



The Soundtrack of Sacrifice: A Two-Hander That Hits Home for Performers

Description

Salt Lake City, UT — What looks like a tidy concert—two performers, two gleaming grands—unfurls into a full-tilt memory play at Pioneer Theatre Company. *2 Pianos 4 Hands* charts the bruised-knuckle ascent from childhood scales to conservatory juries, and the moment when prodigies learn the difference between being *good* and being *great*. This Utah premiere at PTC's Meldrum Theatre is brisk, hilarious, and unexpectedly moving—a backstage tour of ambition where every joke lands like a perfectly timed downbeat.

Hilarious and quietly devastating, it nails the grind—the hours, the auditions, the bargains we make with ourselves. In the end, we never know if it will be worth it—if sacrificing a social life, money, or other careers we might have had will pay off. That uncertainty, amid relentless dedication, is what makes this show so brilliant. And if artists so often sacrifice so much for so little in return, that is an indictment of our culture's values—not of artists.

image

Matthew McGloin and Richard Todd Adams | Credit: BW Productions

Performances that play like chamber music

Richard Todd Adams (Ted) and **Matthew McGloin (Richard)** are the rare double threat the piece demands: precise pianists and nimble character actors. Their duet passages carry the adrenaline of a fencing match—parry, riposte, pedal—while solos bloom with comic specificity. Adams carries the weather of expectation in his shoulders; McGloin toggles from wide-eyed student to acid-tongued adjudicator with a tilt of the head and a shift of touch. The comedy lands because the music does.

I even had flashbacks to my own college piano proficiency test—the tense room, the metronome of my heart beating against the silence of my instructor, their pencil scratching endless notes on a notepad—proof that *2 Pianos 4 Hands* taps into a universal memory for anyone who's ever faced a high-stakes performance.

Adams's résumé helps explain the polish: according to PTC's program, he is among the few actors to have performed both Phantom and Raoul in *The Phantom of the Opera*, and Jean Valjean and Javert in *Les Misérables*. With Broadway credits in *The Woman in White*, *The Pirate Queen*, and the 2016 *Cats* revival. He's a Jeff Award winner with symphony gigs from Cleveland to Vancouver. McGloin, returning to PTC after *Murder on the Orient Express* and *Prayer for the French Republic*, folds TV (*Law & Order*) and a deep Off-Broadway/regional bench into a performance that reads truthful first, virtuosic second.

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Matthew McGloin and Richard Todd Adams | Credit: BW Productions

Tom Frey keeps the tempo honest

Veteran 2P4H caretaker **Tom Frey** who's performed the show 600+ times and directed more than twenty productions nationwide shapes the evening like a well-paced program. Scenes resolve on laughs the way phrases resolve on tonic; recurring motifs (a brittle correction, a botched page-turn) return with deeper color. The built-in theatrical game—two actors playing a chorus of parents, teachers, adjudicators—could tip into sketch. Under Frey, it feels like theme and variations: funny, specific, purposeful.

This production would falter if the music were merely "good enough." Here, it's far better: the score itself becomes part of the storytelling, not decorative background. Selections range from Bach's Concerto in D minor (BWV 1052) and Mozart's Sonata No. 16 in C major ("Facile") and Sonata in D major for Piano Four Hands (K. 381), to Beethoven's F-major Sonatina and the "Pathétique," Grieg's *In the Hall of the Mountain King*, Chopin's "Raindrop" Prelude and Ballade No. 2, and Liszt's *Mephisto Waltz*, with playful pop grace notes—Heart and Soul, "My Funny Valentine," and "Piano Man." Each excerpt arrives like evidence in a case file titled *How We Became Who We Are*. Most importantly, the playing itself carries the narrative: tones tighten under parental pressure and loosen into rubato when the boys briefly remember why they love the piano.

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Matthew McGloin and Richard Todd Adams | Credit: BW Productions

Design that listens

Yoon Bae's clean, unfussy environment leaves room for the instruments (and the actors) to breathe. **Michael Gilliam's** lighting carves quick, legible spaces: a piano lesson, a festival stage, late night bar, all without calling attention to itself. The last scene, during the climax of the show, Gilliam's gradient lighting is masterful. **Matt Mitchell's** sound keeps the room honest: intimate enough that the grand pianos aren't lost in translation, yet transparent enough to preserve the breath before an attack. In an intimate venue, that detail is the difference between "nice playing" and theatre.

Why it resonates especially here

If you've ever auditioned, practiced until the room blurred, or measured your worth in quarter-notes, this show feels like home. But it also speaks to audiences who've never touched a keyboard. The comedy is generous, not cruel; the critique is aimed at systems—the competitive festival machine, the parental investment that turns into inheritance of pressure—more than at people. And tucked beneath the laughter is a radical tenderness: most of us won't be great. We can still be artists. We can still make a life.

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Matthew McGloin and Richard Todd Adams | Credit: BW Productions

A tip of the Hat to the makers

It matters that this piece was shaped by theatre artists who are also musicians. Co-creators **Ted Dykstra** (Coal Mine Theatre co-founder; voice of Dad Tiger on PBS's *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood*; roles from Mozart to Hedwig) and **Richard Greenblatt** (RADA-trained; actor/director of 100+ productions; writer of *Sibs, i.d., Letters from Lehrer*) built a script that's been played on five continents and in 150+ cities since 1996. PTC's team honors that lineage without embalming it.

Quibbles?

A few transitions zip by so fast a sentiment can feel clipped, and a late pivot from satire to sincerity may read tidy to viewers craving more ambiguity. Small notes in an evening that sustains its rhythm, honors its musicianship, and sends audiences out buzzing.

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The takeaway

PTC opens its season with a crowd-pleaser that refuses to condescend. *2 Pianos 4 Hands* is as entertaining as a summer Pops concert and as honest as a practice log at 1 a.m. It's also the rare show I'd prescribe: performers will see themselves; everyone else will understand them a little better.

Show Info

- **WHAT:** *2 Pianos 4 Hands* by Ted Dykstra & Richard Greenblatt
- **WHO:** Richard Todd Adams* (Ted); Matthew McGloin* (Richard)
- **VENUE:** Meldrum Theatre, Einar Nielsen Field House (375 S 1400 E, Salt Lake City)
- **DATES: Sept 12-27, 2025**
 - Mon-Thu 7:00 PM
 - Fri & Sat 7:30 PM
 - Sat 2:00 PM matinee
 - **ASL-interpreted: Mon, Sept 22 at 7:00 PM**
 - PTC is pleased to provide a **T-coil hearing enhancement system**. Receivers can be picked up from the coat check on a first-come, first-served basis.

- **TICKETS:**
 - [Tiers 1&4: \\$57 \(K&12: \\$28.50\)](#)
 - [Tier 5: \\$44 \(K&12: \\$22\)](#)
- **DISCOUNTS:**
- **University of Utah Arts Pass & College Student Discounts**
- **Student Rush (U of U):** \$5 tickets, up to two per student, available in advance at the box office (UCard required, subject to availability).
- **U of U Staff & Faculty:** 50% off all performances (in-person purchase with UCard). [More info here](#)
- **Other Utah Colleges/Universities:** Same-day Student Rush up to two tickets for \$15 each, one hour before showtime (schools include BYU, USU, UVU, SLCC, Westminster, Weber, SUU, Utah Tech, and Snow).
- Discounts are **in-person only**, not available online/phone, non-retroactive, and limited to listed schools and current semester productions.
- **BOX OFFICE:** 801-581-6961 or [PioneerTheatre.org](#)
- **BOX OFFICE HOURS:** Mon-Fri, 10:00 AM-6:00 PM; tickets also sold one hour before showtime at Meldrum
- **DIRECTIONS:** [More info here](#)

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Cast & Creative

- **Director:** Tom Frey
 - **Cast:** Richard Todd Adams* (Ted); Matthew McGloin* (Richard)
 - **Scenic Design:** Yoon Bae
 - **Lighting Design:** Michael Gilliam
 - **Sound Design:** Matt Mitchell
 - **Production Stage Manager:** Emily Roth*
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About the Playwrights

Ted Dykstra and **Richard Greenblatt** are celebrated Canadian playwrights who c**Ted Dykstra** and **Richard Greenblatt** are celebrated Canadian playwrights best known for co-writing *2 Pianos 4 Hands*, which turned their shared piano-student experiences into one of Canada's most successful theatrical exports.

- **Ted Dykstra** has earned acclaim as a writer and director beyond this play, bringing sharp humor and emotional honesty to scripts that merge music and theatre. His additional writing credits include the musical **Evangeline** (book, lyrics, and music), the rock opera **Dorian** (based on *The Picture of Dorian Gray*), and a stage adaptation of **The Kreutzer Sonata** (after Tolstoy).
 - **Richard Greenblatt**, a RADA graduate, has written or co-written numerous plays noted for their wit, humanity, and cultural insight. His works include **Sibs** (also adapted for CBC), **i.d.**, **Letters**
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from Lehrer, **Soft Pedalling, The Theory of Relatives** (with Daniel Brooks and others), **Care, Athabasca, and Pals.**

Since its 1996 premiere at Toronto's Tarragon Theatre, *2 Pianos 4 Hands* has toured over 150 cities on five continents, earning Dora and Chalmers Awards. Together, Dykstra and Greenblatt exemplify playwrights who blend autobiographical truth, theatrical inventiveness, and cultural critique into stories that resonate far beyond the concert hall.

Category

1. Premiere
2. Reviews

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keola06

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