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[RIDM 2013: Bloody Daughter is a wonderful biography of pianist Martha Argerich](#)

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Pianist Martha Argerich, in the documentary film *Bloody Daughter*, directed by Stephanie Argerich. *Bloody Daughter* is being shown at RIDM, Montreal's documentary film festival.

Martha Argerich is a respected, world-renowned pianist, a bit quirky, and – Montreal connection here – she used to be married to Charles Dutoit, former conductor of the Montreal Symphony Orchestra.

That's all I knew about Argerich before I watched the documentary *Bloody Daughter*, which I enjoyed very much, (though I have mixed feelings about the title.) The film is so well put together I think it could be enjoyed equally well by Argerich's most devoted fans or people who know nothing about her at all.

The bloody daughter of the title is photographer Stephanie Argerich, the film's director and one of Martha Argerich's daughters. While Martha Argerich is the main subject, Stephanie and her sisters play an important part in the film, too. We have glimpses of Martha Argerich's three ex-husbands, as well.

"I don't know, I can't explain it," are two phrases that Argerich uses a lot to explain her feelings or her past behaviour. That might be frustrating for people who don't want to take "I don't know" for an answer, but they make her seem all the more human to me. There are many things about my own life and behaviour that I can't explain either!

Decades ago, Martha Argerich came home from a tour of Japan with a video-camera, and that's when Stephanie started filming family life, and especially her mother – just observing things, or asking questions about this and that. (Charles Dutoit appears briefly; Stephanie's father, pianist Stephen Kovacevich, get a bit more screen time.)

It's amazing (and so lucky for her and us) how much footage she has. These films, along with older family photographs, show Argerich throughout the years, as a child, teen, young woman, older woman, talking, performing, joking, happy, sad, tired, dark-haired, grey-haired, etc. (Argerich does not follow the dictum that a woman over a certain age must cut her hair short. Yay, Martha!)

Speaking of Japan, there are scenes from a "Martha Argerich Encounter" there that sells the usual CDs, programs, etc., along with unexpected merch like Martha Argerich notebooks, pen and pencil sets, chopsticks, etc.

Argerich's story is one that spans the globe. She's often described as an Argentine pianist, but she seems more like a citizen of the world. Her parents left Europe for Argentina; Argerich was born in Buenos Aires. She started playing piano before she was three years old, and left Argentina when she was still a child to study in England, Austria and Switzerland. She also lived in Brussels, Paris and New York and has performed all over the world. She speaks French and English and still remembers Spanish, her mother tongue, though Stephanie Argerich says that she rarely hears her mother speak it.

The film is personal and intimate without crossing over into "too much information" territory.

Bloody Daughter, directed by Stephanie Argerich, in French, English, Spanish, with French and English subtitles, is 96 minutes long.

Friday, Nov. 22, 9 p.m. at Cinéma Excentris – Cassavetes

Sunday, Nov. 24 4:30 p.m. at Cinéma du Parc 1

Bloody Daughter is presented by RIDM, Montreal's documentary film festival. which runs until Nov. 24, 2013. Visit the [RIDM web site](#) for more information.

[RIDM 2013: Cinematic suggestions for Sunday, November 24, the last day of RIDM for 2013](#)[Next The Cine Files post Fantasia Film Festival will present two screenings of On The Job to raise money for victims of Typhoon Haiyan: Critic says film is 'Martin Scorsese by way of Johnnie To'](#)[Previous The Cine Files post](#)

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Martha also speaks Italian fluently and she speaks some German, though neither were in evidence in the film as far as I can recall. One minor quibble with the review above--it isn't apparent from the film that the father of her first daughter, Lyda Chen, was ever Miss Argerich's husband. In fact, in the film, Stephanie states that Lyda was the result of one night spent together by her father and mother. But I agree that the film is fascinating. I can't think of anyone else on earth whom it would be so interesting to watch doing the most mundane of activities--eating a salad on the train, getting sleepily out of bed, having some fruit, sitting on a sofa. She is endlessly fascinating, because her genius at the keyboard is so incomprehensibly great.

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