

JACK Quartet x Natacha Diels

# Beautiful Trouble



Rocketing ecstatically between sadness and joyfulness, Natacha Diels's *Beautiful Trouble* is an evening-length 'opera' (as dramatic spectacle) for JACK Quartet that explores a slim window of human existence. Moments gathered like precious stones coalesce to create both sense and nonsense, forming a logic all the piece's own. Organizing the stones just so reveals clarity in chaos, if only for a moment.



*Beautiful Trouble* touches on elements of:  
work ethic (humans as puppets),  
dystopia,  
the beauty of nightmares,  
unmistakable loves,  
childlikeness (play),  
just music,  
protest (no more wars),  
loss,  
nature as commodity (or not),  
the beauty of silliness (playful nonsense),  
long walks,  
and wholeness.



Trailer for *Beautiful Trouble*

[Open in YouTube](#)



# Synopsis



## Act 1: On Monday

The quartet begins as puppets, performing not-quite-repetitive movements that coalesce and diverge from one another to craft the narrative. Spoken text forecasts what strange circumstances will befall you on the days of a week, in some future dystopia. When the dystopia cracks, in a period of peace, the quartet builds a fantasy landscape of outlandish protest signs, sad flailing inflatable arms, and the omnipresent moon. A quasi-nightmarish reality eventually snaps back into place. The quartet performs at a fancy restaurant.

## Act 2: Nightmare for JACK (a ballet)

The musicians perform a ballet comprising exaggerated versions of the motions involved in playing their instruments—a counterpoint to the musical material, as well as a cobweb of complexity upon which to lay the nightmare. Sometimes the piece pursues dreamlike streams of consciousness; at other points, the progression is more linear and concrete. Ultimately, the quartet acts as night guardians, helping to put the forest to sleep.

### Act 3: Sometimes it's the Last Time

The forest is asleep, and the quartet is in the dark, echolocating with whistles and clicks. As the members tentatively explore a new environment, their world erupts into brilliant chaos. They subsequently search for melodic stability in dense, perpetually sliding sound clusters, a musical metaphor for finding beauty in the journey and taking pleasure in the unique (unrepeatable). This gives way to music that plays on the symbiosis and conflict of the canned versus the real, through pop lyrics, playful nonsense, and a visual background of stock video alongside AI-generated images. Finally, the quartet gathers in song around the campfire, characterized by banjo music, children's games, and a confusing quest to understand a map.

### Act 4: Interlude

The quartet takes an intermission in the form of learning a new board game. Momentary outward focus allows for recalibration.

### Act 5: Beautiful Trouble

A long walk through a grassy field, a search for the elusive "beautiful." Sometimes one finds loss; at other times, wholeness. In each there is cherished absurdity.

# Creative Team





## JACK Quartet [jackquartet.com](http://jackquartet.com)

GRAMMY-nominated JACK Quartet's "stylistic range, precision and passion have made the group one of contemporary music's indispensable ensembles" (*The New York Times*). Comprising violinists Christopher Otto and Austin Wulliman, violist John Pickford Richards, and cellist Jay Campbell, JACK was founded in 2005 and operates as a nonprofit organization dedicated to the performance, commissioning, and appreciation of 20th and 21st century string quartet music. Through intimate, longstanding relationships with many of today's most creative voices, the quartet has a prolific commissioning and recording catalog and has been nominated for three GRAMMY Awards and is the 2024 recipient of CMA's Michael Jaffee Visionary Award. JACK has a prolific commissioning and recording catalog and has been nominated for three GRAMMY Awards. This season, the quartet is featured in the ongoing celebrations of John Zorn's 70th birthday, a three-concert day at Wigmore Hall, a premiere by Natacha Diels in Philadelphia, an Australian tour, and the 5th edition of JACK Studio. JACK's all-access initiative **JACK Studio** funds collaborations with a selection of artists each year to develop new works for string quartet. Through its successful nonprofit model, the quartet has created hundreds of new works, and the world's top composers choose JACK because of its dedication to innovation. JACK's albums of music by John Luther Adams were nominated for GRAMMY Awards in both 2022 and 2023. Previous albums include music by Helmut Lachenmann, Catherine Lamb, Du Yun, Elliott Sharp, Zosha di Castri, and Iannis Xenakis. The JACK Quartet makes its home in NYC, where it is the Quartet in Residence at the Mannes School of Music. All four members are alumni of the Lucerne Festival Academy. Learn more at [www.jackquartet.com](http://www.jackquartet.com).



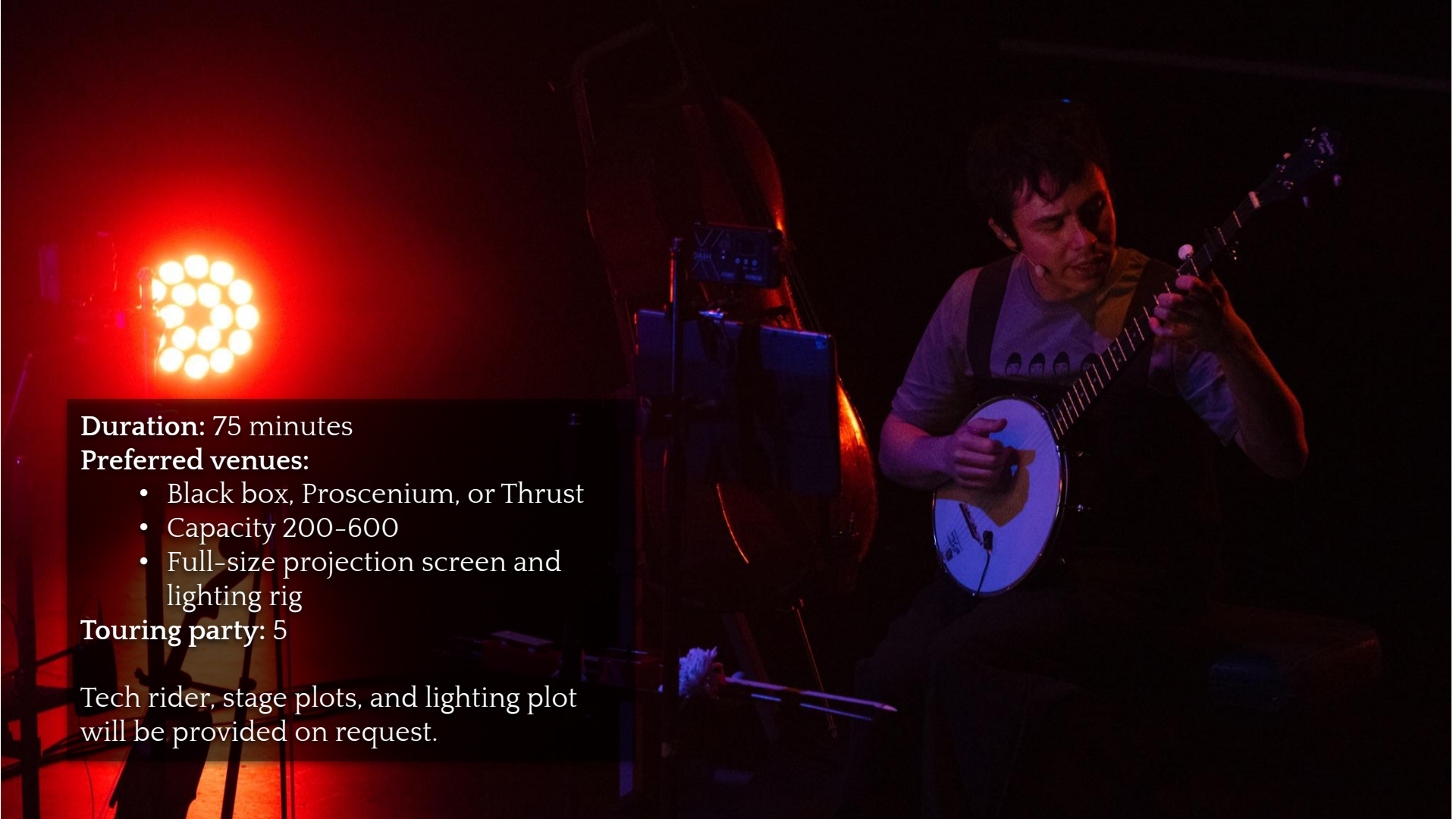


# Natacha Diels [natachadiels.com](http://natachadiels.com)

**Composer + Director**

Natacha Diels' work combines choreographed movement, video animation, instrumental practice, and cynical play to create worlds of curiosity and unease. Recent work includes "Papillon and the Dancing Cranes," for construction cranes and giant butterfly (Borealis Festival 2018, Dear Antwerp 2021) and "Somewhere Beautiful," a solo project premiered at Klangspuren Festival (2022). With a focus on collage, collaboration, and the ritual of life as art, Natacha's compositions have been described as "a fairy tale for a fractured world" (Music We Care About) and "the liveliest music of the evening" (LA Review of Books). Natacha is a founding member of the composer/performer collective Ensemble Pamplemousse (est. 2003). Pamplemousse specializes in unique aspects of new music composition, from complex virtuosic instrumental performance to experimental theatre to electronic and robotic performance. She teaches at the University of Pennsylvania.



A musician is performing on stage, playing a banjo. To the left, a double bass is visible. A bright, multi-lens stage light illuminates the scene from the left. The background is dark, and the overall lighting is dramatic, with a strong red and orange glow from the stage light.

**Duration:** 75 minutes

**Preferred venues:**

- Black box, Proscenium, or Thrust
- Capacity 200-600
- Full-size projection screen and lighting rig

**Touring party:** 5

Tech rider, stage plots, and lighting plot will be provided on request.

# Recent and Upcoming Performances

World Premiere: **February 2, 2024**  
Penn Live Arts, Philadelphia, PA

New York City Premiere: **March 15, 2024**  
Roulette, Brooklyn, NY

JACK Quartet will tour *Beautiful Trouble*  
internationally through 2026.



STAY  
WANTED  
AND DON'T  
KILL  
YOURSELF

**JACK Quartet**  
Performers


**Natacha Diels**  
Composer, Director, Video Designer

**Julia Bumke**  
Lead Producer

**Matthew Craig**  
Technical Director, Sound Designer

**Kent Sprague**  
Lighting Designer

**Maile Okamura**  
Costume Designer

A man with glasses is playing a violin in a dark room. The scene is illuminated with a strong blue light, creating a dramatic and focused atmosphere. The man's face is partially lit, showing his concentration. In the background, there are faint outlines of musical equipment, including a microphone stand and a laptop.

Booking contact

Gregory Brown, **Pink Noise Agency**

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