



CHRIS MAENE

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TRADITION & INNOVATION





*"This piano has qualities that I can also find in historic instruments from the 19th and 20th century. I'm touched by the enormous amount of personality the instrument has. Like historic instruments I can hear different registers with their own color and special character, just like an orchestra."*

**Frank Braley**

Recording Session, September 2017



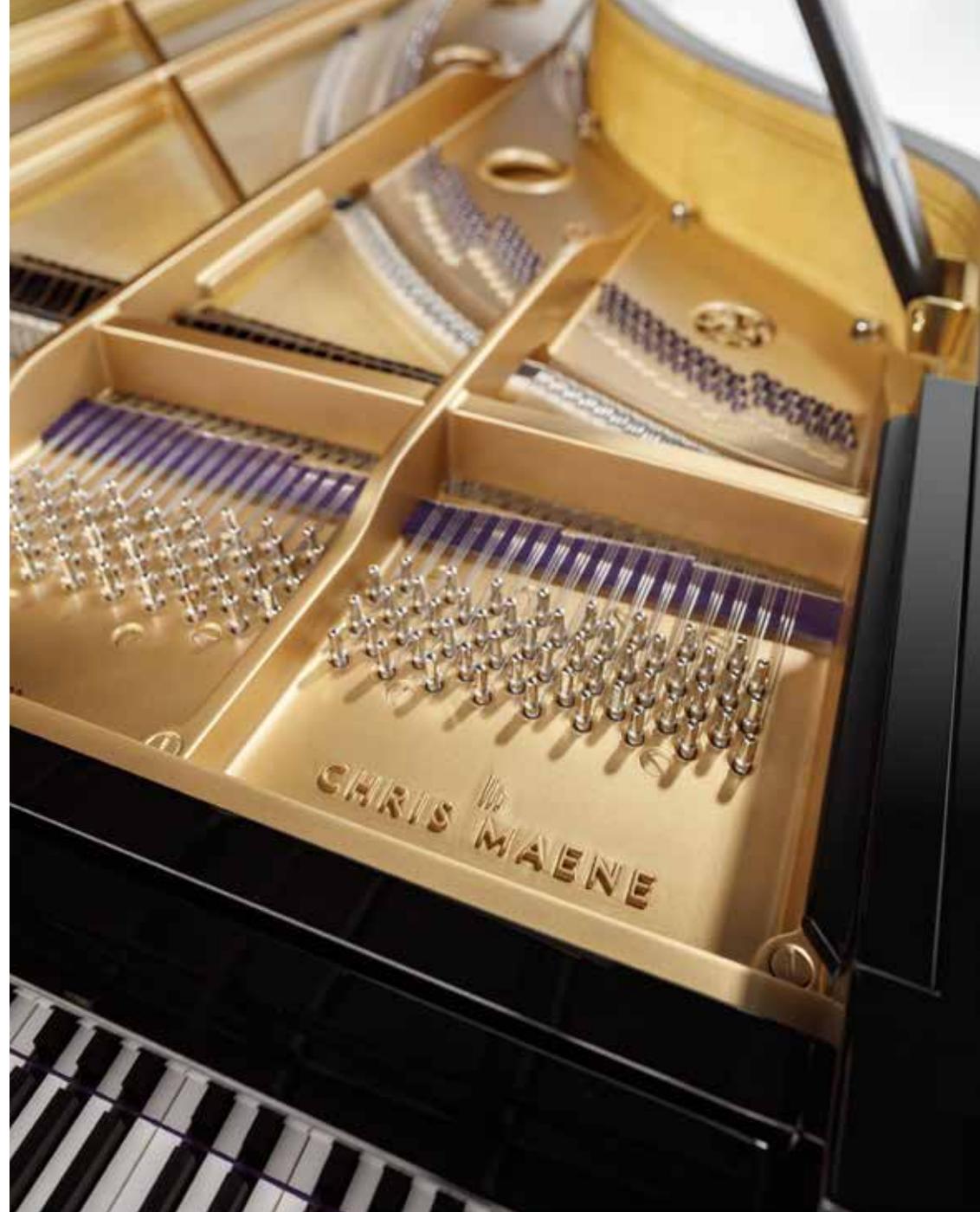
## DISRUPTIVE INNOVATION

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Whether you are a world renowned musician or a passionate and discerning individual, the synergy between music, artist and instrument is essential. To excel, a piano has to offer an unlimited scope of expression possibilities. The instrument has to inspire!

In an age where pianos are commonly standardized, CHRIS MAENE launched a bold new generation of grand pianos that offer an innovative and refreshing alternative. An in-depth knowledge of more than 300 years of piano manufacturing with the most modern and state of the art techniques, the CHRIS MAENE straight-strung pianos are unprecedented and unique. Based on a completely new straight-strung design and handcrafted to perfection, the instruments have no equal.

**For the first time in decades musicians can discover a genuinely new world of sound.**



“The straight-strung grand pianos of Chris Maene are among the most inspiring instruments I’ve played in recent years.”

**Hannes Minnaar**



*“I’ve fallen in love with this piano.  
I want to spend as much time with it as possible.”*

**Daniel Barenboim**



“For both our ears and mind it’s obviously a new sound, especially for bass and treble. Everything is so clear, transparent and beautiful in balance! It is playing easily. Perfect for the 20th century piano music.”

**Alexei Lubimov**

After concert, April 2017

*“The sound of this new piano opens an entirely new world of sounds. Sitting at this grand piano I feel like I am a choirmaster. This piano reacts to my playing style in great detail, with plenty of variation in timbre and nuance.”*

Liebrecht Vanbeckevoort



## TRADITION & INNOVATION

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Contrary to popular belief, the contemporary concert grand is not the result of an evolution from primitive to perfect. From the invention around 1700 and the further development until 1900, there were many different highlights in piano manufacturing that coincided with great composers. History has seen a vast range of different pianos, but they all had one thing in common: they were straight strung. In fact, most of the music we play today, has been written by composers that only knew straight strung instruments during their lifetime.





With the decline of many piano makers after the two World Wars and the crisis of the 30's, the idea of building instruments that distinguish themselves from each other and the continuous innovation in piano manufacturing- inextricably linked to this mindset- came to an end. Piano manufacturers started focusing solely on cross-strung pianos and mass production. The rich culture of varying piano sounds from which musicians could choose, gradually disappeared. As a result, many of the innovations that were introduced on cross-strung instruments (e.g. cast iron frame, modern action, etc.) have never been implemented in straight-strung instruments.

For more than a century there have been no fundamental changes to the concept of grand pianos. As a consequence grand pianos became standardized and all pianos today are variations on the same cross-strung concept.

**The CHRIS MAENE grand piano is the first piano that brings this straight-strung concept to the 21st century.**

It combines the authentic sound, clear bass and transparent registers inherent to straight-strung instruments; with the touch, stability and power of contemporary pianos.





## CONCEPT & DESIGN

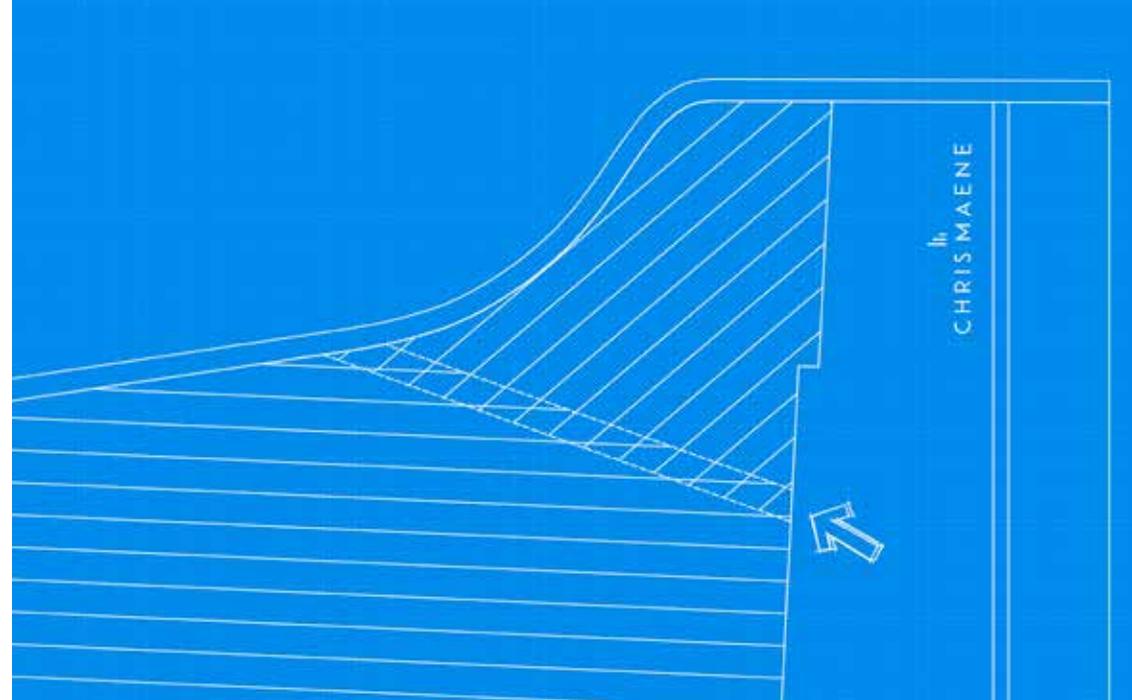
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The straight-strung grand piano differs in many ways from the contemporary piano. To understand how the sound can be so different, one has to remember that the strings, bridges and soundboard work together.



In the CHRIS MAENE straight-strung pianos, the grain of the soundboard wood follows the direction of the strings instead of the bridges. As the vibrations in the wood move more quickly in the length of the grain than in the opposite direction, the vibrations stay more “local” which results in a beautiful and characteristic transparent sound, especially for the bass.

Historic straight-strung pianos often were criticized for their weaker treble part. The CHRIS MAENE pianos solve this problem with a unique and patented soundboard, composed of two parts. In the bass and middle section, the grain of the soundboard follows the direction of the strings, but in the treble section, the grain follows the direction of the bridge which helps to maximize the use of the smaller soundboard area and results in a strong and projecting tone.





## THE MAKING OF

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The CHRIS MAENE straight-strung pianos combine tradition and innovation. This unique combination is clearly identified in the combination of the straight-strung concept with a one-piece continuous bent rim. It is the first step in the manufacturing process and crucial for the optimal balance between stability and sound quality.





➤ To hold the string tension (up to 20 tons) the cast iron frame is an essential component. It has to lend strength to the instrument. Modern CNC technology ensures drilling and shaving to absolute perfection. The frame is sanded several times by hand to achieve a beautifully satin finish that reflects our care and pride.

◀ The Soundboard shape, thickness and positing of support ribs are all designed to enhance the straight-strung concept. To ensure the highest quality of performance standards, each Maene piano is customized. Individual soundboard curvature is perfectly matched to the inner rim. This means that from early on, every soundboard has its own personal rim.





Only high quality strings are used. Strings in the treble part are individually attached and to achieve the original, transparent and characteristic bass sound, the bass string are wound with brass instead of red copper.

The braces are not positioned in a fan-like shape, but follow the straight-strung principals and are in the same direction of the strings for optimal support of the string tension.





To preserve the traditional, handcrafted character of the soundboard and to make an aesthetic link to the past, the soundboard is hand-polished (French polishing) instead of the today commonly used synthetic lacquer.

The action is the key to the world of sound. The CHRIS MAENE straight-strung pianos benefit from a custom-made contemporary action allowing pianists a reliable and familiar touch.





## DECADES OF PIANO MANUFACTURING EXPERIENCE...

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In 1938, Albert Maene and Zulma Doutrelaigne established the company in Belgium. Albert Maene excelled in craftsmanship and musicality – he was an organist and music teacher. His spouse on the other hand distinguished herself with her unique business skills. This combination laid the foundation of the company, that enabled a stable growth for the family business. The acquisition of the old brewery “De Molen” ensured a building for production and today serves as museum for the CHRIS MAENE COLLECTION, with more than 300 valuable historic instruments.





ERVEN DE WITTE

PIANO'S  
LIEPTE



From early on Chris Maene pursued his passion for instrument making: he built his first instrument at the age of 16. He has been avidly building, restoring and collecting valuable instruments ever since.

Chris Maene inherited the business from his father creating a continued expansion. With artisanal experience, he was able to build a workshop filled with specialists, some of whom have trained in Hamburg, Berlin, Poland, Tokyo and Paris. The company developed a unique profile: a highly specialized workshop, a collection of historic instruments and several stores with new pianos.

Since the beginning of the new millennium, the two sons of Chris Maene, Dominique and Frederic, are actively working in the company. They learned the craft from their father, ensuring the continuity and future of the company and factory.



## CHRIS MAENE FACTORY

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The extensive knowledge of historic instruments, combined with an equally comprehensive knowledge in modern instruments, and a workshop with numerous highly skilled craftsmen – each with their own specialty, is truly unique in the world.





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CHRIS MAENE

**Replica of a German harpsichord**  
"Johan Mayer" from 1619



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CHRIS MAENE

**Replica of a Tangent piano**  
"Späth & Schmahl" from 1794



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CHRIS MAENE

**Replica of a fortepiano**  
"Anton Walter" from 1799





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CHRIS MAENE

**Replica of Beethoven's Broadwood**  
from 1817



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CHRIS MAENE

**Replica of the first Steinway piano**  
"Kitchen Piano" from 1836



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CHRIS MAENE

**Replica of an Ignaze Pleyel concert grand**  
from 1843



## CHRIS MAENE & ARTISTS

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More than a trademark, the three hares of the CHRIS MAENE FACTORY symbolize the essential synergy between composer, performer and instrument maker. The interaction between these three was of great importance to the evolution of not only piano manufacturing, but also piano music in the 18th and 19th century. Beethoven was often inspired to write new music when playing a new type of piano.



The CHRIS MAENE FACTORY cherishes this philosophy. There is no better example than the straight-strung piano built for Maestro Daniel Barenboim. When Maestro played Liszt's straight-strung piano in Sienna, he was struck by the vital differences in sound compared to instruments with crossed strings. This fascination led to his search for the modern version. Maestro Barenboim was advised to contact Chris Maene and the two maestri were able to combine their respective musical and technical expertise. Chris Maene worked out a detailed concept for the new instrument which was then developed, constructed, tested and revealed to the world. The two "Barenboim-Maene" grand pianos were the first CHRIS MAENE straight-strung pianos ever built. As a sign of gratitude and recognition, both instruments carry the name of Maestro Barenboim. Maestro Barenboim is no exception. For decades the CHRIS MAENE FACTORY has worked closely with musicians and institutions all over the world.



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*"The warmth and tonal characteristics of the traditional straight-strung instruments is so different from the homogenous tone produced by the modern piano across its entire range. The clearly distinguishable voices and colour across its registers of Liszt's piano inspired me to explore the possibility of combining these qualities with the power, looks, evenness of touch, stability of tuning and other technical advantages of the modern piano. I am so delighted to have worked with Chris Maene, who had the same dream and I must pay tribute to his incredible technical expertise and his deep respect for both tradition and innovation ... It may not look that different, but its construction and sound possibilities make it a brand-new piano which I hope will be embraced by pianists and music-lovers as a real alternative for the 21st century."*

Daniel Barenboim

## TECHNICAL DATA

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- Model: CM // Concert Grand 284
- Dimensions: L 284 cm / W 157 cm
- Compass: 90 keys, GGG – c''''
- Keyboard: Kluge, Remscheid, Germany (built according to Chris Maene specifications)
- Black keys: ebony wood
- White keys: non-slippery and non-reflecting composite material
- Bass strings: Bespoke brass wound bass strings, handmade and custom calculated
- Action: Renner action and hammers / Built according to Chris Maene specifications
- Soundboard: Patent Chris Maene / Red spruce from the Alps / Hand polished

