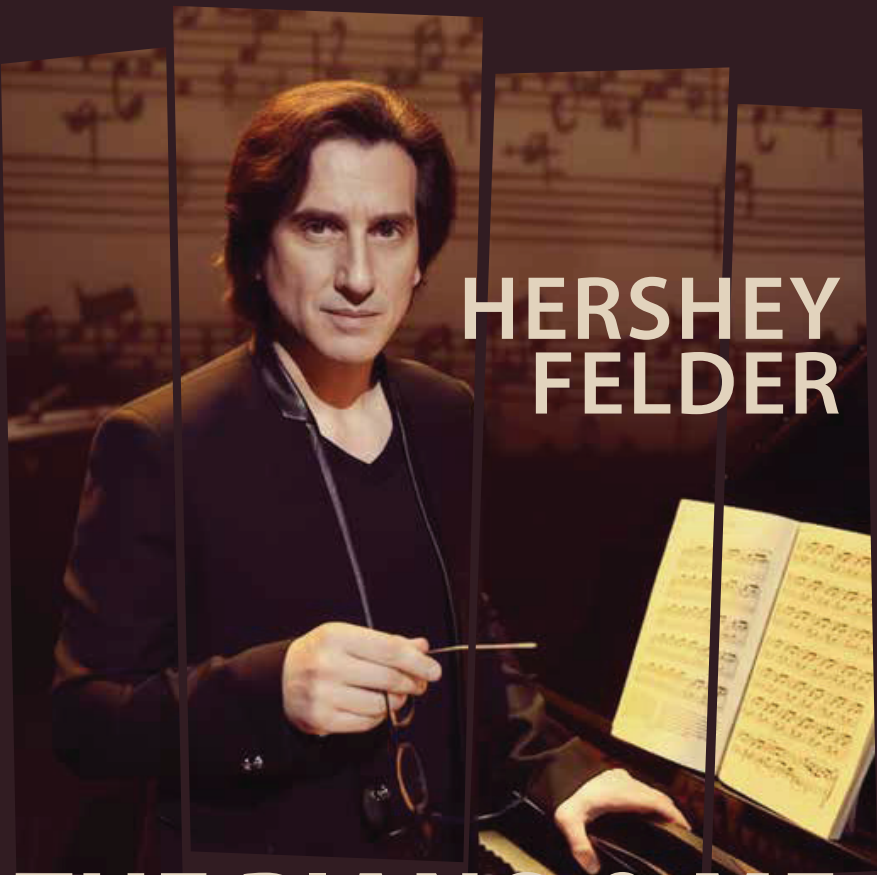




**HERSHEY
FELDER**

THE PIANO & ME

A NEW PLAY WITH MUSIC

FEATURING BACH, MOZART, BEETHOVEN, CHOPIN, AND MORE...

PALM BEACH
pbd
DRAMAWORKS

Theatre to Think About

Don & Ann Brown Theatre

AN INTERVIEW WITH

Henshey Felder

BY SHERYL FLATOW



In 2001, following an acclaimed, extended engagement in Los Angeles, Hershey Felder's George Gershwin Alone had a four-month run in West Palm Beach at the Cuillo Center for the Arts. This unique one-man play, created, written, and performed by Felder, marked the beginning of what would soon become an international career. He is known around the world for his extraordinary depictions of great composers – including Bernstein, Chopin, Beethoven, Berlin, Liszt, Tchaikovsky, and Rachmaninoff – that use musical storytelling to reveal the inner lives of these artists.

At the beginning of this year Felder introduced his most personal show, The Piano & Me, which features Felder playing himself as well as the many characters he's met along the way who made his art possible. After 25 years, he's back performing in West Palm Beach, and though he's never appeared at PBD before, the Don & Ann Brown Theatre will look somewhat familiar to him – in its former life, prior to renovation, it was the Cuillo Center.

Since his Gershwin show, Felder has given more than 6,000 performances of his solo theatre productions in the US and abroad. He is also an artistic director, composer, producer, and filmmaker, who has been called "a world-class singular artist" by American Theatre magazine. A native of Montreal who now resides in Florence, Felder is the artistic director of FirenzeOnStage, directing the city's oldest theatre, Teatro Niccolini (1648). In addition, he is the creator of Live from Florence, an Arts Broadcasting Company, which has thus far produced 18 theatrical films. (For a more detailed account of his work, see his bio on page 8.)

Felder recently participated in an email interview with PBD. The questions and answers follow.

Q: How did you decide that this was the right time to tell your own story, and why did you want to do it?

A: I had been asked to tell this story over the past 30 years. It seems that people are interested in origin stories. In terms of "wanting" to do it – it wasn't a matter of that as much as theatres were looking for new material and asking, "What about your own story? People want to hear that." I caved. I didn't know at the time what exactly would emerge.

Q: You do a lot of research when you're preparing a show about a particular composer. Obviously, you didn't have to do that for *The Piano & Me*. But I imagine that thinking back over your life is a different kind of research. Could you talk about the process, and how you decided what you wanted to include, both in terms of your story and the music?

A: It was necessary to be honest. There was an additional two hours of stories that slowly started to get cut, as they got in the way of what became the specific narrative – that of a child of immigrants finding his way in a not always welcoming world.

Q: People who have written autobiographies often say that the experience leads to some forgotten moments or unexpected emotional moments. *The Piano & Me* is not an autobiography per se, but it's autobiographical. Did either of those kinds of moments happen for you?

A: Shaping the story into a communicable theatrical piece revealed moments not necessarily that I had forgotten about, but moments that affected me deeply. And I had forgotten how they had affected me.

Q: What is it like playing yourself onstage? Is it easier or more difficult than taking on a character?

A: Everything onstage is difficult and a huge responsibility. In this case, I know the material, I know the text, the music, and story that needs to be told, but any “acting” needs to be done away with. Stripping this piece of artifice was the goal. And that requires a lot of work.

Q: You started playing the piano as a child, and I read that you knew you wanted to be a musician very early on. As you matured, what kind of career did you envision for yourself?

A: I didn't really envision a career; I just knew that I wanted to make music and tell stories. And somewhere along the line I realized that I better do things

that people might wish to see – if I wish to eat and pay rent, that is.

Q: I imagine your life changed dramatically with *George Gershwin Alone*. What made you decide to do a one-man show on Gershwin, and how did you come up with the format that would go on to characterize your solo shows?

A: I'm not telling. It's in the show.

Q: I know you've done and continue to do all different kinds of work – all the time, it seems – but did you realize from the success of your Gershwin show that you had created something unique, and make a conscious decision to continue to explore the life and work of composers?

A: I never thought or think of my work in those terms; others define the works' so-called “uniqueness.” The truth is that I do what comes naturally to me – telling stories about things that fascinate, the magic and mysticism of art, its creation, and how exciting being involved in the creation and execution



of art can be. I didn't make any conscious decisions about composers – I just kept on getting asked "what's next?" I did make conscious decisions about composing and creating works that others can perform, and that has been a great joy.

Q: You often talk about how important "context" is. Can you elaborate on why context is so important in your work?

A: Music – or whichever art – doesn't emerge out of thin air. It comes from a person, their experiences, their souls. These people, what is happening around them and to them, inform the art that is created whether it be an acceptance or negation of the surrounding influences. Understanding that context of creation brings a richness to the understanding of the work itself.

Q: In general, does the story determine your choice of music, does the music determine how you'll shape the story, or is it some combination of the two?

A: I always begin with the music, but the narrative has to be able to sustain the music. They are intertwined; one cannot take away from the other. Each counts on the other to advance the story.

Q: You have millions of fans who love what you do, and you clearly love what you do. What do these solo shows mean to you? How much pleasure do you get from them?

A: I always learn something. If we stop learning and growing, what is the point? The joy I get from the pieces is that they might somehow affect people's lives. I'm not talking about me, per se, or my story. But if audiences find something in these stories that reflect something in their own lives and might in some way make a difference to the lives they are living, then I've done a bit of my job.



From the Executive Director & Producing Artistic Director



In 2001, Hershey Felder brought his first one-man play with music to West Palm Beach, performing his superb *George Gershwin Alone* to packed houses for four months. That show was the springboard for an international career highlighted by his spellbinding and enlightening portrayals of

some of the greatest composers in history, which weave story and music to bring these artists to life.

Twenty-five years after he first appeared in West Palm Beach, Hershey is back with his newest solo show, *The Piano & Me*, and we are delighted to welcome him to Palm Beach Dramaworks. This time he plays himself and a cast of characters who made his work possible. This personal and powerful piece is a testament to the intrinsic value of the performing arts, and how music can change people's lives.

We are so pleased that you're here to share in Hershey's journey.

Rudina Toro

Executive Director

William Hayes

Producing Artistic Director



PALM BEACH
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DRAMAWORKS

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS
TONI & MARTIN SOSNOFF

HFP LIVE
PRESENTS

HERSHEY FELDER THE PIANO & ME

WRITTEN BY
HERSHEY FELDER

MUSIC OF
BACH, MOZART, BEETHOVEN, CHOPIN, BARTOK, LISZT,
RACHMANINOFF, GERSHWIN, WILLIAMS, FELDER

STARRING
HERSHEY FELDER

CREATIVE TEAM

Playwright..... Hershey Felder
Dramaturg..... Jerry Patch
Scenic Design..... Hershey Felder
Lighting Design..... Christopher Rynne
Sound Design..... Erik Carstensen
Stage Manager..... Trevor Hay
Production Manager..... Erik Carstensen
Associate Producer..... Tammy Globerman

PRODUCTION CREW

Wardrobe Supervisor..... George Alberto Pires
Stage Crew Lead..... Victoria Bockman-Pedersen
Head Electrician..... Johanna Jackson
Audio Engineer/Technical Assistant..... Connor Madigan
Projections Technician..... Roger Arnold
Spot Operators..... Paolo Pineda, Alen Rosier
Theatrical Technician..... Desiraé Merrit, Nancy Valladeres

Run time: 1 hour, 50 minutes with no intermission

The world premiere of *The Piano & Me* was given at
the Tony Award-winning TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, in January of 2026.

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HERSHEY FELDER

(Playwright/

Performer) is an actor,

pianist, producer,

playwright, and

composer. A resident of Florence, Italy, he is underwriter and artistic director of FirenzeOnStage, which presents globally recognized artists in music, opera, theatre, dance, and film at the historic Teatro Niccolini, Florence's oldest theatre, built in 1648. Artists presented include Helen Mirren, Jeff Goldblum, Malcolm McDowell, and the cast of the film *The Sound of Music*; dancer Mikhail Baryshnikov; pianists David Khrikuli and Boris Giltburg; Broadway stars Santino Fontana and Jenn Colella; jazz superstars Billy Stritch, Jens Lindemann, and many more.

As a playwright and performer, Hershey's works include *George Gershwin Alone*, *Monsieur Chopin*, *Beethoven*, *Maestro* (Leonard Bernstein), *Franz Liszt in Musik*, *Lincoln: An American Story*, *Irving Berlin*, *Our Great Tchaikovsky*, *A Paris Love Story* (Claude Debussy), and *Rachmaninoff and the Tsar*, a two-hander with Hershey as Sergei Rachmaninoff and Jonathan Silvestri as Tsar Nicholas II. *The Piano & Me* received its world premiere in January, 2026 at TheatreWorks Silicon Valley.

American Theatre magazine has said, "Hershey Felder, actor, Steinway Concert Artist and theatrical creator is in a category all his own." Following 28 years of continuous stage productions and over 6,000 live performances throughout the U.S. and abroad, Hershey created Live from Florence, An Arts Broadcasting Company, which has produced more than 18 theatrical films to date. They include *Noble Genius*, *Chopin and Liszt*; *The Assembly*; *Violetta*, the story of Verdi's *La Traviata*; *Dante and Beatrice*; *Mozart and Figaro in Vienna*; *Nicholas, Anna & Sergei*, the story of Sergei Rachmaninoff; *Puccini*; *Before Fiddler*, a musical story about writer Sholem Aleichem; *Great American Songs and the Stories Behind Them*; *Leonard Bernstein and the Israel Philharmonic*, a documentary; and *Musical Tales in the Venetian Jewish Ghetto*. Two seasons of programming are currently available at www.hershefelder.net.

Hershey's compositions and recordings include *Aliyah*, *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra*; *Fairytale*, a musical; *Les Anges de Paris*, *Suite for Violin and Piano*; *Song Settings*; *Saltimbanques for Piano and Orchestra*; *Etudes Thematiques for Piano*; *An American Story for Actor and Orchestra*; and the opera *Il Quarto Uomo*. He is also the

adaptor, director, and designer of the internationally performed play with music, *The Pianist of Willesden Lane*; producer and designer for the musical *Louis and Keely: 'Live' at the Sahara*, directed by Taylor Hackford; and writer and director of *Flying Solo*, featuring opera great Nathan Gunn. He has operated a full-service production company since 2001.

Hershey has been a scholar-in-residence at Harvard University's Department of Music. He was born in Montreal and now lives in Florence with his wife, Rt. Hn. Kim Campbell.

JERRY PATCH (Dramaturg) has served as dramaturg on more than 150 new plays, including the world premieres of *Abundance*, *Freedomland*, *Golden Child*, *Intimate Apparel*, *Search and Destroy*, *Three Days of Rain*, *Ruined*, and *Wit*. He was the founding project director for South Coast Repertory's Pacific Playwrights Festival and artistic director of the theatre program of Sundance Institute. A professor of theatre and film, he was consulting dramaturg for Roundabout Theatre Company (New York) for nearly a decade and resident artistic director at The Old Globe in San Diego. He is now artistic consultant for Manhattan Theatre Club, where he served more than a decade as

director of artistic development, and is resident dramaturg at SCR.

CHRIS RYNNE (Lighting Design) is a lighting and scenery designer for theatre, opera, museum exhibitions, and architectural features. His theatrical design work has been seen in productions around the country, including The Old Globe, San Diego Repertory Theatre, San Diego Opera, Cygnet Theatre, Pasadena Playhouse, Madison Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Michigan Opera Theatre, Hartford Stage, Geffen Playhouse, Laguna Playhouse, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, and Off-Broadway. He has been responsible for lighting a number of independent touring theatrical productions that have played across the United States as well as in London, Paris, and Tel Aviv. In addition to his lighting design work, Rynne also specializes in theatrical, entertainment, and architectural control systems for theatres, houses of worship, hospitality, theme parks, schools, museums, and architainment features. He is a member of USA829.

ERIK CARSTENSEN (Sound Design/Production Management) has worked for HFP LIVE since 2008. He has served as sound designer on *Hershey Felder as Irving Berlin*, *Our Great Tchaikovsky*, *A Paris Love*

Story, Maestro, Louis and Keely “Live” at the Sahara, *An American Story, Beethoven As I Knew Him* (Ovation Award winner), *The Pianist of Willesden Lane* (Ovation Award nomination), and numerous other productions. Formerly, he was the master sound technician at the Old Globe Theatre in San Diego and was production engineer on more than 60 productions. Currently, Erik is the head of production at Teatro Niccolini, Florence, Italy’s oldest and most prestigious theatre (1648).

STEFANO DeCARLI (Video Design) was born in Florence in 1983, and is an Italian filmmaker, editor, and producer. After graduating in 2010 in Agricultural Sciences and Sustainable Rural Development from the University of Florence, he worked in Iraq for two years for the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, coordinating international development and reconstruction programs in collaboration with the US Department of Defense and the US Department of State. At the same time, he began his professional career in visual communication, specifically in photography and video production, which then became his main profession. Since then, he has been working across Italy and Europe on multimedia content, feature films, live theatre, music videos, and corporate videos.

Starting in 2020, he has filmed, co-directed, and edited shows, movies, and documentaries in collaboration with renowned pianist, actor, director, and producer Hershey Felder. In 2023 he worked together with American director Madison Kinsella on a short documentary about a group of Ukrainian refugees in Italy, *A Castle for Kyiv*. The same year he also collaborated with Canadian director Jennifer Baichwal on the impact website insights following the 2022 documentary *Into The Weeds*. He’s also a professor of Multimedia Language at ISIA Firenze, the first university-level public institution for design education in Italy.

TAMMY GLOBERMAN (Associate Producer) joined the Hershey Felder Presents team in the summer of 2020. Based in Los Angeles, she worked with Hershey on his earlier projects in the late 1990s and 2000s before working with talent agencies specializing in below-the-line talent for film and television. After taking some time off to be with her two children, she is excited to be working again with Hershey and his team.



United Scenic Artists, Local USA 829 of the IATSE is the union representing scenic, costume, lighting, sound and projection designers in Live Performance.

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Connor Madigan
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Sailor Kahan

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Resident Director
Resident Scenic Designer
Resident Projection Designer
Resident Scenic Artist
Resident Stage Manager
Resident Fight Director/Choreographer
Resident Photographer
Resident Literary Associate

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PROVENANCE^{†*}

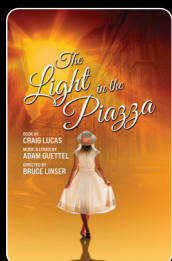
by **JENNIFER MAISEL**
Directed by **CASEY STANGL**

DECEMBER 11 – 27

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER
Penny Bank

ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS
Sandra and Bernie Meyer

The life of a sensual, unusual portrait from its beginnings in early 1900s German society, through its theft by the Nazis and its subsequent travels around the world. Canvas. Pencil. Paint. How can one piece of art tear at the hearts of generations?



THE LIGHT IN THE PIAZZA

Book by **CRAIG LUCAS** | Music and Lyrics by **ADAM GUETTEL**
Directed by **BRUCE LINSEY**

FEBRUARY 5 – 21

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER
Nancy Goodes

In this lyrical, shimmering musical, winner of multiple Tony Awards, Margaret Johnson takes a trip to Italy in 1953 with her daughter, Clara, a beautiful, childlike young woman. Clara falls in love with a handsome Florentine who wants to marry her, and the protective Margaret must decide whether to allow her determined, challenged daughter to follow her heart.



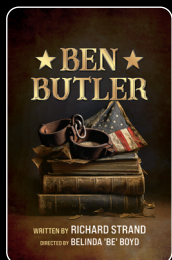
THE BIRTHDAY PARTY

by **HAROLD PINTER**
Directed by **WILLIAM HAYES**

APRIL 2 – 18

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS
Marsha and Steve Rabb

This classic, absurdist comedy of menace is set in a boarding house run by Meg and Petey. Meg decides to throw a birthday party for their only boarder, Stanley, despite his objections. When two ominous strangers arrive, the celebration is transformed into a nightmare.



BEN BUTLER

by **RICHARD STRAND**
Directed by **BELINDA "BE" BOYD**

MAY 21 – JUNE 6

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS
Donna and Chuck Ward

ASSOCIATE PRODUCER



This historical – make that hysterical – comedy is inspired by an event in the life of Major General Benjamin Butler of the Union Army. An abolitionist, his principles are tested when three escaped slaves come to him seeking sanctuary. Should he obey the law and send them back, or obey his conscience and perhaps change the course of history?