

Brecht Valckenaers (b. 2000, Leuven) is a versatile pianist and composer who combines his love for classical and contemporary repertoire with his own compositions and improvisations.

He studied for eight years with Nikolaas Kende at the Royal Conservatoire of Antwerp and is currently continuing his studies with Claudio Martínez Mehner at the Hochschule für Musik Basel and Eliso Virsaladze at the Scuola di Musica di Fiesole.

Brecht has won prizes at several competitions, including the Steinway Piano Competition, Cantabile Piano Competition, Breughel Piano Competition, Concours de Piano Andrée Charlier, and the EPTA Piano Competition. In 2025, he received the Third Prize and the Prize for the Best Performance of a Dutch Work at the YPF European Piano Competition in Amsterdam. He has appeared as a soloist with orchestra and has performed in venues such as Bozar, Flagey, deSingel, Palais des Beaux-Arts de Charleroi, Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ, and Bimhuis Amsterdam.

His compositions – characterized by a strong rhythmic inventiveness – have been featured several times on national radio and are enthusiastically received on YouTube.

After a celebrated appearance at Festival 20·21 in 2024 with his project Ex Nihilo, Brecht is delighted to continue his collaboration with the festival as Artist in Residence. Over the next editions, Brecht will perform all of Ligeti's works in which the piano takes centre stage, alongside other projects. His project Ex Nihilo will be released as an album in February 2026 on Antarctica Records.

Driven by a desire to keep exploring and pushing his musical boundaries, Brecht approaches music as a language to be experienced in all its forms: reading and reciting through the performance of classical and contemporary repertoire, speaking through improvisation, and writing through composition.

Brecht gratefully acknowledges the support of the Stichting Robus and the SWUK, with which he is Artist in Residence.