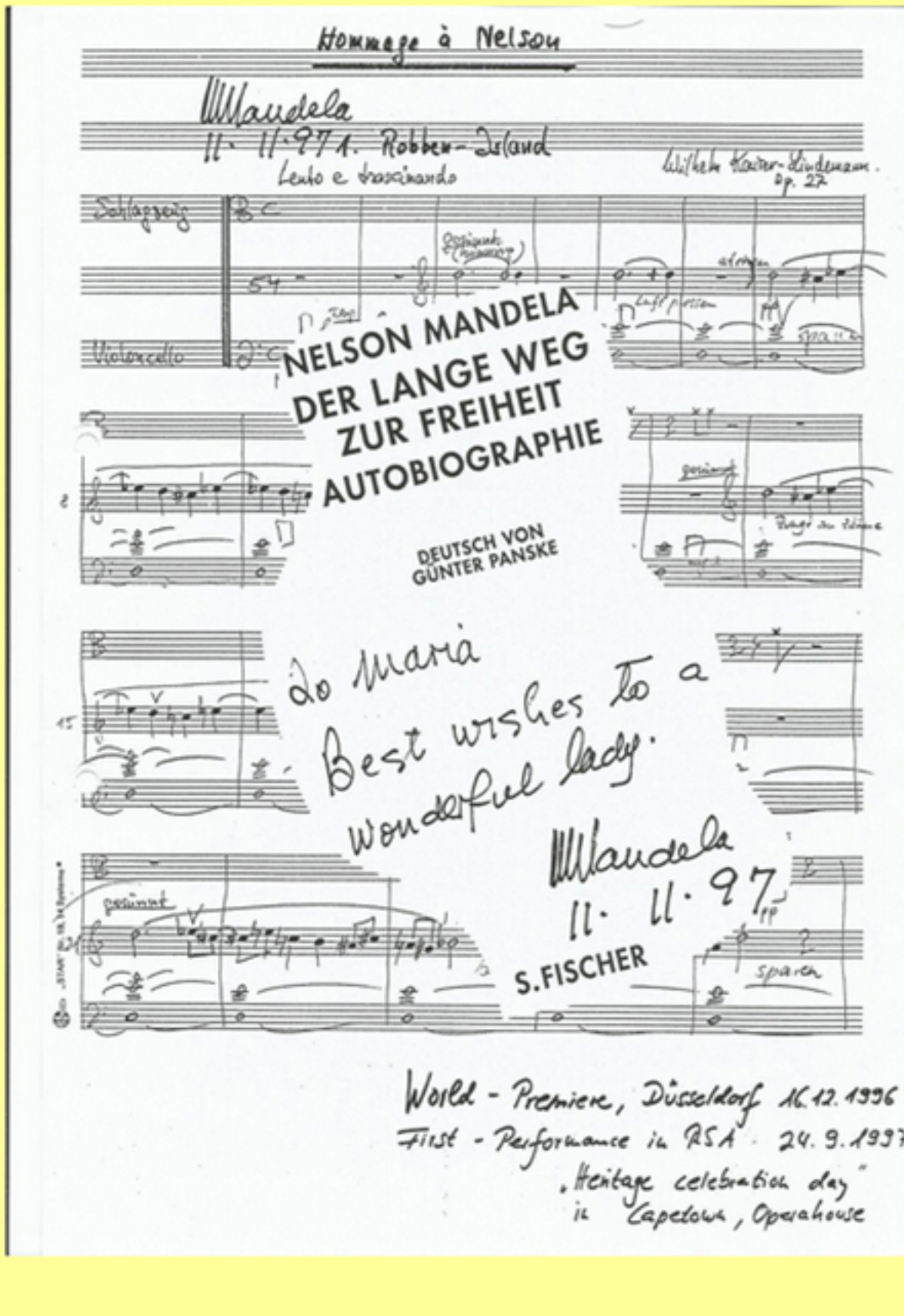


Govan Mbeki after a concert 1999 in Cape Town called the 'Govan Mbeki Tribute Concert' together with Maria Kliegel, who played the cello concerto by C. Saint-Saens as a soloist.

"The public also asked questions about my experience with meeting Nelson Mandela. I told them that, on a vacation in Hawaii, I was reading Mandela's autobiography 'Long walk to freedom', in 1996 and at the end of the book I was so touched by his personality that I had the wish to meet him. That was pretty crazy of course, I mean to meet the President of South Africa, how do you do that? So I got an idea to have a composition written for me for cello and percussion, which I dedicated to Mandela. The name of the piece is an 'Homage à Nelson M.', composed by Wilhelm Kaiser-Lindemann. Of course my wish was to perform it in South Africa, with Mandela sitting in the first row, but that did not work out, so I first did a performance in Düsseldorf, and there was the ambassador of South Africa. Three years later I performed some excerpts of this composition in Cape Town. Mandela was not in the Concert Hall, but Govan Mbeki was. He was one of his buddies from the prison, he has been with Nelson Mandela in prison for some 20 years. And he was the father of Mandela's successor as a president, Thabo Mvuyelwa Mbeki. Govan Mbeki appeared to be also the patron of the Symphony Orchestra in Cape Town. Then Mbeki invited me to come to his office the next day. He was already more than 80 years old, he was a fantastic man, I told him about my wish to meet Mandela., and he told Mandela all about this, and after that I got an invitation from Mandela to see him. And then I met him. "

A dream becomes reality: Meeting the South African President at breakfast

"My encounter with Nelson Mandela was wonderful, I was invited in his residence at his home, and I played for him in the morning at 8.30. I was performing excerpts of this composition, an 'Homage à Nelson M.'" I was explaining him why I was there. It was very lovely. He was listening to me attentively and I performed also some Bach solo suites. I told him of course that I had read his book and referred to some scenes in the book about his life at Robben Island. The music piece consisted of 4 movements, that I dedicated to him. The first movement is called "Robben Island", the second movement is called "Hunting", which is a work from bebop jazz actually, but in this composition it means "Hunting people". Then the third movement is called "Lullabye for Zaziwe", referring to his granddaughter Zaziwe, which means Hope. And the fourth movement is called "Metamorphosis", referring to the changing of the country of South Africa and leaving the Apartheid system behind. Mandela was very touched by this, actually he had tears in his eyes. It was really fantastic that I could do it, because there are thousands of people in the world who want to meet him of course. It was a real dream to meet him, but it took me 3 years to turn my dream into reality. The dream of standing next to this hero, to shake his hand, to look into his eyes, feeling his stunning greatness and iron duration of his vision, his humanity, his understanding and not a bit of hatred. Dignity and the same rights for everybody on this planet was his destination." On the photo at the right we see the first page of the composition an 'Homage à Nelson M.' by Wilhelm Kaiser-Lindemann, put together with the first page from his book, signed by Nelson Mandela, an extraordinary person, whom I met through my profession as a musician."



"Treated like an animal for 27 long years."

Maria emphasizes she wanted to meet Mandela, because of his humanity. "He was treated very badly in prison you know for 27 long years. He said they had really been treating him like an animal, they tried with all their evil power to break his spirits. They were terrible to the prisoners, but he asked himself: Why are they like this? People are not born with his hatred. Why do people turn into such animals? He explained: "We have to start changing the world for this. Not through punishments or through hating people, but it needs education. Although he was treated badly in prison he remained iron strong over these years. But he always said: we have to educate them and he is a very good example, but maybe no one is as strong I want to contribute to him as a musician somehow. So I thought of having a composer write a piece which I could possibly perform in his presence."

(www.thestrada.com)

See also the Maria Kliegel article:



MARIA KLIEGEL, LA CELLISSIMA - A PERFECTIONIST THROUGH AND THROUGH