

JIMMY LIU

JACK KURUTZ

BECKY BILLOCK

ULIANA KOZHEVNIKOVA

PIANO 4TE

Four Piano Concert



MARCH 29, 2025
7:30 PM

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Welcome

Piano 4te was founded in 2019 by Jimmy Liu, Jack Kurutz, Uliana Kozhevnikova, and Luis Hernandez, after we performed together in a piece for 10 pianos, 20 hands at a Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra fundraiser. After that experience, we realized how much we enjoyed making music as a group. Practicing alone for hours can often feel isolating, but playing with friends brings a whole new level of energy and excitement. Of course, coordinating 10 pianists regularly seemed a bit... ambitious. (Have you ever tried to schedule lunch with 10 people?) So we settled on four — still plenty of pianos, but much easier to manage. And thus, Piano 4te was born.

Since then, we've made it a mission to bring new music to life. We've commissioned several works written specifically for four pianos, and tonight you'll hear a few of those world premieres — including I Got Rhythm. Alongside these premieres, you'll also hear our take on some familiar classics, like Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2, as well as fresh arrangements of popular songs like Eleanor Rigby.

In 2024, we welcomed our newest member, Becky Billock, whose artistry and collaborative spirit have been a wonderful addition to the group. Together, we've been fortunate to perform in venues such as Fort Pitt Piano in Pittsburgh, Klavierhaus in New York City, and Weill Hall at Carnegie Hall.

We're so glad you could join us tonight. Playing music with friends is one of the greatest joys we know, and we hope that joy comes through in our performance. Thank you for supporting our music. We hope you enjoy the show!

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Pianist **BIOS**



Jimmy Liu is a pianist, educator, and piano technician based in Pittsburgh. He is a founding member of Piano 4te, a dynamic four-piano ensemble that has performed at renowned venues such as Klavierhaus and Carnegie Hall in New York City, as well as Fort Pitt Piano in Pittsburgh. A prizewinner of the MTNA PA State Competition, the Pittsburgh Civic Orchestra Concerto Competition, the Carnegie Mellon Concerto Competition, and the Silberman Chamber Music Competition, Jimmy is known for his expressive artistry and technical brilliance.

Beyond performing, he is the founder of Presto Piano, a thriving studio in Highland Park with 50 students, many of whom have earned top honors in ABRSM exams and competitions. His students have performed at Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Music Hall in Pittsburgh, and even atop Mt. Washington. As a piano technician, he has tuned in over 800 homes across Pittsburgh and serves as the piano technician for Chatham University and The Ellis School.



A native of New York, **Jack Kurutz** is a performer, educator, and advocate of contemporary music. He is a founding member of Duo Junction, Piano4te, and the Living Room Chamber Music Project. He is also a member of IonSound Project, with cellist Elisa Kohanski and clarinetist Kathleen Costello. Mr. Kurutz received his undergraduate degree from the University of Miami and earned his Master of Music from New England Conservatory. In 2005, he completed an Artist Diploma from Carnegie Mellon University, and coached with Ralph Zitterbart.

In September 2007, Mr. Kurutz won First Prize, Artist Division, in the Liszt-Garrison International Piano Competition. He was a finalist in the 2009 Simone Belsky Competition and the 2010 Steinway Society of Massachusetts Competition. In addition to maintaining a private piano studio, he holds a teaching position at Pittsburgh CAPA 6-12.

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Pianist **BIOS**



Originally from Moscow, Russia, **Uliana Kozhevnikova** is a pianist and teacher residing in Pittsburgh, PA. Since moving to Pittsburgh in 2009, she has played an active part in the city's musical life by performing with organizations including Pittsburgh Festival Opera, Resonance Works, Mendelssohn and Junior Mendelssohn Choirs, PYCO, and the Heritage Gospel Chorale of Pittsburgh. With over 20 years of teaching experience, Kozhevnikova works for the Carnegie Mellon Preparatory School and the Ellis School. She has been the pianist at Bethany Baptist Church since 2011.

Kozhevnikova graduated from Moscow State Conservatory and earned her Masters in Piano Performance from Carnegie Mellon University in 2011. Kozhevnikova is a founding member of Piano4te, an ensemble committed to performing and commissioning works for four pianos. From 2008-2013 she was an assistant stage director and pianist for Lyrique-En-Mer, Festival de Belle Ile, France. From 2013-2016 she founded and directed the Russian Education Center to teach children Russian language and culture. In her free time, Kozhevnikova enjoys working as an Emergency Medical Technician.



Hailed as a "persuasive and capable" musician (BBC Music Magazine) and an "unforgettable listening experience" (Fanfare Magazine), recording artist and recitalist **Becky Billock** has spent much of her career promoting the works of contemporary women. Ms. Billock has enjoyed an active performance schedule including international tours, commissions, and world premieres. She has appeared as soloist with regional orchestras in the US, Mexico, and South Africa.

In addition to performing, Billock serves on the piano faculty at Grove City College, and maintains a private studio in Pittsburgh, PA. She has partnered with Jack Kurutz in a 2-piano ensemble, Duo Junction, since 2013. The piano duo will be performing on May 18 at Duquesne University's PNC Recital Hall. Billock joined the Piano4te ensemble in 2024.

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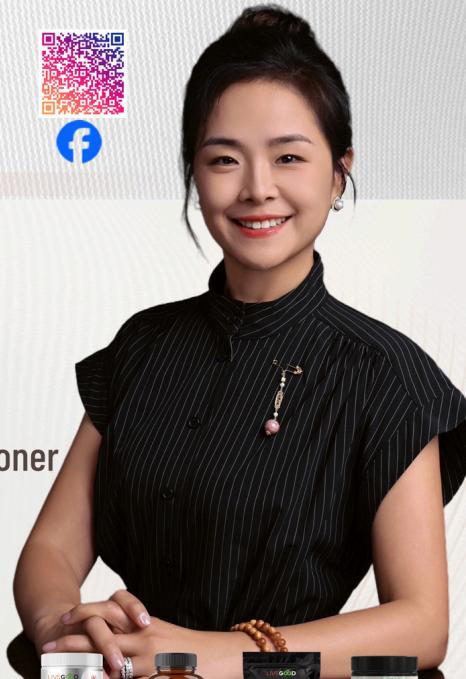


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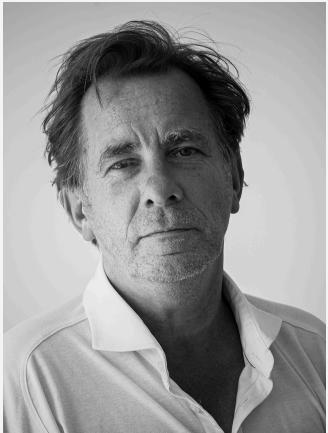


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Composer **BIOS**



Pianist and composer **Douwe Eisenga** creates sparkling music for sparkling minds, a hypnotising mix of rhythm, haunting melodies, and compelling lyricism. Honest, down to earth peoples-music. Often subdued and sober with a generous force: the underlying melodies carve themselves into the soul of the listener. For the last twenty years, Eisenga has gained world-wide attention. He works with British writer David Mitchell, American choreographer Claudia Schreier, Italian harpist Assia Cunego, and the Russian Moscow Contemporary Music Ensemble.

Closer to home, he writes music for harpist Lavinia Meijer, pianists Marcel Worms, Jeroen van Veen and Gerard Bouwhuis, Cello Octet Amsterdam, Slagwerk Den Haag, and many more. In 2017, Eisenga recorded the eight-minute long *For Mattia*. The touching composition has been high in the Classical Top 400 for seven years now, with the 400 compositions most popular on Radio 4 according to listeners.



Chad Twedt studied piano with Kathie Krocak, Joan Houtz, Dr. Ronald Williams, and Dr. James Winn. Twedt holds a Master's degree in Piano Performance (2001) from the University of Nevada, Reno, where he also earned undergraduate degrees (magna cum laude) in piano performance and mathematics. After placing third in the Southwest U.S. Division round of the MTNA collegiate competition, he performed Mendelssohn's Piano Concerto No. 1 with the Reno Pops Orchestra. He has given solo concerts at numerous venues in Nevada and California.

Twedt's Ostinato album won the 2005 Nevada Arts Council Fellowship Grant, and he has explored a diverse range of compositional realms, including solo piano music, teacher duets for Burgmuller's Op. 100, video game arrangements, and four-piano music, all available at orangenote.site. Twedt has adjudicated in many local, state and regional piano competitions, including twice at the U.S. Southwest division level of the MTNA competition. He teaches piano, and produced The Art of Rubato, a Udemy course on analyzing, notating and teaching rubato.



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Composer **BIOS**



Eric Barndollar is a composer and software engineer based in Pittsburgh, PA. He is a graduate of Carnegie Mellon University, where he studied composition with Nancy Galbraith, Leonardo Balada, and Reza Vali. He enjoys writing and producing music across a wide span of genres for both media and live concert performances. You can find more of his work on his music technology oriented YouTube channel (@BarndollarMusic) and at barndollarmusic.com.



Brayden Peppo, from Dayton, Ohio, grew up playing, arranging, and composing for piano, often during the time he was supposed to be practicing his repertoire. He earned a dual degree in Music and History from Grove City College, with a minor in Classical Christian Education. Brayden was taught piano by his mother and later studied under Dr. Becky Billock in college. He is married to Evalyn Peppo and now teaches at Reformation Classical Academy in Dayton.

This arrangement of Gershwin's song "I Got Rhythm" for four pianos is all about just four notes—the four notes that make up the classic first line of the old tune. Being also a "classical" composer, Gershwin did a number of piano arrangements of this song himself, and this new arrangement quotes and borrows from his own quite freely and gratefully. Listen for those classic four notes. They'll pop up in obvious places, subtle places, and odd places. Listen for other Gershwin tunes you may know. There's a couple hidden in the mess for those who'll recognize them. Watch the pianists closely and see how they interact and how they pass the lines back and forth. Enjoy the pure fun of Gershwin and his tuneful sense of humor.

PIANO 4 TE PROGRAM

Pre Concert Welcome

Shallow (from A Star is Born)

Arr. Brooklyn Duo

Ben Du, piano

Alex Du, cello

Variations on a Theme by Paganini

Niccolò Paganini (1782-1840)

Arr. The First Piano Quartet

I Got Rhythm (World Premiere)

George Gershwin (1898-1937)

Arr. Brayden Peppo (b. 2002)

Les Chants Estivaux (2007)

Douwe Eisenga (b. 1961)

Alice Productions- Dancers

Seal Aldrich, Evelyn Aldrich, Hana Yabuki, Madalyn Bauer

Eleanor Rigby (1966)

John Lennon and Paul McCartney
Arr. Eric Barndollar (b. 1986)

Arranger Notes: As I'm sure holds true for many instrumentalists, some of my favorite Beatles songs have always been those featuring instruments beyond the standard rock 'n' roll band. "**Eleanor Rigby**" included an 8-piece string ensemble (scored by producer George Martin), with iconic repeated staccato chords and detailed close microphone capture lending this song much of its intimacy and directness. It's also a song of many seeming contradictions. That intimacy for instance opposes the detached 3rd person narration of the lyrics and their reflective commentary on loneliness. In translating to a piano ensemble, I've tried to capture as many of the song's contrasts as I could. In the talented hands of Piano 4te, we're in for a performance that's indulgent yet reserved, monotonously repetitive yet nuanced and evolving, and surprisingly brief yet full of meaning.

Cosmosis (2020)

Chad Twedt (b.1976)

Totti (1993)

Graham Fitkin (b. 1963)

Mystery Piece (1975)

Arr. by Changhee Lee (b. 1992)

Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2

Franz Liszt (1811-1886)
Arr. Eric Barndollar (b. 1986)

Arranger Notes: Fortunately for me, Liszt's virtuosic techniques in this solo piano masterwork already sounded as if written for 8 hands—certainly more than the 2 possessed by most mortals. Despite his technical pioneering, Liszt always thought of the piano very orchestrally. It was a fun challenge in expanding this arrangement to imagine what enhanced textures Liszt would have employed with a larger 4-piano "orchestra". With any luck, this Piano 4te performance should more closely track Liszt's **Lassan- Friska** (Slow-Fast) 2-part form than Bugs Bunny's ill-fated 1946 attempt. (Fun fact: **Rhapsody Rabbit** was the first thing ever aired on Cartoon Network). The technical challenges in this arrangement remain wickedly demanding for each pianist individually, and it has the additional challenge of ensemble coordination to achieve the rhapsodic tempo pushes and pulls this piece necessitates. Listen for all the fireworks of the original, just bigger and bolder, with even more flourishes, effects, arpeggiations, and runs possible with the luxury of 40 fingers and 352 keys.

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Dancer **BIOS**



Seal Aldrich is a versatile dancer who frequently travels between Pittsburgh, New York, and Los Angeles to train, perform, and battle. Seal is the founder and director of ALICE Productions. sealaldrich.weebly.com



Evelyn Aldrich is a trainee with Maria Caruso's Bodiography Contemporary Ballet and Principal Ambassador of the Bodiography Student Company. She is currently a senior at Pittsburgh Scitech and following graduation will pursue a BFA in dance.



Hana Yabuki is a graduate student from Carnegie Mellon University. She has trained in multiple street styles including waacking, hip hop, and vogue (old way, hands performance).



Madalyn Bauer is a Junior at Burrell High School and has been maintaining a rigorous dance schedule her entire life. She is currently a principal dancer in Bodiography Center for Movement's Student Company and is eager to pursue her goal of becoming a professional dancer after high school.

We made the list!

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Acknowledgements

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Marylee Stenson - Tonight's MC

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Kevin Greiner – Photographer

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