

# Ben Smith | Pianist and Composer

## Short Biography

Ben Smith is a London-based pianist and composer specialising in contemporary music. He is interested in – amongst other things – phenomenological and semiotic approaches to musical analysis, and compositional encounters with silence and repetition. Ben was a Junior Fellow at Guildhall School of Music & Drama from 2020-2022, where he previously studied with Laurence Crane, Rolf Hind, and James Weeks. His recording of Evan Johnson's complete piano music was released on *all that dust* in November 2021.

[www.bensmithmusic.co.uk](http://www.bensmithmusic.co.uk)

## Long Biography

Ben Smith is a London-based pianist and composer specialising in contemporary music. His compositions and writings are often concerned with phenomenological and semiotic approaches to material and repetition, the foregrounding of silence as a formal parameter, and objects from visual art and poetry. His music has been featured on Score Follower (*islands*) and One Glass Eye Records (*thirty-six views of the same thing*), and his performances have been featured numerous times on BBC Radio 3. Ben was a Junior Fellow at Guildhall School of Music & Drama from 2020-2022, where he previously studied with Laurence Crane, Rolf Hind, and James Weeks. In demand both as a soloist and chamber performer (An Assembly, Explore Ensemble, London Sinfonietta, Uproar Ensemble) he is known for daring and virtuosic performances which traverse the extremes of the contemporary repertoire, ranging from New Complexity to Wandelweiser. He has performed across the UK and internationally, including London venues Ambika P3, Barbican Hall, Hackney Round Chapel, Kings Place, Milton Court Concert Hall, St John's Smith Square, Queen Elizabeth Hall, and Wigmore Hall. He has given world and UK premieres by Peter Ablinger (Silk Street Music Hall), Patrícia Sucena de Almeida (Transit: Festival voor nieuwe muziek), Sarah Angliss (Aldeburgh Festival), Eric Egan (inn:pust festival), Michael Finnissy (Spitalfields Music), Anders Hillborg (BBC Total Immersion), Eva-Maria Houben (Borough New Music), Evan Johnson (Cafe OTO, Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival), Ragnar Kjartansson (London Contemporary Music Festival), Helmut Lachenmann (BPSE), Sylvia Lim (Musicon) Rebecca Saunders (Musicon), Alastair White (Tête-à-tête Opera Festival), and Rasmus Zwicki (Ny Musik i Birkerød). Recording projects include works by Nomi Epstein and Paul Newland (another timbre), Brian Ferneyhough and Alastair White (métier), and the complete piano works of Evan Johnson (all that dust).

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## **Qualifications in Music /Educational History**

2020-2022 – Junior Fellowship, Guildhall School of Music and Drama

2018-2020 – ArtDip (Dist.), Guildhall School of Music and Drama (Scholarship in Piano)

2016-2018 – MPerf (Dist.), Guildhall School of Music and Drama (Scholarship in Piano)

(Tracy Chadwell Prize for Composition for Voice) [Voiceworks]

2012-2015 – BMus (Hons), Class I, City University London

(The Worshipful Company of Musicians Prize for the Outstanding Undergraduate Final-Year Major Project in Music Technology and Applied Studies) [Composition and Performance]

2012 – ARCO, Royal College of Organists

2007 – LTCL (Distinction), Trinity College London, Piano

## **Employment History**

2023 – Conductor/Keyboards, *Giant*, Aldeburgh Festival

2019-2023 – LSO Choir Accompanist

2019-2023 – BMus Piano Composition Workshop, Durham University

2018-2023 – ‘Writing for the Contemporary Piano’, Composition Seminar and Workshop, GSMD

2018-2023 – Workshop Accompanist, City, University of London

2021 – Musical Director/Piano, *RUNE*, Tête à Tête: The Opera Festival

2018 – Piano/Keyboard, *4.48 Psychosis*, Royal Opera House production

2018 – Serenade (dir. Sasha Owen), Playback Film Festival

2017 – Piano, London Sinfonietta Academy

2015-2016 – Concerts Assistant, City, University of London

2012 – Accompanist, *The Choir: Sing While You Work*, twentytwenty productions

2011-2012 – Keyboard Player/Programmer (*Chess*, *Hairspray*), Aberystwyth Arts Centre

2011 – Musical Director (*Sweeney Todd*), Manchester School of Theatre

2010-2012 – Music Teacher, Ensemble Director, Accompanist, Bolton School Boys’ Division

## **Writings**

*Evan Johnson, lists, little stars: complete piano music 2003-2020* (liner notes)

Music We'd Like to Hear (Review). *TEMPO: A Quarterly Review of New Music* (January 2018)

Masters Thesis: *Images of Nothing: Notes Towards a Semiotic Phenomenology of Silence*

Undergraduate Dissertation: *L'image sonore?: Images, Objects, and Signs, and their Application in Musical Interpretation*

## **Composition History**

Previous teachers include Newton Armstrong, Laurence Crane, and James Weeks

[video and audio examples, along with a full work list, can be found at:

<http://www.bensmithmusic.co.uk>]

## **Performance History**

Previous teachers include Rolf Hind and Ian Pace

[a full performance history can be found at: <http://www.bensmithmusic.co.uk>]