

Pianissimo!

presents

“An International Feast of Music”



Pianissimo! was first formed in December 2014, and recently appeared in several venues for Make Music Chicago. As soloists and duo-pianists, the four women have appeared in major concert halls and on TV and radio around the world, recorded numerous CD's, and won numerous awards and honors, as well as accolades and rave reviews from major publications for their outstanding performances and programming. The Pianissimo! ensemble's mission as a four piano ensemble is to present entertaining and educational programs of Classical music on two and four pianos. Offering both traditional symphonic and piano repertoire, contemporary music for multiple pianos/pianists, as well as cross-over repertoire from Jazz and Broadway genres, the ensemble aims to appeal to audiences of all ages who enjoy good music accompanied by charming, witty and informative commentary on the music

Each a soloist and distinguished musician in their own right, Susan, Irina, Svetlana, and Elena, have combined forces to bring to you a program that is brilliantly virtuosic, powerful, sexy, elegant, artistic- an intimate portrait of their individual and collective stories of their successes, their failures, their hopes and dreams and their vision for the future of Classical Music in the 21st Century. www.pianissimoensemble.com



Svetlana Belsky- Critically acclaimed as "a passionate pianist and scholar", Dr. Svetlana Belsky is an in-demand recitalist and chamber pianist, noted for her remarkable rapport with audiences and stylistic versatility. She has appeared in the Ukraine, Russia, Poland, China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, and throughout the United States. Her performance credits include Carnegie Recital Hall, Kiev Philharmonic Hall, Dame Myra Hess Series, Music in the Loft, countless university concert series, live recitals on Chicago's WFMT and New York's WQXR, and guest appearances with the University of Chicago Symphony, Southern Illinois Symphony, Chicago Chamber Orchestra and the Tutti Orchestra. Her latest recording of the solo version of Stravinsky's Rite of Spring (on the Centaur label) has been heard on numerous radio stations around the world.

Elena Doubovitskaya- A native of Russia, Dr. Elena Doubovitskaya has established herself as a solo and collaborative musician after moving to the United States in 1998. In 2002, she performed her debut recital in Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall as part of the Artists International series, followed by a number of solo and chamber music recitals in the New York metropolitan area. Dr. Doubovitskaya's accomplishments include prizes and awards from Artists International Presentations, the Seattle International Piano Competition and the IBLA Grand Prize Competition (Italy). Dr. Doubovitskaya was awarded fellowships, and scholarships at the Tanglewood Music Festival, the Northwestern University Bienen School of Music, the Manhattan School of Music, the Hot Springs Music Festival and the Sewanee Music Festival.

Irina Feoktistova- Irina Feoktistova graduated from St. Petersburg Conservatoire, Russia. She has performed in the major halls of St. Petersburg, Russia, and toured Europe and the United States as a soloist, duo pianist, and accompanist. Since immigrating to the USA in 1998, Feoktistova has also worked as an Assistant Conductor and Russian Diction Coach at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, and on the faculties and staff of Northwestern and North Park Universities. She released her first solo CD, Poems and Fairy Tales, featuring works by Medtner and Scriabin, on MSR Classics in 2007, and is a prize winner of the IBLA Grand Prize Competition and the Kawai Recording Competition for Solo Piano.

Susan Merdinger- Performances by Steinway Artist, Susan Merdinger, have been hailed as "Tender and impassioned" by the Glasgow Herald and "Breathtaking" by the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. Ivy-league and conservatory trained in the USA and Europe, Merdinger enjoys an international career as a soloist, duo pianist and chamber musician and is a Visiting Artist of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Among her many honors, Merdinger is a Winner of the Bradshaw and Buono International Piano Competition, the Artists International Young Musicians Competition and the Dewar's Young Artist Award in Music. Most recently Merdinger was awarded Gold, Silver and Bronze Medals in the Global Music Awards for her French Fantasy, Carnival and Soiree CDs, which have been aired on radio stations in Europe, Canada and the USA.

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Egmont Overture (Arr. T. Herbert) 2 pianos, 8 hands.....Ludwig van Beethoven

“Summer” from the Four Seasons for Four Pianos....WORLD PREMIERE.....Antonio Vivaldi/Margarita Zeleniaia

Fantasy on the Man I Love 2 Pianos, 4 hands.....George Gershwin/Alexander Tsafman
Svetlana and Elena

España 2 pianos, 4 hands.....Emmanuel Chabrier
Susan and Irina

Capriccio Italienne (Arr. Amy Tan/ Svetlana Belsky) **for Four Pianos**.....Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky

INTERMISSION

Rip Current for Four Pianos (2015) WORLD PREMIERE.....James Stone

Fireball for Four Pianos Dedicated to Susan Merdinger and Pianissimo! (2015) WORLD PREMIERE
.....Ilya Levinson

Danse Macabre 2 pianos, 8 handsCamille Saint-Saëns

Fantasy for Four Pianos on Rimsky-Korsakov’s “Scheherazade” for Four Pianos (2015)..... WORLD PREMIERE
.....Margarita Zeleniaia

Variations on a Theme of Paganini 2 pianos, 4 hands.....Witold Lutoslawski
Susan and Irina

Broadway Medley for Classical Pianists for Four Pianos (2015).....WORLD PREMIERE.....Ilya Levinson

Our Featured Composers:

Margarita Zeleniaia: The music of Russian-born and trained composer Margarita Zeleniaia received its Lincoln Center premiere in 1997 and its Carnegie Hall premiere in 2001. Among her most recent world premieres were “Reflection and Antiphon” for Two Pianos (2015), the “Lamentation” for violin solo and strings (2012), “The Agony in the Garden”, a poem for viola and piano, “The Lion that Could not Roar” (2010), a music fairy-tale that was written in collaboration with Robert Sherman, the renowned radio personality from WQXR. In 2009 her duo “Homage II” (violin & cello) received its world premiere at the Chicago Cultural Center as part of the Chicago Chamber Musicians’ First Monday concert series and was broadcast live on WFMT Chicago. In 2008, Ms. Zeleniaia was awarded the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council and the Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance (NoMAA) grants for creation the “Byzantine Chants”, a sacred concerto for a Solo Cello. In 2007 she was a recipient of the “Encore” program grant from the American Composers Forum, resulting in her works were being performed at the Kaplan Penthouse Chamber Music Series at Lincoln Center by musicians of the New York Philharmonic. Subsequently, her string quartet, “August. Sunset Bloom,” was given its world premiere on the Philharmonic Ensembles at Merkin Concert Hall series. Versatile in genre, the music of Margarita Zeleniaia defies stylistic boundaries and ranges from operatic and chamber works, to musical theater and art songs.

Ilya Levinson: Russian-born Ilya Levinson graduated from the Moscow State Conservatory, where he studied composition with Alexander Pirumov and orchestration with Edison Denisov. After immigrating to the United States in 1988, Levinson completed a Ph.D. in Composition at the University of Chicago where his training included instruction from Ralph Shapey, Shulamit Ran, John Eaton, and Howard Sandroff. Levinson is Assistant Professor at the Music Department of Columbia College Chicago and Music Director and Co-Founder of the New Budapest Orpheum Society, an ensemble-in-residence at The University of Chicago. The group specializes in performing music of the Jewish Cabaret. Their two CD’s: *Dancing on the Edge of the Volcano* and *Jewish Cabaret in Exile* are recorded on the Cedille label. Ilya Levinson is composer-in-residence with American Music Festivals, an organization committed to promoting cultural exchange and American music. Levinson’s catalogue includes operas, musicals, symphonic and chamber music, film scores and original music for theatre productions. His music has been performed by the CSO Chamber Music Series Tononi Ensemble, Russian State Philharmonic Orchestra, Yaroslavl Orchestra, Civic Orchestra of Chicago, Sarajevo Philharmonic, CUBE Ensemble, New Music Ensembles of The University of Chicago and Northwestern University, and Duo Montagnard among others. Ilya Levinson was a winner of the 1994 Midwest Composers Competition and recipient of two Illinois Arts Council Fellowships in Music Composition in 1997 and 2003.

James Stone: James Stone is an avid composer and pianist who uses music to tell stories. At the age of five, he began piano lessons and dove into the world of music. That journey has placed him in jazz orchestras, Bassanova groups, symphony orchestras and recital halls. He studied English literature and composition at the University of Chicago with Augusta Read Thomas, Marta Ptaszynska and Anthony Cheung, receiving the Olga and Paul Menn Foundation award for his thesis octet *Astronomic*. He has in the past two years scored an independent feature film and various short films, most recently a thesis film for a student at NYU’s Tisch School. James is interested in the intersection of stories and music and presently works as a screenwriter in Los Angeles, chipping away at a miniseries for a production company. He is currently writing a string quartet, to be played and recorded in early November.

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