

The Infinite Mind Moves to Cambridge and Begins Eighth Season *Author Dr. Peter Kramer Takes Helm as New Host*

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. – **The Infinite Mind**, the award-winning, weekly public radio show that has a million listeners across the nation contemplating the origin and meaning of their own thoughts and actions, has moved to Cambridge.

Or you could say **The Infinite Mind** has come home.

The brainchild of Bill Lichtenstein, a Newton native, **The Infinite Mind** takes a 360-degree look at varying aspects of the mind, mental health, and humanity. Producers, hosts and guests go beyond the headlines to find in-depth answers to bottom-line questions about how the brain functions and malfunctions. From how children learn to why adults forget, from what it means to be a man to why people marry, wage war, or hoard trash, **The Infinite Mind** explores the way the brain works, why humans do the things they do, and what effect their actions have on others around them and society overall. The show brings developed discussions about important, current, and sometimes controversial topics related to the human mind to the public in a way that is challenging, while also captivating and even entertaining.

After 15 successful years in New York, Lichtenstein Creative Media, the company that produces and independently distributes **The Infinite Mind**, is now in Cambridge. Producers are gearing up to launch the show's eighth season with its new host, psychiatrist Dr. Peter Kramer, author of the bestseller, *Listening to Prozac*. Kramer has written five books, the latest of which, *Against Depression*, is set to hit stores in May. His first show, which is, ironically, about writer's block, will air on April 17. Listeners will hear from the famously blocked Fran Lebowitz, and the prolific and rarely blocked Joyce Carol Oates. Music and conversation with Aimee Mann and readings by actor Stanley Tucci complete the program. In Boston, **The Infinite Mind** airs on WUMB, 91.9 FM at 6 a.m. and 8 p.m. every Sunday. Dr. Fred Goodwin, who has hosted the program since its launch in 1997, will continue on the show as senior contributor and guest host.

Kramer is, according to *The New York Times*, "possibly the best-known psychiatrist in America." Recognized as a philosopher as well as an expert on the chemistry of human behavior, Kramer has built a career around exploring the scientific aspects of the human mind and how medications affect brain chemistry, personalities, and human actions. His work also explores how emotions alter the decisions we make, the relationships we keep, and the things we do. It is his breadth of knowledge about both the scientific and emotional causes and explanations of human conduct that make Kramer uniquely qualified to host **The Infinite Mind**.

What compels listeners to tune in to **The Infinite Mind** each week is the way the show investigates topics from every possible angle: emotional, spiritual, chemical, scientific, medical and social. A show entitled "The Dopamine Connection," for example, scientifically explains why young, beautiful women marry old, unattractive men, and not vice versa (it goes beyond father figures and finances). The show also includes segments from the film *Dopamine*, and an interview with its director; an interview with anthropologist Dr. Helen Fischer on evolution and the mating process; the testimony of a man who gambled his life's savings in reaction to his medication for Parkinson's disease; a medical expert from the National Institute of Mental Health who speaks to how the reward system works within the brain; a Harvard researcher who studies addiction; and finally, a humorous look at dopamine as the thought villain urging us to justify our indulgences and bad habits.

Once a topic is selected, the format is dictated by the content unearthed in the research process, says Executive Producer June Peoples. "We try not to be redundant and not to fight with breaking news. We'll wait to see how mainstream media covers a topic, what aspects of the story have gotten out there, which aspects needed more investigation, and which concepts could have been explained better. Then we create a story in a way that enables people to understand the information more organically," Peoples said. "Listeners call and say, 'Thank you for not underestimating my intelligence; thank you for challenging me to think about subjects that might not have ever crossed my mind.'" Peoples has received calls and emails from listeners who said the show literally saved their lives.

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The Infinite Mind is known as public radio's most honored and listened to science and health program. Scientists, physicians, politicians and scholars have presented the show with many prestigious awards. But to the bartenders, school teachers, personal trainers, executives, clerks, stay-at-home-moms, and engineers who await the weekly broadcast, **The Infinite Mind** is an hour of information that helps them understand themselves, their loved ones, and human nature better than they did before. The program was an outgrowth of three one-hour-long public radio documentaries, the Peabody Award-winning "Voices of an Illness" series, Lichtenstein created and produced about mental illness in the early 1990s, in part to change public perception about mental illness, and in part as a catharsis for his own healing. Bill Lichtenstein knows mental illness. He's been there, and back.

All Roads Lead Home

Before he was diagnosed with manic depression, before he graduated from the Columbia J School, and before he enticed Peoples to leave her award-winning career in newspapers, and then married her, Bill Lichtenstein was a Newton kid who was obsessed by radio. While trying to fulfill the requirements of a school project, Lichtenstein, then 14, took the first steps on his lifelong career path by answering phones one night a week for Charles Laquidara at the new alternative radio station, WBCN. From volunteer phone operator, to radio news reporter, to weekend announcer, Lichtenstein spent years working at the station, including summers while on break from Brown University.

At WBCN, Lichtenstein found his passion for uncovering the truth. He was young and it was the 70s, when idealism was encouraged and people believed in the honor of the media. Expanding beyond radio, Lichtenstein found he had a skill for getting to the bottom of a story and telling it through visual images, quickly, accurately, and truthfully. From Boston, he went to New York where he landed a job as an investigative producer for ABC's "20/20." Next he produced reports at "World News Tonight with Peter Jennings" in D.C., where he learned how to create, edit, and get a news story on the air within minutes. By the mid-80s, Lichtenstein was back in New York, working as a producer on "Jimmy Breslin's People." During a particularly stressful time, his thoughts and mind began to unravel. Paranoid and unable to sleep, Lichtenstein ended up in a hospital, from which he was released weeks later without a diagnosis. His mother, a nurse, brought him to McLean Hospital, which is where he first heard the term "manic depression."

"I took the usual path and went to the self-help section at the Barnes & Noble to learn more about this mystery disease," Lichtenstein said. "I found one very thin paperback. All I knew was that when I told friends and colleagues I had manic depression, they stopped returning my phone calls. This was clearly not something I wanted to have." In denial and not taking medication, Lichtenstein was hospitalized two more times over the next three years. The only job he could hold down was as a word processor. "It was like I was in a bad Kafka scene," he said. "I was 30 years old, and I remember digging through the couch cushions for enough money to buy toothpaste. My parents were paying my rent. I realized then that I had two choices. I could go home to Newton, or I could take control of my illness and get on with my life." And so began Lichtenstein's self-education about mental illness, the start of his recovery, and the beginning of Lichtenstein Creative Media and **The Infinite Mind**.

"For years while I was at ABC, my job involved muckraking and chasing trails of corruption. I was a journalist who was always looking for the next story," Lichtenstein said. "It wasn't until I got sick that I looked at the story of people's lives and how people are affected by everything around them." The company's first radio documentary, "Manic Depression: Voices of an Illness," which was narrated by Patty Duke, was heard on 400 public radio stations. "The day it aired, the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill got 10,000 calls. It blew out their voice mail system," Lichtenstein said. "It was a lightning rod. People wanted more."

About Lichtenstein Creative Media

Founded in 1990, Lichtenstein Creative Media is an independent media company that has extensive multimedia production, distribution, education, and community outreach experience, particularly with health, human rights, and social justice issues. The company has distinguished itself by producing films and TV and radio programs that show people can, and do, recover from serious mental illness. The work of LCM and Bill Lichtenstein have been honored with a George Foster Peabody Award, television and radio's highest honor, as well as over 60 major broadcast and health journalism awards. In June 2004, LCM received the United Nations media award for **The Infinite Mind** program about war. LCM's film *West 47th Street* brought the reality of what it is like to live with mental illness to the public. LCM is producing a film about the Hepatitis C epidemic and a film about innovative programs that help at-risk youth. For more information about Lichtenstein Creative Media, visit www.infinitemind.com or call (617) 682-3700.

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