

May 17, 110 Monday 12 Sivan 3870 13:35 IST 

# THE JERUSALEM POST

JPOST.com  
Israel's best-selling english daily and most-read English website



Photo by: .

## Playing jokes

BY MAXIM REIDER  
09/02/2010

Aleksey Igudesman imbues classical music with humor to create a new and broader form of expression.

‘Standing in front of the orchestra and playing a well done piece is in a way kinky, but regular concerts never were in my personal plan. There are so many amazing musicians who do it great – and also this weird competition, with a lot of people who go to concerts just to compare who plays what better – that it is not interesting for me,’ says violinist/conductor/composer/actor Aleksey Igudesman in a phone interview from his Vienna home. Later this month Igudesman returns to the Eilat International Chamber Music Festival, where he debuted a year ago together with his childhood friend and musical partner Richard Hyung-ki Joo in a hilarious crossover program.

For Igudesman, who was born in Leningrad into a musical family, immigrated to the West with his parents at the age of 6, and attended the prestigious Yehudi Menuhin School at the age of 12, the creative aspect of music and of writing, the mixture of music and word, and of music and theater are far more attractive.

‘From the very beginning I started doing music performances with a lot of theatrical aspects to them, where humor was a part of it but not necessarily had to be,’ he says. ‘Humor is just another tool to make the palette more rich and interesting for myself and eventually for the public. It’s a great way to break out of convention.’

Igudesman explains that using humor does not necessarily mean making jokes at the cost of music, but rather making jokes with music. ‘Combining music, theater and comedy is a new and broader form of expression. In certain combinations you can make people laugh one moment, cry the next, and then be astounded by the beauty of the music.’ Igudesman considers himself very lucky. ‘I was able to turn to classical music many people, who saw my programs live and on YouTube, and this is one of the nicest achievements I can have,’ he says.

But Igudesman’s choice of pieces does not depend only on the presence of humor. He also believes that distinctions between rock, pop, classical and jazz are fading. ‘For me, personally, the most interesting music comes from the popular sector – from film and pop music – since contemporary classical music got stuck and went into directions where it lost a lot of the public by over-intellectualizing.’

Like in his many international tours, at the the Eilat festival Igudesman will devote the first part of the concert purely to classical music, while in the second part he plays his own music, which, he says, ‘is definitely classical, but has a theatrical, popular aspect.’

Igudesman also likes to use other instruments, such as electric guitar and electric bass. Among other pieces is the *Concerto for Four and a Half Violins*, which includes ‘Roby Lakatos, playing Gypsy-style, Roman Yanuska, a wonderful jazz and classical violinist, and Pavel Vernikov,’ as well as Igudesman himself, ‘playing various styles, from Celtic to klezmer music. So it’s kind of a journey around the world, and a lot of fun.’

IN ADDITION to his busy concert career, Igudesman is doing a lot of film music in Hollywood, writing, arranging, playing the violin. He recently performed most of the violin music in Guy Ritchie’s *Sherlock Holmes*.

‘I work a lot with Hans Zimmer, a German Jewish folk composer and Oscar winner,’ he says. ‘Lately, he called me, saying they’d love to have this ‘strange Russian-Jewish-Celtic mix for the new movie,’ and I said,

‘Well, I am the right person for that!’ laughs Alexey.

With all these activities Igudesman does not have time to teach regularly, “but I do love to give workshops when I can.” In his *Laughing Violin* master class in Eilat he plans “to show what is possible to do outside of regular classical violin music. Also a combination of playing and movement is interesting for me. According to the good old Russian school, you should stand like a stone, but to be flexible and free can also be very useful for classical playing, and it can even give you musical freedom as well.” Igudesman is going to explore this technique, together with others he has acquired in his constant travels, both at the master class and in the concert, *Violins of the World*, which will feature duets he wrote that are inspired by music from various parts of the world.

“Julian Rachlin and Pavel Vernikov are playing, and Sir Roger Moore will recite some of my many poems,” Igudesman says. “And I am going to involve children in the performance, because some of the duets are written for children. In a way, this is very much in the spirit of Sir Roger Moore, who is a great UNICEF ambassador.”

And what is that drives him to live the way he lives?

“I believe that there is one God, one energy... God is around us and within us. In other words, we are creators. So whatever we do in life, we create our life minute by minute, and we are creating it in the most artistic and beautiful way. So this is the way I chose to live and this is what drives me. I believe that even if you are doing a simple job, if you put all your love and creativity into it, you will live a rich and beautiful life.”

*Igudesman's workshop takes place February 23, while the concert is set for the 25th. For information and a detailed program visit <http://www.eilat-festival.com> or call (08) 637-7036.*



---

[About Us](#) | [Advertise with Us](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [RSS](#)

All rights reserved © 1995 - 2009 The Jerusalem Post.

כל הזכויות שמורות © 2009- נט אפיקי תקשורת אינטר מדיה בע"מ