



Derek Baron

The Holy Restaurant

Recital is pleased to announce *The Holy Restaurant*, the new full-length album by Derek Baron, and their first solo LP since *Curtain* (Recital, 2020).



The album is built from years of miniature transcriptions of improvisations, functioning in many ways as a sister to *Curtain*. Half-thoughts and mistakes are revisited, gilded, and illuminated. The floorboards of the album are laid with piano, organ, string pads, while serrated accruals (distortions, flourishes, and recording interferences) step and drop overhead. The resulting conflux, as Baron notes in the accompanying booklet “becomes the point and the problem to explore.”

The second track “Oven Girls” opens with us galloping on a horse in some video-game meadow on a bed of MIDI strings. Abruptly, a helicopter soars over us and we transition to a latticed guitar and woodwind exploration. The album rolls on in this fashion, juxtaposing musical half-sentences within a museum of sounds rag-picked from history and daily life. Emotional interviews with Midwestern friars who build and sell caskets are set against gothic piano and guitar duets. On “Music in the Casket,” A disorienting and hilariously epic guitar solo erupts. The penultimate titular piece, “The Holy Restaurant,” sets a text written by Baron’s grandfather. A small chorus voices his words, echoing the humanistic storytelling of “Blue” Gene Tyranny’s “A Letter From Home.” Under sunlit piano progressions, a fleet of smokey trumpets emerges.

Running throughout the album is a series of “traces”: short melodic phrases painted over again and again with different real and MIDI instrumentation. The “luxurious asceticism of doubling” as Baron puts it. They explain, “Part of the allure for me is that the ‘original’ material is itself kind of thin, sketchy, meaningless, maybe calling attention to itself only by way of a felicitous mistake. Hearing, transcribing, and learning what was basically only ever played first on accident becomes the guiding concern.”

The album’s shifting, variegated forms and voices pass quickly; the record feels both comforting and elusive, suitable for any hour of the day.

The Holy Restaurant features guest players Ed Atkins, Lucy Liyou, Quentin Moore, Emily Martin, Dominic Frigo, Jacob Wick, and several of Baron’s family members.

Artist: Derek Baron

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Purchase: <https://recitalprogram.bandcamp.com/album/the-holy-restaurant>

Distro / Press: seantristanmccann@gmail.com

- Limited LP edition of 200
- 12-page booklet with liner notes and artwork

Artist Bio:

Derek Baron is a composer, writer, and teacher. They play in the bands Cop Tears and Permanent Six Flags, and run the record label Reading Group.



photo by Emily Martin



4. "Hover!"

"Hover!" was a CD-ROM computer game that came with the first Microsoft PC we had in our house in the mid-1990s. Something that my sibling and I spent a lot of time looking at. It was sort of a mix of bumper cars and capture the flag, but also Wolfenstein?

5. "Palisades"

"Palisades" is short organ interlude written for and performed by one of my oldest friends, Dominic Frigo on the organ at the church in New Jersey where he works. What's written here is played twice, and the charming embellishments and flubbed notes become the source of the piece's minor pleasure in Dom's hands. Like the rest of the music here, this interlude is an only very minimally edited transcription of an improvisation, and part of what interests me here is the move from a cheap imitative voice leading to these modal and starker parallels in the final two systems, feeling both more twentieth and more twentieth century. Dom is a serious musician in a way that I am not and I owe much of my musical life to him.

6. "b2"

This sequence is another transcription of a series of monophonic random lines played on top of one another with only minimal memory of what came before or underneath. It is played here by Ed Atkins and fused over inappropriately by my midi chamber ensemble. At a concert that Ed and Steve hosted for me in 2023, I didn't want to show up empty handed so I learned a piece of music that I knew Ed liked and performed it at the concert as a thanks for having me. This little interlude is different, but comparable. At one point I had a reason why all three of these "interlude"-like pieces were scratched together on the album like this, but I don't remember what it was.



12. "Our Lady of the Mississippi"

"Our Lady of the Mississippi" is an illuminated dialogue between two sacred communities in eastern Iowa, the Sisters of the New Melleray Abbey, a Christian monastery in Postville, and the Abbey of Our Lady of the Mississippi, a convent (also a Christian) in Dubuque, the town where my mother was born. I heard about the sisters of Our Lady of the Mississippi when I was visiting Grinnell in 2023 and was pleased to find that the abbey supports itself by making candy—specifically caramels—which during the winter holidays can barely be made fast enough to keep up with demand from all over the world. Meanwhile, the sisters sustain New Melleray through a humble but successful business making caskets. There are several lovely documentaries about these two Abbeys on YouTube that you can find. In addition to the humble expression, in Midwestern accents, of very old ways of organizing communal life, I am especially drawn to how these Trappists/Trappistines articulate the political economy of their respective vocations: sustaining their simple but abundant life, with a kind of pious antipathy towards the propulsive not of capitalism's growth-or-death-drive. In the context of that unchecked world-devouring whirl of capital, the Abbeys feel to me more like small, private projects or Alcoholics Anonymous.