**The Evolution of the Piano:**

**A Collaboration Across Space and Time**

by Alan Eder, RPT, MFA

"The Evolution of the Piano" traces an epic journey beginning with the origins of our planet, continuing through the progression of human technology, including the piano, and culminating with a look ahead to the ongoing development of the piano into the 21st Century and beyond. If it sounds cosmic, that’s because it *is*!

Throughout human history, the march of technology has been fueled primarily by survival instinct, but also by a need for recreational play. In this program, Fulbright Scholar, musician, musicologist, Registered Piano Technician, tool-lover, and cultural observer, Alan Eder, examines the history of tool usage and tool making as they inform and lead to the eventual development of our culture’s polyphonic instrument of choice. Special attention is focused on the parallel evolution of weaponry and musical instruments–the tools that distinguish homo-sapiens from other tool-using creatures.

Eclectic stops along the way include a comparison of Bartolomeo Cristofori and George Washington, and the long shadows each cast forward in their respective realms. We will also consider what the rest of the world wanted from America in the 19th Century, and what it looks to us for today.

Source materials are drawn from an extensive bibliography of texts on piano history; documentaries about nature, human evolution, mythology, weapons and pianos; TED talks, movies, poetry, and video games. Eder’s own efforts have been magnified by the contributions of legions of pianists, piano technicians, students of music history, and other workshop participants over the past decade.

Because of the highly interactive nature of this program, Eder has declined proposals to make a video documentary of it. He believes that each iteration of the presentation develops its own unique character, benefiting from both the accrual of new information, and the contributions of each particular group of participants.

Due to the coronavirus, this year’s CalArts class in 19th Century music history has migrated online. While interpersonal interaction is regrettably lost, these unusual circumstances also present an opportunity: this year, “The Evolution of the Piano: A Collaboration Across Space and Time” will be formatted for an online meeting, and, for the first time, it will be open to a far wider audience.

“The Evolution of the Piano” is three hours in duration, divided in two segments. Part 1 will be on Wednesday, May 6, from 11 am – 12 pm, and Part 2, on the following Wednesday, May 13, from **10 am** – 12 pm. To attend the class, please email the address below to receive a link to each online session.

There is a party in Alan Eder’s mind, and you are all invited!

(For a 30 second video-collage trailer for “The Evolution of the Piano”, please visit: <https://youtu.be/VIwm7H37Tlk>)

Contact information: [aeder@calarts.edu](mailto:aeder@calarts.edu)

What they are saying about “The Evolution of the Piano…”

“I gotta see this!” Marc Lowenstein

“Best piano history presentation EVER!!!” Alan Eder’s mom