



## INGRID HEDLUND

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I was born in Finland and graduated in piano from the Sibelius Academy. Later, I accompanied master classes held by the singers Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, Sir Peter Pears and Hans Hotter, worked as répétiteur and performer, including regular appearances with the South African born singer Robert Brooks. In 2001, Robert Brooks and I started building MIAGI – Music Is A Great Investment (first known as International Classical Music Festival - ICMF).

I am passionate about the magic of music and its power to act as an effective tool for social upliftment. This becomes most tangible when children are given the opportunity to engage in musical activities at an early age because especially then, music also acts as an effective tool for intellectual and moral upliftment. MIAGI does, in our heart and actions, not separate students from professionals or separate different music styles from each other. When that captivating feeling of importance that marks great performances is present, all levels of musicianship and all music forms, essentially, boil down to the same thing. Most important though is that our actions genuinely do not in the first place spring from petty, self-centred motives. Only then, there is that quality which brings enthusiasm which in turn brings natural growth.

With these aspirations, MIAGI has, in the past 13 years, raised a total of R76 million, which was invested in music and music education by our partners, such as the National Lottery Distribution Trust Fund, the South African Department of Arts and Culture, the Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of South Africa, the Embassy of Finland in Pretoria and the Embassy of Sweden in Pretoria through Sida. Our mutual investment ranges from support of music education initiatives in historically marginalised areas, commissioning of inter-cultural compositions, and scholarships enabling young artists to study and participate in competitions, to running the MIAGI Youth Orchestra and Youth Jazz Band. Through MIAGI, the CDG Xincayincayi Dancers performed at the Audi Festival in Ingolstadt in the same hall where Rostropovich had just conducted the London Philharmonic Orchestra; the Gauteng Choristers sang with Kammerorchester Basel at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam and the Menuhin Festival in Gstaad; and the MIAGI Youth Orchestra played the opening concert of the Young Euro Classic festival at the Konzerthaus in Berlin. Through MIAGI, Maxim Vengerov, Fazil Say, Barbara Hendricks, Sergei Nakariakov and the English Chamber Orchestra came to teach and perform in South Africa for the first time.

As one of *'Classicfeel's Classic Women'*, I want to include a few very special women, with whom I had the joy of working extensively within our MIAGI endeavours. What I learnt from them as an artist and as a person is immeasurable, I feel, and for this life gift I am immensely grateful. They are the Nqgoko Women Xhosa overtone singers, Xhosa Muse Madosini, Thikundwi kha Sialala Venda Ngoma drummers and dancers and Miriam Makeba, whose first and only concerts in South Africa together with a large symphony orchestra were arranged by MIAGI in 2005. Unforgettable evenings were spent at Miriam Makeba's home where she sang songs for me and never got tired of trying to teach me 'the hip lilt'.

As a most notable and proud achievement and culture project as a result of our work, I would also like to mention the building, opening and running of the Cape Gate MIAGI Centre for Music (CMCM) in Soweto. CMCM is a beautiful centre offering music education and also acting as a vibrant community centre.

MIAGI's positive impact so far and long-term goals? As I see it, there can only really be one major long-term goal. At the end of the day, all of our mutual efforts will be in vain if we do not collectively manage to decrease all expressions of violence and therefore fear; the two factors that make all creative work and life difficult, even impossible. MIAGI believes that it has brought some healing pieces to this highly challenging puzzle.