



## The cult of classical music

We need to confront the ignorance surrounding classical music – and fast

What happened to classical music and how did it become a cult? Why are we choosing to isolate generations of people from the power and joy of [Mozart](#) and [Beethoven](#), when we have more tools than ever through which we can communicate this great art form? Why are there so many oblivious to the existence of Carnegie Hall or Lincoln Center even if they live a block away? What happened to our understanding that art, as great as classical music, is absolutely essential to our society?

It is time to call things what they are - a crisis. We are losing our battle with collapsing attention spans. We have been catering to the lowest common denominator in our society, pandering more to what millennials like than to what they actually need.

Instead of encouragement towards making an effort, we caved into oversimplification and a frequent removal of independent thinking. We are programmed to think in tweets and have given up fighting generation ADD. How soon will we be cutting Beethoven and Mozart symphonies to 3-4 minutes to make them more accessible?

Many governments worldwide are slashing budgets for the arts, finding it to be the simplest way to fix an economic crisis. We must try to identify the problem by going to its root so we can understand why there is so much talk about classical music's future, decline in interest and concert attendances, poor record sales and lastly, why the primitive cultural styles have prevailed.

Preceding my latest video project I had been randomly approaching common folks in various places for past three years, around the world in fact, from taxi drivers to managers of grocery stores to bartenders, about what music they listen to and their perception of classical music.

I heard truly fascinating stories. I secretly wished that I had a camera and a microphone so people could share my experiences.

We are seeing a number of classical artists and organizations doing outreach programs, looking for new innovative ideas, combining visuals with music and making creative hybrids with the hope to introduce classical music to new audiences. Is it enough? Is underdressing for concerts,

like the popular 'Beethoven in Blue Jeans', and encouraging clapping between movements the way to attract new audiences and make classical music more accessible?

The clip below has been called the saddest, most depressing and alarming video research on classical music, but I see it as an invitation to an open conversation and to looking at the situation with a different mindset — in part from the perception of the young people themselves. I also have received an array of letters thanking me for finally exposing what everyone has had on their mind for a long time.



Classical, or any good music for that matter, must be reintroduced. I wanted to emphasize that the protagonists of my video are really just the folks that never had any proper exposure to classical music. And, most importantly, with a fair amount of tireless supporters for the arts and education, many more people must join forces to prevent complete extinction of great music. It is scary to think that the kids of the young individuals I interviewed may not even know that classical music even existed.

It is time to stop eye rolls, smirks and shrugged shoulders and reach out to those that never had a chance to experience great art forms. It is time to stop quoting great maestros like Wilhelm Furtwängler who said 'Classical music is not for everyone'.

I would love to bring some of the kids I interviewed in my video into a concert hall and interview them again to get their impressions. Even if in most cases it might remain an acquired taste, the individuals at least would at least be able to make a more informed choice on their music preferences and undoubtably it would make it a worthwhile and rewarding experience.

One frustrated commentator on my Facebook fan page exclaimed: 'Where is Lenny?! We need him!'

Let's hear it from the maestro, Leonard Bernstein himself, from an article he wrote on May 4, 1970 : '...We need the power of art as no other modern generation has ever needed it, and yet we have done everything, both in the arts and out of them, to destroy that power. What arts served - is our human understanding of our lives we have somehow lost; our touch with them, our feel of them, our sense of their reality, of the dignity and meaning they seemed once to have. We have filled them so full of things, of appurtenances, of possessions, devices, machinery - of what we call, with perhaps unconscious irony, our "affluence", that there is no room left for ourselves. And the result is the crowded, congested, deafening, unbeautiful emptiness of our existence.'



### **Philippe Quint**

Lauded by Daily Telegraph(UK) for his “searingly poetic lyricism” violinist Philippe Quint is carving an unconventional path with his impassioned musical desire for reimagining traditional works, rediscovering neglected repertoire to commissioning works by contemporary composers. Whether with his Tango Band the Quint Quintet or a most recent journey with a Jazz Trio, his dedication to exploring different styles and genres with an award winning discography has solidified him as one of the foremost violinists of today.