

Sander Leeuwenburgh, piano

A Search for insight and beauty

Sander Leeuwenburgh (b. 1977) began playing the harpsichord at the age of eight. He studied Materials Science at Delft University of Technology and is now a professor at Radboudumc in Nijmegen, where he leads a research group focused on developing new biomaterials for tissue regeneration. During his doctoral studies at Radboudumc, he also pursued piano studies with Frank Peters at the Conservatory of Arnhem, where he graduated with distinction (*cum laude*) in 2005.

He attended masterclasses with renowned pianists such as Frank van der Laar, Igor Roma, Thomas Herrmann, Rian de Waal, Paul Komen, Vitaly Margulis (Freiburg), and Mūza Rubackytė (Paris). His focus during this time was primarily on the late-Romantic Russian repertoire, though he also studies early music with Pieter-Jan Belder and Siebe Henstra.

Balancing reason and emotion

His decision to combine a PhD in science with conservatory-level piano studies was inspired by a beautiful passage from Hermann Hesse's novel *Narziss und Goldmund*:

“Schaffen, ohne dafür den Preis des Lebens zu bezahlen! Leben, ohne doch auf den Adel des Schöpfertums zu verzichten! War denn das nicht möglich?”

“To create without paying the price of life! To live without renouncing the nobility of creation! Could such a thing not be possible?”

In this novel, the seemingly irreconcilable contrast between the intellectual Narziss and the artistic Goldmund is passionately explored as a metaphor for the universal human struggle to balance intellect and emotion. For Sander Leeuwenburgh, this balance proved unsustainable in 2005 when it appeared impossible to combine both science and music at a professional level. Yet, following an intense period of soul-searching, he returned to the stage in 2024 as a concert pianist - and in 2025 also as a harpsichordist - performing solo and with ensembles.

Since his musical comeback, he has performed at venues such as Castle Hernen, the Akoesticum and Ericatheater in Ede, Podium Doesburg, BIJ ANDREAS in Naarden, the Chapel at 't Rijsselt in Eefde, the Lambertuskerk in Vught, and the Lutheran Church in Nijmegen. In 2024, he recorded his first album, *East meets West*, a musical journey from West to East and back again, featuring works by Bach, Scriabin, Medtner, Rachmaninoff, Fats Waller, among others.

In 2025, he chose to follow his heart into music. After three decades of dedication to science, Narziss made space for his dearest friend, Goldmund. That summer, Sander reduced his professorship to a part-time appointment, creating the time and space to explore innovative musical initiatives.

His artistic vision is to bridge the currently separate worlds of early and modern music through carefully drafted programs centered around themes such as *East meets West*, *Folia: Four Centuries of Musical Madness*, and *From Bach to Blues*. During his concerts, he draws on his teaching experience to guide the audience with engaging narratives about the historical background, zeitgeist, and inner world of the composers.

Thanks to his multifaceted background as pianist, harpsichordist, and scientist, his repertoire is remarkably broad: ranging from Sweelinck to Scriabin, and from Bach to blues.

An ode to the playful “homo ludens” and versatile ‘Homo universalis’

With this unusual career shift, Sander Leeuwenburgh hopes to inspire others in search of their own *Homo ludens*—the playful human being, who may get lost so easily in the seriousness of adult life. No music without play, not science without wonder.

From a broader perspective, his decision to step away from the conventional academic path toward honorary retirement as professor is also a tribute to the *Homo universalis*: the universal human being as the embodiment of the Renaissance ideal as a person skilled across multiple fields. In our current age of complexity, specialization, and differentiation, that ideal may seem lost. Yet through his future concerts and musical projects, Sander hopes to inspire his audiences toward an deepening of the soul and an opening of the heart.