

BIO - English

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

He is driven by a desire to constantly discover and push his own musical boundaries. For him, music is a language through which he seeks to express himself in different ways: by reading and performing existing music, but also by speaking and writing himself.

As a pianist, Brecht is known for his carefully crafted solo programmes, in which familiar and lesser-known repertoire is brought together with his own work, with a particular focus on music of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. His programme *Ex Nihilo*, in which Ligeti's *Musica Ricercata* enters into dialogue with his own compositions, grew into an album released by Antarctica Records in 2026, which has received international acclaim.

The piano also occupies a central place in his compositions. His music is characterised by strong rhythmic inventiveness and has been featured several times on national and international radio. Alongside his own piano works, he is currently writing commissioned works for I SOLISTI and SPECTRA, which will be premiered in 2027. His work can also be heard in several jingles for Klara, Belgium's classical music radio station.

His passion for contemporary music has led him to collaborate with, among others, Ictus Ensemble. Improvisation is also an important part of his practice, alongside his work as a chamber musician and in various ensemble settings.

Following his acclaimed debut at Festival 20·21 in 2024, Brecht began a multi-year residency as Artist in Residence at the festival. The central thread of this trajectory is an integral performance of Ligeti's works in which the piano plays a central role, each time in dialogue with his own work and related repertoire. As part of this trajectory, Brecht is also expanding his *Rhythm Studies* into a complete set of twelve studies.

Brecht has performed as a soloist with orchestra and has appeared at venues including Bozar, Flagey, Concertgebouw Brugge, deSingel, Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ and Bimhuis in Amsterdam. He has received prizes at various national and international piano competitions, including the YPF European Piano Competition, the EPTA Piano Competition and the Steinway Piano Competition.

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

Brecht is grateful for the support he receives from Stichting Robus and SWUK, where he is an Artist in Residence.