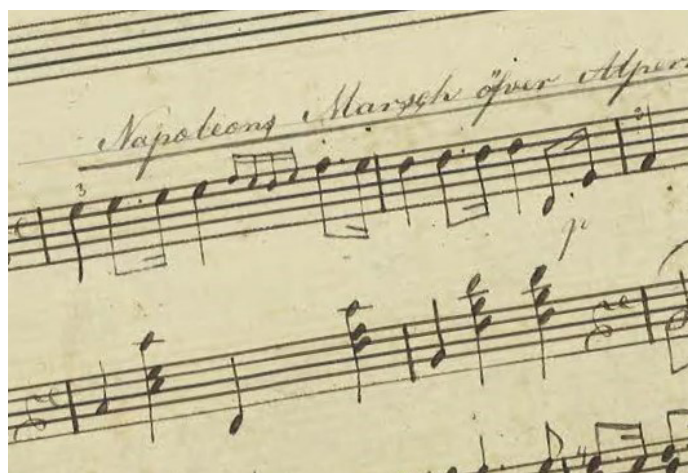


Olga captured, museum preserved,

The cover of Olga's sheetbook

musicians brought to life

The diary and music sheetbook from 1866 of Olga Ahlström, a local resident, were found in the K.H. Renlund Museum in Kokkola, Finland. Now these notes are once again in use.



Olga was a merchant's daughter who documented in her diary her life in a small town on the west coast of Finland. The preservation of the old is valuable in itself, but the significance of preserving traditions took on a special role when the Central Ostrobothnia Chamber Orchestra brought Olga's notes to light.

The museum's information service assistant, Anna Puikko, digitized the fragile sheet music, and the orchestra's program coordinator, Dr. Lauri Pulakka, modernized the notes' appearance. Selected pieces for the concert included "Summer Memory, Polka-mazurka" and

"Napoleon's March over the Alps." There is no information about the composers — while the melody of Napoleon's March is known in various versions in Finnish and Swedish folk music, its origin is unclear.

In the Central Ostrobothnia Chamber Orchestra's new chamber music series, "Spirit of the Place," the essence of historic public buildings in Kokkola is explored through music. The music transmitted to us by Olga was included in the series' inaugural concert, "Young Nation's Artists at the old Town Hall," in the fall 2023. The old Town Hall, since its



Keski-Pohjanmaan kamariorkesteri, taustalla Kokkolan raatihuone. Valokuva: Ulla Nikula

construction, has been a hub of Kokkola's cultural life, hosting dances, plays, and operettas.

There is no planned temporal structure for the concert series, but the series continues tailored to the atmosphere of different interesting venues: in the 2023—2024 season, the orchestra will perform in Kokkola's medieval church, the old high school's auditorium, and will return to the old Town Hall with a program designed from a different perspective.

Due to renovations at its regular venue, the orchestra is currently displaced and this has influenced the brainstorming of new concert locations. The initial impetus was the realization of the significant role the built environment plays in our lives and identity:

- Beauty, historical interest, and layers of history often go unnoticed in our everyday lives. I see a clear connection here to the classical music I represent; it clearly ties us into the European cultural tradition, much like architecture does, describes Lauri Pulakka.

In Kokkola, the architectural heritage represents various eras and styles. It has felt natural for the orchestra to combine one building with a phase of music history. In the case of the old Town Hall, both local history and the "grand narrative" of music history are involved. The starting point for the curated program was both local people and the major ideological and aesthetic currents of the time.

On the other hand, Kaarlela Church is so ancient that in planning its program, the 'spirit' became more important than the 'place!'"

- Regarding the Town Hall concert, the museum's information service was a great help. Exploring the archives reinforced the preconception that the music life of the 1800's bourgeoisie focused on vocal and piano music and, generally, small-scale concert and chamber music performances, Lauri Pulakka explains.

The majority of preserved scores are either songs or miniature pieces composed for the piano, and as such, they do not constitute the core repertoire of orchestral concerts or chamber music activities.

The first heyday of Kokkola's music life was in the late 18th century. At that time, Anders Chydenius compiled his scores, now kept in the Sibelius Museum in Turku, and organized concerts in his rectory. This repertoire has been recorded by the Central Ostrobothnia Chamber Orchestra. Dance and folk music found in the archives have also been useful in compiling concert programs.

Olga Ahlström's sheet music book is historically intriguing. The origin of the compositions is still unknown, but uncovering it could open up interesting perspectives on the music scene of the time in a coastal town in Ostrobothnia.

THE MUSEUM'S MISSION IS TO PRESERVE AND BRING TO LIGHT

The tasks of the K.H. Renlund Museum include the preservation, research, and presentation of cultural heritage.

Museum collections provide a basis for both research and public information services, combining historical knowledge, objects, artworks, photographs, and archival material.

- I am delighted that archival collections are put to such use and they come to life in the present day. I wonder when was the last time before this concert that something was played from Olga Ahlström's sheet music book?, ponders information service assistant Anna Puikko.

Information services and research provide material for building local and regional identity and sense of community. Cultural heritage and associated research help to see and understand local and regional peculiarities.

The museum's information service serves everyone interested in the area's cultural heritage and art. The framework for thematic content is Kokkola and its surroundings' history and the museum's own collections.





*Olga Evelina
Ahlström
(1850–1908)*

ABOUT THE ORCHESTRA & THE MUSEUM:

Established in 1972, the Central Ostrobothnia Chamber Orchestra is one of the internationally renowned Finnish orchestras, with a broad repertoire from Baroque to the present day.

[Orchestra's website and repertoire](#)

The K.H. Renlund Museum is Kokkola's city museum, offering art and history through exhibitions, events, and research. As the regional responsibility museum for Central Ostrobothnia, it also acts as an expert authority on built cultural environment and archaeology and promotes regional museum work and regional art museum work. Together with local arts and local history actors, the museum cherishes the region's cultural heritage.

[Museum website, exhibitions, collections](#)

OSTROBOTHNIAN
Chamber
ORCHESTRA

K.H. RENLUNDIN MUSEO
K.H. RENLUNDS MUSEUM

Kokkola
Karleby

A history thesis based on Olga's diary (in Finnish):

"Nuoren tytön päiväkirja.

Kokkolalaisen Olga Ahlströmin elämää 1860-luvulla."

Sanna Mäntykorpi 2012.

<https://urn.fi/urn:nbn:fi:uta-1-22396>

Text: *Kati Hyvönen, Anna Puikko, Lauri Pulakka and websites of the museum and the orchestra.*

Photos of the sheetbook and Olga:
K.H. Renlunds museum.

Layout: *Kati Hyvönen, Centria University of Applied Sciences. February 2024.*

More information about the project ICH North: <https://net.centria.fi/en/project/ich-north/>

The project is funded by Interreg Aurora, and co-funders Region Västernorrland, Troms og Finnmarks fylkeskommune, Nordisk Kulturfond and Lapin Liitto together with project partners: Centria University of Applied Sciences, Kulturens Bildningsverksamhet, KulturÖsterbotten, Yrkeshögskolan Novia, The Arctic University of Norway UiT, Finnish Folk Music Institute and Västernorrlands museum.