

JORDAN COLLEGE OF THE ARTS
SIGNATURE | SERIES

ANDERSON & ROE PIANO DUO

Wednesday, October 8, 2025

7:30 PM

Eidson-Duckwall Recital Hall

PROGRAM

Six variations on “Ich denke dein” (“I think of you”), WoO 74

Ludwig Van Beethoven

Chorale Prelude after Beethoven’s “Vom Tode” (“On Death”), Op. 48, No. 3

Anderson & Roe

“Pyramid Song” from Amnesiac

“Paranoid Android” from Ok Computer

Radiohead

arr. Anderson & Roe

“Lerchengesang” (“The lark's song”), Op. 70, No. 2

Johannes Brahms

arr. Anderson & Roe

Carmen Fantasy for Two Pianos

Georges Bizet

arr. Anderson & Roe

– *Intermission* –

“Lever du jour” (“Daybreak”) from Daphnis et Chloé

Maurice Ravel

arr. Gryaznov

Eight Variations on “Hallelujah”

Leonard Cohen

arr. Anderson & Roe

“Glósóli” (“Glowing Sun”) from Takk...

Sigur Ro

arr. Anderson & Roe

“Somewhere” and “America” from West Side Story

Leonard Bernstein

arr. Anderson & Roe

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

The **Anderson & Roe Piano Duo** has been called “the most dynamic duo of this generation” (*San Francisco Classical Voice*), “rock stars of the classical music world” (*Miami Herald*), and “the very model of complete 21st-century musicians” (*The Washington Post*). These superlatives are grounded in what can only be described as *ineffable connectivity*: the technically masterful **Greg Anderson** and **Elizabeth Joy Roe** exude an organic and seamless completeness when they perform together, working in sync to unearth the essence of each piece they play from their genre-transcending repertoire, and testing the boundaries of their instruments. That special alchemy immediately captivates their audiences: “Even the most jaded of concertgoers sat forward in their seats and dropped their jaws in amazement as these two just re-wrote the book of the tedious concert recital” (*Sarasota Herald-Tribune*).

Over twenty years ago, the two Juilliard students first sat down together at a pair of pianos and were astonished by how perfectly their musical sensibilities gelled—as did their ideas about how classical music could, and should, be a more relevant and powerful force in the world. Their two-decade-long partnership can be described as nothing short of pioneering. Anderson & Roe completely redefined the model of the piano duo and have toured the world extensively. Their original compositions—from re-imaginings of the classical canon to arrangements of pop music through a classical lens—reflect their belief that all music has something to say to all people. Their five critically acclaimed albums have spent dozens of weeks atop the Billboard classical charts. Their music videos are the stuff of legends, racking up millions of views and securing them an Emmy® nomination. And they’re regular media personalities, from appearances on MTV, NPR, PBS, and the BBC, to hosting the webcasts of the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition.

PROGRAM NOTES

Six Variations on “Ich denke dein” (“I think of you”), WoO 74

Beethoven chose a popular, unassuming theme by Christian Gottlob Neefe (his early mentor) for this set of six variations. “I think of you,” the song’s original lyrics say, “when sunlight gleams” and “when moonlight arches high.” Composed for four hands at one piano and intended for intimate home enjoyment, there is no grand drama here—just pure, unfettered feelings of friendship.

Beethoven adheres to the traditional structure of Classical variation sets: the theme lays out clear melodic and harmonic building blocks, and each variation reinterprets the material from new perspectives, adding ornamentation and altering chords for virtuosic, lyrical, or even humorous effect.

With the repeated transformation of a simple theme, we set in motion an evening defined by the art of re-creation and vocal music transfigured, where every melody, old or new, finds itself reborn.

Chorale Prelude after Beethoven’s “Vom Tode” (“On Death”), Op. 48, No. 3

Beethoven’s little-known song “Vom Tode” (“On Death”), from his Six Lieder, Op. 48 (1802), offers a stark, spiritual reflection on mortality. Composed in the same year as his Heiligenstadt Testament—Beethoven’s anguished private confession of impending deafness—“Vom Tode” confronts death not as an end, but as a passage to faith and transcendence.

In this two-piano chorale prelude, we have slowed the theme to contemplative breadth, transforming Beethoven’s melody into a slow-moving backbone over which the pianos weave new textures and countermelodies, including a quotation from the transcendent Hammerklavier Sonata, Op. 106. For nearly four minutes, the harmonies repeatedly evade resolution until the new melody ascends and the chorale seems to dissolve away, surrendering to the unknown.

“Pyramid Song” from *Amnesiac*

Radiohead’s “Pyramid Song,” from *Amnesiac* (2001), has long fascinated listeners with its elusive rhythmic structure—rooted in an alternation of duple and triple meters—and evocations of the afterlife: a flowing river of memory, carrying souls beyond time toward a mythic shore where fear and doubt dissolve.

In our four-hand reimagining for two pianists, those currents are refracted through four independent yet interlocking voices. Drawing inspiration from David Lang, simple gestures accumulate into shifting hues, with enigmatic tones suspended in the air. Each voice steadily repeats pitches four times—an homage to a pyramid’s four faces—yet at tempos proportional to its neighbors, while loosely mirroring the contours of the song’s melody and harmony.

We omit the vocal line altogether—eschewing any attempt to mimic frontman Thom Yorke’s indelible singing—and instead envision the souls of the underworld as wanderers no longer bound to earthly speech. The work becomes a voiceless meditation on the cycles of love and eternity.

“Paranoid Android” from *OK Computer*

Ever since Radiohead 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 this 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 the result is more of a nightmare—an unsettling mix of alienation, violence, and madness, thanks to an inexorable rhythmic pulse, distorted guitar solos, the manic shifting of musical textures, and Yorke’s operatic wailing. A commentary on the ills of modern society, the bleak lyrics are simultaneously absurd and forthright; here are excerpts:

*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)*

[...]

*When I am king, you will be first against the wall
With your opinion which is of no consequence at all*

[...]

*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....*

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 to keep evolving as artists and to continue exposing existential truths, however unsettling.

Our treatment of the musical material 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. Yet we drew inspiration from the song’s epic scope, the lyrics’ striking imagery, and Radiohead’s iconoclastic spirit in our hopes to reanimate the original’s mind-bending reality on two pianos.

“Lerchengesang” (“The lark's song”), Op. 70, No. 2

*Gently I close my eyes,
And memories pass by
In soft twilights,
Pervaded by the breath of spring.*

Originally composed in 1877 as a lied for voice and piano, “Lerchengesang” (“The Lark’s Song”) is one of Johannes Brahms’s most lyrical and evocative settings. The poem, written by Karl August Candidus, paints a picture of a lover

listening to the song of a skylark while separated from his beloved. The lark, traditionally associated with the morning, appears here during twilight in the distance, evoking memory rather than awakening. With Brahms's hallmark blend of restraint and passion, the song's soaring melody mirrors the lark's flight and the yearning of the human heart.

Our arrangement for two pianos retains the song's poignant ache of distant love. There are no bird calls here, but rather an expansion of harmonic breadth and an embellishment of feeling, the lark a musical spirit guiding us skyward.

Carmen Fantasy for Two Pianos

"Love is a rebellious bird that no one can tame."

— *Carmen*

A concert fantasy in the grand romantic tradition, our *Carmen Fantasy for Two Pianos* weaves together several distinct scenes from Bizet's perennially popular *Carmen*. Serving as an introduction, the work begins with the "Danse Bohémienne" from Act IV, a ballet that is almost always cut from modern performances of the opera. (Incidentally, Bizet used the same material as incidental music to *L'Arlésienne*.) The introduction is followed by the "Aragonaise" (originally the entr'acte to Act IV, a scene just before the opera's climactic bullfight), the famous "Habanera" from Act I in which Carmen sings "L'amour est un oiseau rebelle" ("Love is a rebellious bird"), and the "Card Aria" from Act III (in which Carmen reads in the cards that both she and Don José are doomed to die). Following the terrifying omen of death, the music cuts to the "Flower Song" from Act II, a scene that epitomizes that love Don José and Carmen once shared for one another. Ultimately, the juxtaposition serves to highlight the tragedy of the opera without recreating the opera's climactic recitative (in which Don José murders his former lover, Carmen). The fantasy concludes with a party scene from the beginning of Act II, in which Carmen and her friends entertain army officers with a song about gypsy girls (much like themselves). The music accelerates in a whirlwind of fevered rhythm, Basque tambourins, and ecstatic dance.

With this fantasy, we aim to amplify the darkness, drama and sensuality at the heart of *Carmen*, channeling the spirit of the opera's tempestuous heroine through a generous dose of pianistic flair. Our ultimate desire is to evoke the fierce independence of Carmen herself, who defies convention and embraces her fate on her own terms.

"Lever du jour" ("Daybreak") from *Daphnis et Chloé*

Commissioned by Sergei Diaghilev for the Ballets Russes, *Daphnis et Chloé* was Ravel's most ambitious orchestral score, a "choreographic symphony" that sounds as if it were born from the earth itself. The Daybreak scene "Lever du jour" is arguably the emotional summit: a sound-painting of the sun rising over a Grecian landscape, where light spills slowly across the sleeping world until all is radiant with love and life. The music is both erotic and elemental, climaxing in a kind of ecstatic stillness before dissolving back into awe.

Vyacheslav Gryaznov's transcription reimagines the score as if Ravel had composed the work for two pianos, lifting shimmering textures from Ravel's many piano works devoted to light reflecting on water—"Jeux d'eau" ("Water Games") "Une barque sur l'océan" ("A Boat on the Ocean"), and "Ondine." The piano, often thought of as a percussive instrument, here aspires to fluidity and breath.

Eight Variations on "Hallelujah" by Leonard Cohen

A cult classic originally released in 1984, Leonard Cohen's most well-known song—covered by numerous artists, including legends like Bob Dylan, Bono, and Jeff Buckley (whose sublime version may be our personal favorite)—is a meditation on the elusive nature of love and the search for atonement. The lyrics contain multitudes in their complexity, and the meaning of "hallelujah" itself seems to shift throughout the song, alternating between despair, yearning, ecstasy, and praise; it emerges as a call that is not solely religious, but profoundly human. As Cohen himself said:

"This world is full of conflicts and full of things that cannot be reconciled, but there are moments when we can transcend the dualistic system and reconcile and embrace the whole mess, and that's what I mean by 'Hallelujah.' That regardless of what the impossibility of the situation is, there is a moment when you open your mouth and you throw open your arms and you embrace the thing and you just say, 'Hallelujah! Blessed is the name.' ... The only moment that you can live here comfortably in these irreconcilable conflicts is in this moment when you embrace it all and you say, 'Look, I don't understand a thing at all—Hallelujah!' That's the only moment that we live here fully as human beings."

In creating our set of variations, we were influenced by the late works of Beethoven and Schubert, who both were masters at unearthing an almost otherworldly transcendence amid human struggles. As a nod to the elliptical nature of

the song, we created a set of variations that are structured in an unconventional manner; there are eight variations with no initial, straightforward statement of the theme (a common feature of most variation sets). The eight variations are divided into four pairs: Variation 1 is chorale-like, followed by a variation in which the theme is presented as a Schubert lied. Variations 3 and 4 are bustling, at times straying from the harmonic progressions of the original. The third set of variations are characterized by serpentine configurations, calling to mind Schubert's idiomatic four-hand piano writing. The concluding two variations are the most expansive and Beethovenian, in structure and mood; it meanders, lost, then finally builds toward a rapturous state of grace.

"Glósóli" ("Glowing Sun") from *Takk...*

With "Glósóli" ("Glowing Sun"), from their 2005 album *Takk...*, Icelandic post-rock band Sigur Rós pays tribute to the otherworldly transcendence of their homeland's summer sun. The song itself is deceptively simple: it rests on a seven-note diatonic canvas built around a simple I-V alternation, with Jónsi's falsetto hovering around a single pitch. Though it never seemed destined for two pianos, its vision of sunlight lingered in our minds for nearly twenty years until we finally arrived at a viable compositional plan.

Less a transcription than an outright recomposition, this two-piano work uses *Glósóli's* harmonic skeleton as a guide, transforming its diatonic simplicity into a study of light. From the first suspended pitches, the pianos favor the sharp gleam of seconds and sevenths, scattering sunlight like glass. The kaleidoscopic textures and tightly wound patterns are inspired by the minimalist two-piano writing of John Adams, particularly his *Grand Pianola Music*, refracted here into fresh patterns of color and motion.

As the momentum builds, the prisms of light become full-blown rainbows—towering arches of seven-note arpeggios that climb and descend the pianos. It's as if the music is hurtling along Rainbow Road in *Super Mario Kart*, flung through the cosmos in loops of iridescent light. The exhilaration gives way to a searing climax: relentless alternations and dissonances in both pianos' upper registers, the sun at its most blinding.

Beneath the sparkle and sweep lies a deeper current: a sense of journeying beyond the known, or the promise of eternity. Our hope is that you leave the hall bathed in that brilliance—awakened, as the lyrics implore, "Now that you're awake, everything seems different."

"Somewhere" & "America" from *West Side Story*

Leonard Bernstein's beloved 1957 musical *West Side Story* is a 20th-century retelling of *Romeo and Juliet*, set among rival street gangs, the Jets and the Sharks, in New York City's Upper West Side. With lyrics by the young Stephen Sondheim, the musical centers on the star-crossed romance between Tony and Maria.

At the heart of the musical is the longing for belonging, a better future, and a world beyond hate and fear. Two of the most iconic moments from the musical—"Somewhere" and "America"—frame that longing. "Somewhere" is the emotional soul of the show: a whispered wish that there *is* a place where love triumphs and divisions dissolve. To evoke the tenderness of Tony and Maria's love—and to honor the song's classical roots—we interweave a quotation from the slow movement of Beethoven's "*Emperor*" Concerto, one of the most exalted passages in the piano repertoire. By contrast, the Latin-infused "America" is full of fire and friction. Originally staged as a spirited dance-off, the number pits optimism against cynicism in a brash, irreverent celebration of life in America. Its biting wit and explosive rhythms lay bare the conflicting realities of the immigrant experience: aspiration and alienation, disenchantment and joy. Our reimagining embraces this vibrant, competitive spirit, involving our four hands in a dazzling whirl of showmanship and surprises. We dive headfirst into Bernstein's dazzling syncopations, letting the music swing, snap, and argue with itself—as if dancing across fault lines.

Together, these two selections reflect the emotional arc of *West Side Story* and of this concert as a whole: from despair to defiance, from darkness toward light. Tony and Maria dream of a world that doesn't yet exist. Through Bernstein's music, we're invited to dream it with them.

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We acknowledge that we gather here at Butler University on the traditional land of indigenous peoples including the Potawatomi, Miami, Delaware, and Shawnee. We honor with gratitude the land itself and the indigenous peoples past and present who have stewarded it throughout the generations. This calls us to commit to continuing to learn how to be better stewards of the land we inhabit, while also acknowledging that some were brought to this land not by choice.



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