

PROGRAM

3:30 • West Building, West Garden Court

Anderson & Roe Piano Duo

Greg Anderson and Elizabeth Joy Roe, duo pianists

Danse Macabre

Daft Punk, Pharrell Williams,
and Nile Rodgers

"Lose Yourself to Dance," from
Random Access Memories (Chaconne
for Two Pianos)

Arr. Anderson & Roe

Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971)
Le Sacre du printemps
Part I: The Adoration of the Earth

Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714–1787)
Orphée et Eurydice
Ballet

Arr. Anderson & Roe

Michael Jackson (1958–2009)
"Billie Jean," from *Thriller*
Arr. Anderson & Roe

Camille Saint-Saëns (1835–1921)
Danse Macabre: Bacchanal for Two Pianos
Arr. Anderson & Roe

Intermission

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873–1943)
Suite No. 1 (Fantaisie-Tableaux), op. 5
"The Night... the Love"

Radiohead
"Paranoid Android," from *OK Computer*
Arr. Anderson & Roe

Astor Piazzolla (1921–1992)
Oblivion
Arr. Anderson & Roe

Maurice Ravel (1875–1937)
La Valse

The Musicians

Known for their adrenalized performances, original compositions, and notorious music videos, Greg Anderson and Elizabeth Joy Roe are revolutionizing the piano duo experience for the twenty-first century. Described as “the intense synchronization of genius” (*ThirdCoast Digest*) and “the most dynamic duo of this generation” (*San Francisco Classical Voice*), the Anderson & Roe Piano Duo aims to make classical music a relevant and powerful force around the world. Their recent albums on the Steinway Label (*When Words Fade*, *An Amadeus Affair*, and *The Art of Bach*) were released to critical acclaim and have spent dozens of weeks at the top of the *Billboard* classical charts, while their Emmy-nominated, self-produced music videos have been viewed by millions on YouTube.

Since forming this dynamic musical partnership in 2002 as students at The Juilliard School, the Anderson & Roe Piano Duo has appeared on NPR and MTV, toured extensively worldwide as recitalists and orchestral soloists, and presented at numerous international leader symposiums. A performance by the Anderson & Roe Piano Duo was handpicked to appear on the *Sounds of Juilliard* CD, celebrating the school’s centenary. Highlights of their 2015–2016 season include tours throughout North America, Asia, and Europe; performances of Brahms’s *Double Concerto* in their arrangement for two pianos and orchestra; recitals in Lincoln Center’s Avery Fisher Hall at the Mostly Mozart Festival; and the premiere of their ambitious — and literally explosive — music film, *The Rite of Spring*, at the Wine Country Film Festival.

Program Notes

“Lose Yourself to Dance”

“Lose Yourself to Dance” is a chart-topping single from Daft Punk’s internationally acclaimed 2013 album *Random Access Memories*. The French electronic music duo’s dance hit already bears resemblance to a work of classical minimalism (where small musical motives are repeated and ever-evolving), and we emphasized this stylistic trait considerably when creating our arrangement. The resulting kaleidoscopic rhythms are deliberately similar to the morphing patterns of light created by a spinning disco ball. As you listen, lose yourself to the hypnotic groove of this dance.

Le Sacre du printemps

Arguably one of the defining works of the twentieth century (and of all time), Igor Stravinsky’s *Le Sacre du printemps* (*Rite of Spring*) remains as startling and powerful as ever. From its legendary 1913 premiere in Paris — which, like many compositions of that era, sparked a riotous uproar — to more than a century later, this masterwork continues to electrify with its savage rhythms, harmonic daring, and mythical weightiness.

Narratively based on the rituals and sacrifices performed by a pagan tribe to win the benevolence of the gods of spring, the piece culminates with the offering of a young virgin who dances herself to death. At its core, *Le Sacre du printemps* is about primitive instincts and emotions, from the brooding omens at the work’s opening to the terrifying abandon of “Dancing out of the Earth” heard at the conclusion to Part I.

This work bears a greater symbolic import as an encapsulation of the tumultuous sociopolitical climate of the early twentieth century. Perhaps this is why the work resonates with such fierce impact in our own complex age. Furthermore, the music bespeaks a certain rite of passage that is universal in the human experience: the loss of innocence, the poignancy of discovery, the claiming (or reclaiming) of personal liberation. *The Rite of Spring* transformed the face of culture, and Stravinsky's version for piano / four hands brilliantly brings the music's clashing dissonances, percussive edge, and overwhelming force to the fore.

Orphée et Eurydice

During the eighteenth century, the formation of the classical style (often associated with the music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven) arose in alignment with that era's cultural preoccupation with classical antiquity, a period of history associated with Ancient Greece and Rome. In 1756, the classical archeologist Johann Winckelmann observed, "The general eminent characteristic of Greek masterpieces is ultimately a noble simplicity and a calm greatness." Twenty years later, Gluck expressed a similar aim for his musical compositions, writing, "I thought that my chief endeavor should be to search for a grand simplicity."

"Noble simplicity" and "calm greatness" are poignantly evident in Gluck's *Orphée et Eurydice*, an opera based on the famous Greek legend of Orpheus. The opera tells the poetically tragic story of Orpheus's attempt to retrieve his wife Eurydice from the underworld after she dies on their wedding day. There is one condition, however: Orpheus must not look back at Eurydice while guiding her from the underworld, or else he will lose her for eternity. As they are making their escape from the underworld, Orpheus cannot resist looking back at his beloved out of anxiety and yearning, and Eurydice slips away to die a second time.

In Gluck's 1774 opera, this ballet (otherwise known as the *Dance of the Blessed Spirits*) was originally scored for the ethereal combination of flute solo and string accompaniment; it appears at the opening of Act II, which takes place in the Elysian Fields, the hauntingly beautiful resting place of souls in Greek mythology.

"Billie Jean"

Michael Jackson's iconic dance hit hints at the sinister sides of human nature, recounting a tale of obsession and suspense. Immortalized by an enigmatic, film noir-inspired music video and an out-of-this-world dance move (the moonwalk), we've reimagined the song in an avant-garde, "classical" vein while emphasizing its nocturnal edginess and Michael Jackson's legendary use of rhythm. As you listen to our updated version of this classic song, escape your comfort zone and lose yourself to the thrill of intrigue and innovation.

Danse Macabre: Bacchanal for Two Pianos

An emperor, a beggar, a monk, a mother, a musician.... No matter one's station in life, the dance of death unites us all. Can we, the living, dance with the same unbridled revelry as these white skeletons who pass through the gloom? How fragile life is, how vain its earthly glories....

Danse Macabre, the third of Saint-Saëns's four symphonic poems, premiered in 1874. The broad waltz theme in the *Danse Macabre* may be recognized as a variation on the *Dies Irae*, the ancient liturgical chant for the dead. While the *Danse Macabre* is Saint-Saëns's most frequently performed orchestral work, it was not originally conceived in orchestral terms. Saint-Saëns adapted it from one of his songs for voice and piano. The song was originally set to a verse by French poet Henri Cazalis (translated in English below):

Zig, zig, zig, Death in a cadence,
Striking with his heel a tomb,
Death at midnight plays a dance-tune,
Zig, zig, zig, on his violin.
The winter wind blows and the night is dark;
Moans are heard in the linden trees.
Through the gloom, white skeletons pass,
Running and leaping in their shrouds.
Zig, zig, zig, each one is frisking,
The bones of the dancers are heard to crack —
But hist! of a sudden they quit the round,
They push forward, they fly; the cock has crowed.

With vividness and verve, Saint-Saëns depicts the fantastic tale of Death's frenzied dance. The work begins with the tolling of midnight bells, after which Death, portrayed as a fiddler, tunes up and commences his waltz. A second theme evokes the roused skeletal celebrants who become increasingly energetic until, with the cock's crow, they disperse and vanish.

The musical material in Saint-Saëns's *Danse Macabre* has proven to be ideal for multiple piano treatment, and to date, we have created no fewer than six different compositions based on the original score. In all iterations, we exploit the capabilities of the piano, illustrating the rattling of bones with percussive rhythmic drive and creating atmospheric effects through use of pedal and swirling harmonic figurations.

Additionally, the four "bacchanal" arrangements feature an extended hootenanny in which the pianists playfully take turns demonstrating their pianistic prowess.

Fantaisie-Tableaux

Sergei Rachmaninoff, one of history's most beloved composers and towering pianists, envisioned this work as "a series of musical pictures," hence its original title of *Fantaisie-Tableaux*. Rachmaninoff dedicated it to one of his predecessors, the great Russian composer Tchaikovsky; one can hear the influence of the latter composer upon this suite, with its richly colored musical textures and sweeping, lush expressivity. Consisting of four movements inspired by poetry, each one presents a fascinating, unabashedly romantic scene juxtaposing human emotion with sounds from nature and life: rippling water, bird calls, tear droplets, and bells.

The first movement is a bacarole (boat song) depicting the melancholy strains of the gondolier's serenade as the undulations of the waves symbolize the surges of love. The second movement, "The Night... the Love," played here, features the passions of a nocturnal tryst, accompanied by the warbling of the nightingale. The third, "Tears," unfurls with canonic cascades of descending notes, emblematic of falling tears. The final movement, "Easter," is at once terrifying and triumphant, with the epic tolling of Russian Orthodox church bells resounding seemingly throughout the entire earth.

Here are excerpts from the poem upon which Rachmaninoff's intoxicating music is based:

II. The Night... the Love (from "Parisina," by Lord Byron)

It is the hour when from the boughs
The nightingale's high note is heard;
It is the hour when lovers' vows
Seem sweet in every whisper'd word;
And gentle winds, and waters near,
Make music to the lonely ear.
She listens — but not for the nightingale —
Though her ear expects as soft a tale.
There glides a step through the foliage thick,
And her cheek grows pale — and her heart beats quick.
There whispers a voice through the rustling leaves,
And her blush returns, and her bosom heaves:
A moment more — and they shall meet —
'Tis past — her lover's at her feet.
And heedless as the dead are they
Of aught around, above, beneath;
As if all else had passed away,
They only for each other breathe;
Their very sighs are full of joy
So deep, that did it not decay,
That happy madness would destroy
The hearts which feel its fiery sway.

"Paranoid Android"

Lose yourself in the delirious depths of a nightmare, seething with alienation, surreal imagery, and madness. Merge with the confusion and the chaos, with the wandering of dreams. In the end, the singer pleads for the heavens to "rain down" and cleanse the ugliness of the world. The darkest hour is just before dawn....

Radiohead remains one of the most visionary, exciting, iconic bands of our time. Ever since they appeared on the rock scene in the early nineties, they have continually redefined their sound and aesthetic to brilliant effect. With their album *OK Computer* (1997) — which *Rolling Stone* called a "stunning art-rock tour de force" — Radiohead fully established themselves as a creative force to be reckoned with. The crowning track of the album may well be

"Paranoid Android," a three-part suite clocking in at over six minutes. With a title that references a character from the *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, the song was originally intended to be humorous. Yet beyond this humorous intention seethes music suggesting something far more complex; an unsettling mix of alienation, violence, and madness prevails throughout, thanks to an inexorable rhythmic pulse, distorted guitar solos, the manic shifting of musical textures, and frontman Thom Yorke's operatic wailing. The lyrics themselves are simultaneously absurd and bleak:

Please could you stop the noise, I'm trying to get some rest
From all the unborn chicken voices in my head
What's that. . . ? (I may be paranoid, but not an android)
What's that. . . ? (I may be paranoid, but not an android)

When I am king, you will be first against the wall
With your opinion which is of no consequence at all
What's that. . . ? (I may be paranoid, but no android)
What's that. . . ? (I may be paranoid, but no android)

Ambition makes you look pretty ugly
Kicking and squealing gucci little piggy
You don't remember
You don't remember
Why don't you remember my name?
Off with his head, man
Off with his head, man
Why don't you remember my name?
I guess he does. . .

Rain down, rain down
Come on rain down on me
From a great height
From a great height . . . height . . .
Rain down, rain down
Come on rain down on me
From a great height
From a great height . . . height . . .
Rain down, rain down
Come on rain down on me

That's it, sir
You're leaving
The crackle of pigskin
The dust and the screaming
The yuppies networking
The panic, the vomit
The panic, the vomit
God loves his children,
God loves his children, yeah!

It is ironic that the song includes the line "Ambition makes you look pretty ugly," when one of Radiohead's key traits is their ambition — an ambition to keep evolving as

In creating our cover of "Paranoid Android," we drew inspiration from the song's epic scope, the lyrics' strikingly evocative images, and Thom Yorke's emotive singing. Our treatment of the musical material, however, is far from literal; the arrangement takes on a life of its own as it strays from the original's structure and elaborates frenetically on melodic motives. As a tribute to Radiohead's iconoclastic spirit, we have put our own Anderson & Roe stamp on the song.

Oblivion

What do tango dancing and piano duo performance have in common?

Racing heartbeats,
intense eye contact,
physical friction,
a charged chemistry,
and an element of danger...

In transcribing Piazzolla's irresistible melody for four hands at one piano, we aim to emulate the physical choreography of tango dancers, the sonic textures of a tango band, and, most important, the emotional spirit of the tango. With the smoky, sultry "Oblivion," we incorporate extended piano techniques as a metaphor for the tango's forays into forbidden territory. Four-hand playing already hints at an intrinsic eroticism, but in this tango, we dare to raise the heat and intensity to another level: we boldly invade one another's personal space, while also exploring regions of the piano that typically remain unseen. The effect is at once sensual, visceral, and highly dramatic.

La Valse

Still as shattering and relevant today as when it was composed nearly a century ago, *La Valse* is a work of fascinating duality. In Ravel's vision, the Viennese waltz is both glorified and deconstructed. Perhaps best known in its orchestral version, Ravel transcribed it for two pianos and solo piano. In fact, the first performance of *La Valse* was given as a two-piano work (with Ravel as one of the performers) at the home of Misia Sert, the dedicatee of the composition and legendary patron of the arts. This premiere of sorts occurred in 1920, and the audience included such seminal figures as Ballets Russes impresario Serge Diaghilev, composers Igor Stravinsky and Francis Poulenc, and choreographer Léonide Massine. The work was originally conceived as a ballet to be performed by the Ballets Russes, but Diaghilev's criticism of the score led to an estrangement between him and Ravel. Today the work is rarely performed as a ballet, but the music is inseparably linked to dance not only in its rhythms but also in its vivid imagery and sweep.

Composed in 1919–1920, the work was conceptualized over an extended period of time. A letter Ravel wrote in 1906 reveals his desire to pay compositional tribute to Johann Strauss Jr.: "You know of my deep sympathy for these wonderful rhythms, and that I value the *joie de vivre* expressed by the dance." This nascent idea materialized by 1914 into a work entitled *Wien: Poème symphonique*, which Ravel described as "a sort of apotheosis of the Viennese waltz, mingled with, in my mind, the impression of a fantastic, fatal whirling."

The work is ostensibly a glittering homage to the Viennese waltz and old-world elegance. The music is steeped in nostalgia and is redolent of a bygone society's seductive refinement, as illustrated by the charming melodic strains and suave rhythmic fluidity. A misty, surreal atmosphere prevails via the usage of whirling figurations, harmonic ambiguity, and various pianistic and pedaling effects. Colorful outbursts of virtuosity punctuate this representation of the imagined past.

Yet beneath the surface a menacing irony simmers, as presaged by the murky opening with its rumbling, oscillating heartbeat. Written in the immediate aftermath of World War I, *La Valse* depicts the demise of a civilization. Ravel was horrified by the unprecedented carnage and mayhem of the war, and he channeled his bitterness into this composition. As the piece unfolds, the waltz becomes increasingly distorted and dissonant; Ravel seems to mordantly comment on the poisonous effects of sociopolitical corruption as well as the eventual chaos of warfare. The music escalates with hallucinatory frenzy to a cataclysmic climax (where one can virtually hear bombs going off). Motivic fragments collide until the music spins itself to a conclusion of darkly exultant finality.

La Valse continues to resonate in our complex times. The atrocities surrounding Ravel incited him to create music of farsighted modernity and urgent eloquence.

Program notes by Greg Anderson and Elizabeth Joy Roe