

*Inside Out* audiences realize that classical music can be a tremendous resource for understanding oneself and others. It's food for our minds, hearts and souls. And yet classical music is intangible, mysterious, and undiscovered by most of the American population. It's generally thought of as elitist and inaccessible except to the knowledgeable few.

*Inside Out* builds bridges to audiences by showing that a connection with music is not so much about knowing (although it's useful to know the historical and cultural context of a piece), it's more about tapping into the emotional essence and universal human experience that's inherent in every work of art, be it music, dance, theatre, film, or visual art. This innovative interdisciplinary approach helps concertgoers access their memories and activate their imaginations so that they can have more moving, meaningful, and personal experiences.

I've been passionate about classical music my whole life. As a child, I performed as soloist with the Philadelphia Orchestra several times; as an adult I was a member of the prestigious Cleveland Orchestra for 18 years. In those formal settings, the artificial wall that separated musicians and audiences troubled me.

I began thinking about how I might improve the connection with an audience by creating a more informal atmosphere and presenting novel ways to help people relate better to the music. When I started conducting ensembles at the Cleveland Institute of Music in 2000, I noticed how much the students craved to be emotionally connected to what they were doing. I was rehearsing Brahms's Serenade No. 2, and came to a difficult cello passage. Instead of saying, "Cellos, you really need to practice that," I took a different tact. I said, "When I think about

this melancholy passage, it reminds me of the gypsies in Vienna, who were probably looked down upon and didn't have enough to eat." An oboe player raised his hand and half-jokingly said, "That's how I feel as a music student, looked down upon and hungry!" Everyone laughed. I said, "Okay, so *you've* felt how those gypsies might have felt. Hold onto that." We played the passage again and the sound of the cello section changed completely. It was dark and emotional, and most of the technical problems had disappeared. The students and I were amazed. I started thinking about how I could give listening audiences a similar "right brain" experience.

I presented my first *Inside Out* Concert in Shaker Heights in 2002; I rented a church and asked colleagues from The Cleveland Orchestra to perform with me. I advertised this way: "Do you feel uncomfortable at classical music concerts? Are you scared about not knowing the rules of concert etiquette? Please wear comfortable clothes and bring your imaginations!"

I welcomed the audience of about 100 adults. I encouraged them to get physically comfortable by letting them stretch and breathe deeply, since people become more imaginative when they're relaxed. I told them bits of information about each piece, and gave them creative ways to project their lives onto the music. For example, before we performed a Bach Fugue I told the audience that a fugue is about building something. I asked each of them to choose something they felt most earnest about building in their lives. I explained that every project takes many steps to complete. Every time the fugue melody was presented, they could think of it as a building block. Things always come up that we don't expect so we have to improvise, like Bach, who improvised between the fugue statements. We demonstrated several excerpts, since familiarity helps people relax, then played it

through. Afterwards people seemed excited. “I was totally engaged.” “I’m a rock ‘n’ roll guy, but I really liked this concert!” “When’s your next one?” I was juiced!

Through my collaboration with three different psychotherapists, Ceci MacDonnell LISW, Alan Bachers PhD, and Cynthia Anne Hale PhD, *Inside Out* has evolved to include guided visualizations to connect concertgoers with universal emotional themes such as joy, loss, strength, struggle, gratitude and grace.

For example, I presented Brahms’s Horn Trio, which, I told the audience, was written during the year after his mother died. I related that loss is a universal human experience, and led a guided meditation to help the audience get in touch with their sorrows. After the concert, the pianist of the trio said, “Eli, do you realize that half the people in the audience were crying during the third movement?”

In 2005, I left The Cleveland Orchestra and moved to Boston to have more time and energy to develop *Inside Out* and other creative endeavors. The Arlington Street Church in Boston has been hosting my *Inside Out Concert Series* for three years. Listeners have reported having amazing and moving experiences. In fact, 62% of survey respondents disclosed that this approach changed the way they thought about classical music. The Boston Globe, Cleveland Plain Dealer and the Santa Barbara News-Press have published feature articles about *Inside Out*.

Programs have varied in terms of method, repertoire and ensemble size (from solo to chamber and orchestral). I’ve presented diverse music of composers such as Beethoven, Ravel, Messiaen, and Paquito D’Rivera. I even presented a solo piano

recital where Eve Kodiak, after performing Schumann's *Scenes from Childhood*, asked the audience to share titles of episodes from their own childhoods. Then Eve improvised a whole new suite, a sort of "playback" of their personal childhood scenes.

Our society is hungry for meaningful experiences. People will come back to classical music concerts if they think there's a good chance they'll have another moving experience.

It's been challenging to persuade established musical organizations that incorporating the *Inside Out* format could help them bring in and build a new audience base for classical music in America. Alan Brown, director of *Audience Insight* said, "What you have here, Eli, is a lever to get people into the concert hall again and again."