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# Piano Pianissimo!



## Contents:

- Biography
- Press
- Repertoire
- YouTube Video Links
- Photo Gallery

Complete artist information including video, audio and interviews are available at [www.pricerubin.com](http://www.pricerubin.com)

# Pianissimo! – Biography

Blazing Virtuosity and Breathtaking Symphonic Sound on MULTIPLE  
Pianos performed by FOUR Elegant and Entertaining Pianists!

Imagine a combination of Real Housewives of Chicago, combined with Marvin Hamlisch's A Chorus Line, combine with a PBS Special of the world's greatest symphonic piano music, performed on Multiple Pianos, by FOUR distinguished Virtuoso Female Pianists, interwoven with the True Stories of being a professional FEMALE PIANIST in the 21st Century!

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.

Featuring newly-commissioned and specially arranged works by some of this country's foremost composers Grammy-nominated composer Ilya Levinson, Elbio Barilari, Margarita Zelenai, and Jeremy Beck, plus the world's most famous music by Beethoven, Bernstein, Strauss, Rossini, Verdi, Liszt, Rachmaninoff, Piazzolla, Gershwin, Cole Porter and The Beatles, and you can begin to imagine the sensational concert-event you will witness and be a part of.

Pianissimo! was first formed in December 2014. The ensemble has appeared in several venues for Make Music Chicago, made their acclaimed Chicago Debut in September 2015 and were broadcast on CKWR- Canada's First Public Radio Station, and Price Rubin Radio One. Their Live Chicago Concert Debut CD won them two Silver Medals for Outstanding Achievement in the prestigious 2016 Global Music Awards. They recently performed Bach-Vivaldi's Concerto for Four Pianos and Orchestra and the Two Piano Concerti of Mozart and Poulenc with FullScore Chamber Orchestra in a concert entitled Piano Masters: From Bach to Beck. Their season includes performances in libraries, schools, and retirement homes with special programs geared towards youth and seniors. As

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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 education 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.

### ABOUT THE PIANISTS: (In Alphabetical Order)

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 critically-acclaimed 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. Belsky is presently Piano Coordinator for the Music Department of the University of Chicago.

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 several solo and chamber music recitals in the New York metropolitan area. Dr. Doubovitskaya's accomplishments include prizes and awards from Artists

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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. She is presently Chair of the Piano Department at the Merit School of Music and a member of Lakeshore Rush Ensemble.

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 a Russian Diction Coach at the Lyric Opera of Chicago and for the Chicago Symphony with French actor Georges Depardieu, and is on the accompanying faculties and staff of Northwestern and North Park Universities. Feoktistova has performed with Russian singers Vladimir Galuzine, Methodie Bujor and Natalia Timchenko, as well as noted Italian Bass, Andreas Silvestrelli, Russian Cellist Nazar Dzhuryn and trumpet player, Crispian Perkins-Steele. 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 Kawaii 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 has collaborated with distinguished musicians such as Ilya Kaler, John Bruce Yeh, Charles Pikler and John Sharp. She is a Visiting Artist of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and regular Guest Artist on Chicago’s WFMT. Among her many honors, Merdinger is a Twotime First Prize 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, Soirée and Four Centuries CDs, which have been aired on

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radio stations in Europe, Canada and the USA. Merdinger is a member of the Piano Faculty of the Summit Music Festival in New York.

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## Pianissimo! – Press

*"Charismatic Piano Virtuosi"*

*"Ample Technique and musical integrity"*

*"Muscular...dynamic,,,,invigorating"*

*"Each of the four charismatic piano virtuosi who make up the recently formed Chicago-based ensemble Pianissimo! is a highly successful performing artist in her own right. Their long and varied official Chicago debut at the Merit School of Music's Gottlieb Hall Saturday demonstrated ample technique as well as musical integrity."*

– Gerald Fisher, Music Critic

Chicago Classical Review

September 14, 2015

*"The piano queens of Chicago! This all-woman multi-piano ensemble is a force to be reckoned with. These 4-piano works synchronize in such an utterly magical way---creating a sound I guarantee you've never heard before. Their traditional classical background and repertoire blend seamlessly to create the energy of a powerfully energized contemporary group. "Fantasy on Rimsky" and it's dramatic waves flow flawlessly and is performed with such richness that I felt like I was listening to an entire orchestra. Their performance and musical integrity is outstanding!"*

– Gurujas Khalsa, 2017 Grammy Award Winner- Best New Age Album for White Sun II

Grammy Awards 2016 Testimonial

*"Working with the members of the Pianissimo! was just a pure enjoyment. The FOUR AMAZING PIANISTS each contributed tremendously to the world premiere of my "Fantasy for Four Pianos on Rimsky-Korsakov's "Scheherazade". It supposed and it did sound with the diverse and complex of the highly virtuosic Piano orchestra, with all possible nuances that included: powerful climaxes and lyrical episodes, the texture with rich counterpoints, and driving, fascinating rhythm.*

*Susan Merdinger and Svetlana Belsky, Elena Doubovitskaya and Irina Feoktistova, are not just the great professionals, they are passionate about what*

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*they are doing, and was extremely happy to collaborate with them. I hope and strongly believe, the debut concert was a very beginning of the successful carrier for them as a group, that despite all difficulties the “Pianissimo!” will rise high and deserve the attention it should have.”*

– Margarita Zeleniaia, Composer

*"Absolutely Fabuolous!"*

*"Outstanding program! Exceeded our expectations! Great that they changed pianos so we*

*could see all four hands. Very nice comments by performers."*

*"Excellent concert!!!! Please pass on! Thank you! Please invite them again."*

*" The four women were terrific and the music was varied and interesting."*

– Anonymous Audience Feedback

Northbrook Public Library

March 2016

*"Congratulations to Pianissimo! on a wonderful performance at Make Music Chicago. Wow, I'm impressed that you played some of your duo music by memory."*

– Susanne Baker, DePaul University

Make Music Chicago

June 2015

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# Pianissimo! – Repertoire

## **An International Feast of Music:**

### *Four Pianos:*

Jeremy Beck: Nightlife for Four Pianos (2008)

Ilya Levinson: Fireball, (2015) dedicated to Susan Merdinger and Pianissimo!- World Premiere!

Broadway Medley for Classical Pianists (2015) dedicated to Pianissimo! - World Premiere!

Margarita Zeleniaia: Vivaldi's "Summer" from the Four Seasons transcribed and arranged for Four Pianos (2015)- World Premiere!

Fantasy on Rimsky-Korsakov's Scheherazade (2015)- World Premiere!

James Stone: Rip Current for Four Pianos (2015) World Premiere!

Tchaikovsky: Capriccio Italienne, Arr. Amy Tan and Svetlana Belsky

### *Two Pianos, Eight Hands:*

Beethoven: "Egmont" Overture; Saint-Saens: Danse Macabre

### *Two Pianos, Four Hands:*

Gershwin: Fantasy on "The Man I love"; Chabrier: España; Lutoslawski: Paganini Variations

## **International Tales from Stage and Screen:**

American: Bernstein's West Side Story Dances

Music Theater- "Chicago" by John Kander- "Cell Block Tango" arr. Merdinger

Gershwin- The Man I Love

Russian: Rimsky-Korsakov's Scheherazade arr. Margarita Zeleniaia

Stravinsky's Three Movements of Petrouchka

French: Saint-Saëns' Carnival of the Animals

Bizet's Carmen

Berlioz's Symphonie Fantastique

Paul Dukas' The Sorcerer's Apprentice

German: Wagner's Liebestod from Tristan and Isolde

Hungarian: Liszt's Mephisto Waltz

Norway: Edvard Grieg's Peter Gynt Suite

Latin-American: Elbio Barilari's Canyengue

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Russian-American: Ilya Levinson's "Fireball" and "Shtetl Scenes"

### **The Four Seasons:**

"Seasons of Love" from the Musical/Movie "Rent"

Vivaldi: Four Seasons- L'Estate ( Summer), Arr. Zelenka

Tchaikovsky: Seasons

Capriccio Italienne, arr. Belsky

Stravinsky: The Rite of Spring

Piazzolla: Las Cuatro Estaciones Porteñas

### **Two Pianos- Eight Hands Specialities:**

Beethoven: Symphonies and Overtures

Bizet-Wilberg: Carmen Fantasy

Debussy: Petite Suite- for Two Pianos-Eight Hands

Dvorak: Slavonic Dances

Grieg: Peter Gynt Suite

Haydn: Surprise Symphony

Khachaturian: Sabre Dance

Lavignac: Marche Galop- (FOUR pianists, ONE piano!)

Levinson: Broadway Medley ( 2 piano-8 hand Version)

Moskowski: Spanish Dances

Smetana: Sonata for Two Pianos-Eight Hands

Wagner-Liszt: Liebestod from Tristan and Isolde

Rimsky-Korsakov-Zelenka: Fantasy on Scheherazade (2 piano-8 hand version)

Saint-Saens: Danse Macabre

Vivaldi-Zelenka: Summer from the Four Seasons (2 piano-8 hand version)

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## Pianissimo! – YouTube Links

Bach - Vivaldi Concerto for Four Pianos and Orchestra, BWV 1065

<https://youtu.be/Oo8YUJogiiI>

Lavignac- Galop Marche

<https://youtu.be/C7rjsAap5cY>

Poulenc Concerto for Two Pianos in D minor

<https://youtu.be/ha7hyNSwe30>

Live Concert Promo Video

<https://youtu.be/2SxR92LzoWQ>

11 Rimsky-Korsakov/Zelenaia: Fantasy on Scheherazade

<https://youtu.be/dHnAfRRio-M>

"Rip Current" 2015 by James Stone

[https://youtu.be/2NJQdzn\\_mpl](https://youtu.be/2NJQdzn_mpl)

Fireball Movie

<https://youtu.be/geck87kzvsg>

10 Saint Saëns Danse Macabre

[https://youtu.be/xAe3\\_CMGtY](https://youtu.be/xAe3_CMGtY)

Camille Saint-Saëns (arr. Ernest Guiraud) - Danse Macabre

<https://youtu.be/km4sVJr0YOW>

01 Beethoven Egmont Overture

<https://youtu.be/mqhmqyNURXc>

Richard Wagner Isolde's Liebestod from Tristan und Isolde

<https://youtu.be/O5axfaO7sYs>

Edward Grieg (arr. Adolf Ruthardt), from Peer Gynt

<https://youtu.be/3dCGxfuqsQU>

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## Pianissimo! – YouTube Links

Claude Debussy (arr.) Henry Busser- from The Petite Suite: En Bateau and Minuet

<https://youtu.be/RRq5XqxBZuo>

Chicago's Premier Piano Ensemble to perform Debut

<https://youtu.be/iCzi0IsA3O4>

Mozart Two Piano Concerto:

<https://youtu.be/cfbVzGY8YYk>

Youtube Channel:

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpb\\_j1\\_zeBKgpgf3r9FITiA](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpb_j1_zeBKgpgf3r9FITiA)

Artist Website: <http://www.pianissimoensemble.com/>

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