

## Something's up in Houston

It took me a while, but I want to tell you about my concert last week in Houston with the River Oaks Chamber Orchestra. It was founded by oboist/executive director/mom Alecia Lawyer. Besides being an excellent ensemble, and programming daring, adventurous music, "ROCO" has drastically changed the classical concert format. Here's the run-down:

5pm concerts, 90 minute concert duration, child care/music education for kids 10 and under during and after the concert, 5 minute intermission, surprise pieces at the beginning and end of the concert.

Also, if you fill out a card, you are eligible to be one of four people who gets to sit in the orchestra for one piece after the break. (It's a great way to get info about your audience).

And ... during the five minute intermission, the ENTIRE ORCHESTRA mingles with the audience.

Finally, the older kids in child care get to come hear part of the program right after the break, and are always acknowledged by the conductor and audience. It's great to hear them cheer from the balcony.

They've done it — they've taken a classical concert and made it into a friendly, fun, social event without compromising the music. Thus proving what I've always thought — it's not the music or the programming that need help in the orchestra world, it's the EXPERIENCE. River Oaks Chamber Orchestra is taking off. Congratulations, and bravissimo!

Edwin Outwater

Music Director

Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony Orchestra