November 4, 2026
Questions from Triple Canopy:

1. What relationship do you see between your electronic works and solo piano works?

The most direct relationships would be the frequent use of piano in both my house and electroacoustic projects, starting with my first release "Raw Through a Straw" in 1993. For most of my career I have used digital keyboards, combining improvisation captured by MIDI, digitally stepping in notes one by one, and other computer editing. As someone who cannot play keyboard in a traditional sense, and who has no training, I have always played with how the act of releasing a recording on physical media will automatically lend it credibility. What was basically cat-on-the-keyboard chaos would typically be filtered through listener expectations to be heard as a skilled player who chooses to eschew convention. This was a cultural tendency I had already worked with during my college years studying visual art, where I first developed clear critiques of the cultural functions of authenticity, originality, creativity, etc.

This premise was expanded through my *Rubato Series* of digitally composed piano solo albums covering Kraftwerk, Gary Numan and Devo. In the liner notes I was clear that the recordings were digitally composed and played on a synth, but reviewers typically overlooked this and received them as acoustic piano. During an interview Numan once even referred to my covers of his songs, saying I played piano better than him. So the functional illusion of talent goes a long way. Of course, my interest in doing this is related to a deconstruction of dominant culture and the musical mainstream. It is not to climb a cultural or economic ladder by fooling people. I am always open about the fact that I cannot play instruments in a conventional sense, and try to explain where my critical interests lie. And stylistically my performances are obviously not in song form.

When it comes to actually using an acoustic piano, my first unedited piano solo release was part of my 2012 album *Soulnessless*, the +30 hour minimalist piece "Canto V: Meditation on Wage Labor and the Death of the Album." That was recorded in a series of roughly six hour sittings which were concatenated unedited into a single audio file. There was also an unedited piano solo included in my 2017 album *Deproduction*, followed a few years later with a roughly 10 minute recording included in a 24 hour performance called "Time Piece," curated by Berno Odo Polzer for the 2021 edition of MaerzMusik in Berlin.

In terms of actual keyboard performances before an audience without computer assistance, it always came through a push from somoene else. My first time was through Joe Claussel, who asked me to play "Raw Through A Straw" live in Sapporo. I actually opened for Lonnie Liston Smith if you can believe that (I still can't). Then there were the times I sat in at the piano with Zeitkratzer performing covers of my tracks, some recordings of which have been released on CD and vinyl through my Comatonse label. "Canto V" was performed live in full with a rotating staff who played the piano in two hour shifts, ranging from professional pianists like Heloisa Amaral and Reinhold Friedl to non-

keyboardists like Mark Fell and myself. Based on the way I play and compose, it was generally more difficult for the professionals than non-professionals.

It was during the "plandemic" shutdowns that I finally got an actual acoustic piano through a warehouser in Osaka - a 1970's Diapason 210E. Despite my work's emphasis on electronic instruments, I have also always collected a random assortment of acoustic instruments, drums and organs found cheap or pulled out of the trash. My mom played hammered dulcimers, and when she passed I ended up inheriting two of those as well. On a nerd level, I like figuring out the way things are built, and seeing the technology behind instruments. So getting a piano was more part of that hobby than anything work related. I had previously helped Tsuji Aiko find a much higher quality used Diapason, and got into them. They are a Japanese piano, currently made by Kawasaki, but the model I have is from back when it was still a smaller independent company. Diapasons have more of a rounded, mellow German piano tone that is quite different from the sharper, thinner sound of Yamaha pianos.

This current series of piano solo performances weirdly began with two simultaneous invitations to play in 2024 - one from Trajal Harrell at the Schauspielhaus Zurich in Switzerland, and the other from Thomas Venker at the Monheim Triennale in Germany. Venker's invitation came first, but the show in Zurich actually happened a month before the one in Monheim.

I was incredibly depressed and exhausted by the constant destruction of my electronic studio through forced software updates and other things, which was a major reason for my drop in studio productions over the years. On a sonic level, the sounds of glitches and errors had also shifted with the improvement of audio algorithms and processor speeds. I often compare the glitches of early digital software to GIF images, and later software to JPEG images. With GIF compression, the individual pixels are approximations that remain distinct squares. JPEG compression, on the other hand, creates broader fields that appear more natural and blended. The same goes for audio algorithms, which have become increasingly smooth and accurate (as a result of market driven attempts to emulate things like acoustic instruments, etc.). So from the software side, those 90s and early 00s digital sounds are no longer possible. That era's cultural tensions between digital audio and mainstream music have also entirely disappeared. Everything is digital now. Simultaneously, changes in the behaviors of music distributors, sales outlets and listeners have also culturally shifted. So while most of my cultural criticisms still hold weight, the question of how the sounds of digital audio production relate to the power dynamics of dominant culture has become far less interesting, and less relevant.

Today, I suppose the closest thing to that aesthetic would be media works that emphasize the errors of AI generated audio and visuals. But even that is now passé, and was doomed to ultimately fall into the same trap of just helping big businesses improve their algorithms all the quicker. I despise AI, and think its propensity to amplify mistakes and diversions at an exponential rate - typically doubling down on its errors - is truly dangerous. For example, the US military's use of AI targeting in Iran resulting in the deadly bombing of a girls school. Those

deaths and others are real, not rhetorical. Even more so, I despise the corrupt and socially bankrupt AI developers who feel it is their right to openly rape the planet of all information, but keep their data proprietary. It is the amplified version of what happened decades ago around audio sampling and authorship rights. Like the music industry, AI companies constantly bombard us with information to be internalized as part of our personal identities, but at no point are we as individuals allowed to culturally posses that information. Authorship rights sound like something that would protect the individual, but they are more often the basis for corporate exploitation of individual labor and lawsuits against minor producers. Amidst AI bots scanning all media online, and their notifying minor producers' use of mainstream cultural media to the legal departments of conglomerate rights holders, collage based and culturally critical works become increasingly impossible. Meanwhile, I know that several of my own tracks have been used for AI training without my permission, and I have zero faith in the advertised removal process.

In daily life, I hear how AI composes and renders sounds in background music at restaurants and shops. There is a lot of AI generated jazz and relaxation piano out there. While it is not my main objective, I suspect the way I play piano is not easily replicated by AI. If so, I do not consider that any testimony to human authenticity or ingenuity, but rather a possible sounding of the culturally minor. If only for the moment.

2. What do you make of the trope of the "solo piano performance" (see: famous examples by Keith Jarrett, Thelonious Monk, Charles Mingus, etc.) and the appeals to intimacy and authenticity inherent in the form? How do you see this new piano work engaging—or not—with these expectations?

I already consider all of my various types of performances as having a relation to the transgendered stage, consciously failing to deliver on the tropes of flamboyancy and extravagance typically associated with drag shows and instead opting for anti-spectacle and boredom. For me, the value of drag performance - its cultural use value - rests in the fact that it remains something other than the thing it emulates. We are always aware that drag occupies a different cultural space than what it mimics. It is about facsimile. And that makes it a relevant site for critiquing notions of authenticity and originality - despite today's dominant rhetoric around drag culture being nothing but claims to authenticity. So that is one subtext to these shows.

I think we would agree that most everybody can immediately feel what you mean by that word "trope," but if you dig into that feeling of consensus you quickly realize everyone is thinking something different. For example, the most frequent online comments people make about any of my *Rubato Series* is either, "boring, it's just piano," or conversely, "good despite being just piano." That tells me that piano solo as a format remains culturally awkward and unpopular, regardless of the trope. In that sense, it seems like a reasonable enough site for doing the types of themes and culture jamming I have performed in other audio marketplaces. Maybe not. This is only my fourth such performance, so I can't really say for sure.

I am mostly influenced by plink-plonk piano playing that showed up in pop songs of my youth: Gary Numan's "Telekon," David Bowie's "Aladdin Sane," The Monkees' "Writing Wrongs." I think if you listened to any of those you would immediately recognize their echoes in my own catalog. In reference to strict piano solos, as a teen I was drawn to late 70s and early 80s albums that went against the emergence of Vangelis-style New Age, like Lubomyr Melnyk's "KMH," Akemi Kuniyoshi-Kuhn's "Motion-E-Motion," and especially Evan Lurie's "Happy? Here? Now?" I have also always loved jazz players like Vince Guaraldi (not just for his Charlie Brown soundtracks), and Lonnie Liston Smith.

Like my other works, these piano solos stem from an interest in anti-classicism and an active aversion to traditional musicology. Sonically my playing doesn't fall into melody, and structurally it doesn't fall into song. The pieces sit in the realm of ambient. I have never been a fan of free improvisational jazz or similarly chaotic new music. I understand their historical value in relation to rejections of conventional musicology, but I find them physically unpleasant to listen to. Like a Fluxus art performance, it may read okay on paper, but I don't want to be there when it happens. Conversely, I am leery of playing too pretty, because then everything falls back into that trope of affect you mentioned. It quickly becomes New Age, which is a continual concern when producing my electroacoustic and ambient albums. Fortunately within a live setting, even if the sound momentarily gets too pleasant that gets tempered for the audience by the unpleasantness of sitting still for an hour.

I try to structure things so that the audience has to do a little work as listeners, but to get them to do that means it has to sound like there is work being done. Like any drag performance, it benefits from preparation and run throughs - which I do daily for a month before each show. I am not interested in just taking a piss by randomly smashing piano keys. That would be too easy, too expected, and too readily dismissed. The point would be made in the first thirty seconds. To avoid sonically falling into that, there is a degree of composition. I play within the parameters of a previously established improvisational system. I develop a different system for each show, so each one is different. To undercut any sense of uniqueness, and in rejection of the trope of "once in a lifetime moment" recordings like Jarrett's *The Köln Concert*, there is no recording of the shows allowed However, I do record the month of prep sessions beforehand. They will eventually be self-released through Comatonse Recordings as collections containing 4-5 separate takes, giving a sense of what happened at the live performances while still refusing to settle on a single take as "the one."

Just as with my +30 hour piece "Canto V," I could have easily generated a random audio file to fill the desired length, but that lack of effort would have bled into to how open listeners would be to investing in its accompanying social analysis (which in the album's text occupies 52 pages). When we performed it live, we had bedding and some people stayed the entire 30 hours. That is more difficult, and humiliating, to actually try to sit for lengths of time at a piano seriously attempting to conjure a culturally familiar illusion of talent despite its absence.

That labor is perceptible by an audience - when openly placed before them to be pondered - and I suspect is circling the core of these shows.