

DAN TEPFER'S NATURAL MACHINES



Dan Tepfer performing Natural Machines at Melbourne Planetarium as part of the 2022 Melbourne International Jazz Festival.
Credit: @Duncographic

In an age of unprecedented technological advancement, Dan Tepfer is changing the definition of what a musical instrument can be. Featured in an [NPR documentary viewed by 1.5 million people](#), Dan Tepfer shows his pioneering skill in this concert by programming a Yamaha Disklavier to respond in real time to the music he improvises at the piano. Meanwhile, another computer program turns the music into stunning animated visual art. Called "fascinating and ingenious" by Rolling Stone, the Natural Machines performance lives at a unique intersection of mechanical and natural processes, making it "more than a solo piano album... a multimedia piece of contemporary art so well made in its process and components and expressed by such a thoughtful, talented, evocative pianist... that it becomes a complete experience" (NextBop).

Program length

60 minutes (flexible)

Set up time

2.5 - 4 hours (please refer to tech rider [here](#))

Video Links

Full Natural Machines video album on YouTube:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLUzNnspxG1f5Bks6R8ckCzDSEn__psaO8

Natural Machines Live from the Boboli Gardens, Florence (New Generation Festival):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sg5qEaunsls>

NPR Tiny Desk Concert:

<https://youtu.be/SaadsrHBygc>

Press

When musician Dan Tepfer was a kid, he taught himself to code on an early Macintosh computer that his dad brought home one day. That little kid grew up to be a world-renowned jazz pianist. And now, he has programmed another machine: his piano. For the past five years, Tepfer has been writing algorithms that direct a specially modified Yamaha piano to play along with him. Amazing — a duet with phantom hands.

[—NPR All Things Considered](#)

Fascinating... Ingenious. Jazz pianist Dan Tepfer is known for forging deep musical relationships. The 2018 album *Decade* featured highly attuned duets between the 37-year-old and legendary 91-year-old alto saxophonist Lee Konitz, his collaborator for 10 years. Tepfer's new album features a similar kind of intense communication — the only difference is that this time, his partner is an algorithm.

[—Rolling Stone](#)

Often lovely, in a jaggedly hypnotic way... Tepfer's work is a modern update of what Brian Eno dubbed "generative music".

[—The New Yorker](#)

What's most striking — along with the stunning visuals — is how human it all sounds, as if Tepfer were engaged in a deep conversation with another musician. It's impossible to tell where Tepfer ends and the machine begins.

[—Jazziz \(UK\)](#)

Experimental and highly innovative... Pianist Dan Tepfer has created a futuristic version of the player piano.

[—Gothamist](#)

More than a solo piano album... a multimedia piece of contemporary art so well made in its process and components and expressed by such a thoughtful, talented, evocative pianist... [that it becomes] a complete experience.

[—NextBop.com](#)

High-resolution images

dantepfer.com/photo

Biography

One of his generation's extraordinary talents, Dan Tepfer has earned an international reputation as a pianist-composer of wide-ranging innovation, individuality, and drive—one "who refuses to set himself limits" (France's *Télérama*). The New York City-based Tepfer, born in 1982 in Paris to American parents, has recorded and performed around the world with some of the leading lights in jazz and classical music, from Lee Konitz to Renée Fleming, and released eleven albums of his own in solo, duo and trio formats.

Tepfer earned global acclaim for his 2011 release *Goldberg Variations / Variations*, a disc that sees him performing J.S. Bach's masterpiece as well as improvising upon it—to "elegant, thoughtful and thrilling" effect (*New York magazine*). Tepfer's 2019 video album *Natural Machines* stands as one of his most ingeniously forward-minded yet, finding him exploring in real time the intersection between science and art, coding and improvisation, digital algorithms and the rhythms of the heart. The *New York Times* has called him "a deeply rational improviser drawn to the unknown." His 2023 return to Bach, *Inventions / Reinventions*, an exploration of the narrative processes behind Bach's beloved *Inventions*, became a best-seller, spending two weeks in the #1 spot on the *Billboard Classical Charts*.

During the Covid pandemic, his belief that music brings people together in times of crisis led him to dive headlong into live-streaming, performing close to two hundred online concerts from his home for a devoted community of listeners. As part of this effort, he pioneered ultra-low-latency audio technology enabling him to perform live through the internet with musicians in separate locations, culminating in the development of his own app, *FarPlay*.

Tepfer has composed for various ensembles beyond jazz. His piano quintet *Solar Spiral* was premiered in 2016 at Chicago's *Ravinia Festival*, with Tepfer performing alongside the *Avalon String Quartet*. Tepfer has received commissions from the *Prague Castle Guard Orchestra* for two works: the suite *Algorithmic Transform*(2015) and a concerto for symphonic wind band and improvising piano, *The View from Orohena* (2010). In summer 2019, Tepfer unveiled his jazz-trio arrangement of Stravinsky's Baroque-channeling *Pulcinella*. In 2024-2025, he'll premiere three new major commissions: a suite for choir and piano in memory of his mother, a chorister at the *Paris Opera*; a song cycle for jazz great Cécile McLorin Salvant and string orchestra; and a symphonic work featuring algorithms and visuals.

Tepfer's honors include first prizes at the 2006 *Montreux Jazz Festival Solo Piano Competition*, the 2006 *East Coast Jazz Festival Competition*, and the 2007 *American Pianists Association Jazz Piano Competition*, as well as fellowships from the *American Academy of Arts and Letters* (2014), the *MacDowell Colony* (2016), and the *Fondation BNP-Paribas* (2018, 2021 & 2024).

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