

= Craig Taborn =

Craig Marvin Taborn (/ ˈteɪbɔːrn / ; born February 20 , 1970) is an American pianist , organist , keyboardist and composer . He works solo and in bands , mostly playing various forms of jazz . He started playing piano and Moog synthesizer as an adolescent and was influenced at an early stage by a wide range of music , including by the freedom expressed in recordings of free jazz and contemporary classical music .

While at university , Taborn toured and recorded with jazz saxophonist James Carter . Taborn went on to play with numerous other musicians in electronic and acoustic settings , while also building a reputation as a solo pianist . He has a range of styles , and often adapts his playing to the nature of the instrument and the sounds that he can make it produce . His improvising , particularly for solo piano , often adopts a modular approach , in which he begins with small units of melody and rhythm and then develops them into larger forms and structures .

In 2011 , Down Beat magazine chose Taborn as winner of the electric keyboard category , as well as rising star in both the piano and organ categories . By May 2016 , Taborn had released six albums under his own name and appeared on more than eighty as a sideman .

= = Early life = =

Taborn was born in Minneapolis , Minnesota , to John , a psychologist , and Marjorie , a social worker . He grew up in Golden Valley , Minnesota , where he attended Breck School . His parents gave him a Moog synthesizer as a present when he was 12 , which was also around the time when he started playing piano . He borrowed records from a public library and listened to public radio , discovering music from the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians and Sun Ra , among others . As a youth he also listened to heavy metal and contemporary classical music , and identified commonalities among these disparate forms of music .

At high school , Taborn studied music theory and composition with PhD @-@ qualified teachers for two years . In his own words , he is " not a classically trained pianist at all " ; he practiced with others , initially playing rock , progressive rock , and jazz fusion , before becoming more interested in jazz . He borrowed from the library Segments II (Orchestra Of Two Continents) by pianist Cecil Taylor 's band while at high school , but found separating the various elements of the music too difficult . After attending a Last Exit concert (a loud free jazz band of Peter Brötzmann , Bill Laswell , Ronald Shannon Jackson and Sonny Sharrock) , he went home and listened to the Taylor album again : " It was more manageable in terms of being able to hear detail and listen to content . That was a big moment in terms of being able to relax and process information in more abstract environments . "

= = Later life and career = =

= = = 1988 ? 1999 = = =

Taborn studied at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor from 1988 . He auditioned for the jazz program in the university 's School of Music , but joined the College of Literature , Science and the Arts . Taborn met drummer Gerald Cleaver soon after arriving at university , and they established an electronic group , the Tracey Science Quartet . Taborn also played with Marcus Belgrave and Wendell Harrison . While still a university student , he became known for his membership of saxophonist James Carter 's band , where he contributed to a series of albums , beginning with JC on the Set , which was recorded in 1993 .

Taborn 's first recording as leader came in 1994 , and was released by DIW . Craig Taborn Trio , with bassist Jaribu Shahid and drummer Tani Tabbal , featured Taborn playing in a range of styles on piano and included several of his own compositions . At this stage in his career , his comments on his tastes in composition and performance were : " Even though I like avant garde jazz and classical music , I like to swing . I like to work with harmony and melody in my own music , and I like

acoustical instruments . But I can be quite dictatorial about the composed section , and lay down in great detail what everyone is supposed to do and how they should do it . "

Frequent performances and tours with Carter and others meant that Taborn 's studies were delayed : he graduated from university with a BA in general studies (rather than the intended English literature) in April 1995 , after which he moved to New York . He continued playing with Carter into 1998 . In the late 1990s , Taborn also recorded with saxophonist Roscoe Mitchell (Taborn 's first appearance on the ECM label) , and for techno producer Carl Craig 's album Programmed as part of Innerzone Orchestra .

= = = 2000 ? 2009 = = =

In 2001 , Taborn made his second recording as leader : Light Made Lighter , for Thirsty Ear , with Chris Lightcap on bass and Cleaver on drums . " On the strength of this recording " , wrote the Los Angeles Times reviewer , " Taborn emerges as one of the most exciting pianists to lead a band since the ascent of Matthew Shipp " . Another reviewer commented that " Taborn seems to revel in the cracks the way [Thelonious] Monk did , hitting the awkward @-@ sounding notes between the notes to punctuate his lines " .

In the 2000s , " Taborn became one of the most in @-@ demand musicians in New York " , in the words of one biographer . He played and recorded with a large , diverse range of musicians , in both free jazz and more mainstream bands , and playing various keyboard and electronic instruments . One critic observed that a lot of his collaborations in the early and mid @-@ 2000s did not feature a bassist , and suggested that Taborn 's " dexterity and inventiveness [...] stand in for both a keyboard and a bass player . " In 2001 , he had his first solo concert in New York , and made his first recordings under the leadership of saxophonist Tim Berne , and with a trio led by percussionist Susie Ibarra . On these , he employed electronics as well as piano . Taborn went on to record , during the period 2002 ? 04 , as a sideman under the leadership of Steve Coleman , Dave Douglas , Marty Ehrlich , Drew Gress , Evan Parker , Wadada Leo Smith , and others . In 2003 , Taborn toured Europe with Ibarra 's band , and played with saxophonist Lotte Anker for the first time .

Taborn 's third release as a leader was Junk Magic in 2004 , again for Thirsty Ear , with tenor saxophonist Aaron Stewart , violist Mat Maneri and drummer Dave King . The album 's title was also the name of the band , which was formed to be Taborn 's electronic group , allowing him to explore the interactions of composition , improvisation and electronics . Texture and pulse were important contributors to the overall sound .

Taborn played with Chris Potter from around 2005 , and toured Europe with the saxophonist 's Underground band early in 2007 . The pianist played the Monterey Jazz Festival in 2007 . In late 2007 and early 2008 , Taborn toured internationally with Underground , guitarist David Torn 's Prezents , as well as being part of shorter tours and making occasional appearances with Cleaver , Gress , Ibarra , Mitchell , and William Parker . In April 2008 he toured Europe with Berne 's Science Friction , was back in Europe for the first three weeks of the following month , this time as part of David Binney 's quartet , and returned there in November with Potter . Taborn remarked in 2008 that he was attempting to phase out his use of a laptop in performance , to allow him to concentrate more on improvising , and that he had delayed further performances as a leader , owing to finances . In the same year , he commented on the number of regular , working bands he was a member of : " You could say 15 to 20 . But if you 're talking about the ones that are regularly working right now , I 'd have to say seven or eight . "

After joining Michael Formanek 's quartet in 2008 , Taborn recorded under the double bassist 's leadership for the first time the following year . Also in 2009 , Taborn played with trumpeter Tomasz Sta?ko in New York , and returned to Europe for concerts with Torn , violinist Dominique Pifarély , and with his own trio .

= = = 2010 ? present = = =

In the early 2010s , Taborn continued playing and recording with others , but also had more solo

concerts than earlier in his career . He had a solo tour of Europe in 2010 , which may have led to an agreement with ECM to record his first solo piano album , *Avenging Angel* , which was released in 2011 . In critic Nate Chinen 's view , this album concentrated on " pure sound " , being " full of moments where a note hangs sharply in the air , and you hear the gathering overtones , the vibrations of the strings " . The album helped Taborn get more attention as a leader .

In 2010 , Taborn also toured Europe with Anker 's trio , Potter 's Underground , and played piano duets with Vijay Iyer . In the following year , Taborn again performed with Sta?ko , as part of drummer Paul Motian 's quartet , and had another solo tour of Europe . Taborn toured internationally with his own trio , Anker 's trio , and with Dave Holland 's quartet Prism in 2012 , and remained part of Holland 's band into 2014 .

A further ECM album , *Chants* , led by Taborn and with bassist Thomas Morgan and drummer Gerald Cleaver , was released in 2013 . This was the trio 's first release after eight years together . At this point , Taborn 's comments on composition and group performance were : " I knew that if I created a context and then deferred , fully , to Gerald 's and Thomas 's sensibilities it would inherently be stimulating and would also challenge the context . [...] I 'd much rather engage with the group , always , than have the format be ' piano adventures with supporting cast ' . " This band began a tour of Europe in 2014 , but Cleaver was replaced by J.T. Bates part of the way through it , owing to illness . Earlier the same year , Taborn played in a small group led by guitarist Bill Frisell . Taborn played as part of the Ches Smith Trio late in 2014 and toured with the percussionist and Mat Maneri early in 2016 . His sixth album as leader , *Flaga : Book of Angels Volume 27* , was released in 2016 . The trio recording , with Christian McBride on bass and Tyshawn Sorey on drums , employed compositions by John Zorn .

According to Jazz Police , Taborn is " basically shy " and prefers to " let his music do the talking " , which is why he " doesn 't have , or want , his own website " .

= = Playing style = =

Taborn 's range of playing styles was summarized by Mike Hobart in *The Financial Times* : Taborn " draws obliquely on the jazz tradition [...] he is as at home in free improvisation as he is in composition " . In an interview for *Down Beat* in 2011 , Taborn described his improvising style , particularly for solo piano . When playing , he often adopts a modular approach , using small units of melody and rhythm and then developing them . This can begin from as little as three notes , with structure being built around referring back to elements of the units . He starts simply , using basic elements such as major and minor thirds , varies them in turn , and then continues to expand to create larger structures .

Taborn has commented on the similarities and differences in his playing on piano and electronic instruments . Comparing his accompaniments on piano and Fender Rhodes , he said that :

I play some of the same chords on the piano , but there are definitely things I would do on the piano because it 's a more transparent instrument that I wouldn 't do on the Rhodes . [...] The Rhodes is so strong that when you play something on it , it really can dictate , because it 's louder and the timbre is much more opaque . So you leave more holes . On the piano , I would maybe play more sustain chords .

Taborn prefers earlier models of Fender Rhodes , for their raunchier sound . He also attempts to retain control over the sound that is presented to an audience when playing electronic instruments : he links his instruments to his own amplifier , and then has the venue take its feed from that amplifier .

Guitarist Torn commented that Taborn is " the rare musician who takes the approach , ' What can I do with this instrument ? ' rather than playing through its book of techniques . [... He] is able to eschew the technological aspect in order to get out the sounds that he feels are suitable for the music . "

= = Compositions = =

Taborn incorporates requirements to improvise within his compositions . Commenting on his writing for trio and quartet , Taborn stated that " I like multiple kinds of rhythmic things . On their own , they 're not so complicated , but when you fit them together , it sounds a little mysterious . A lot of that writing extends from my trio writing , where I 'm writing things that are playable in real time . There 's a certain orchestration you can get out of a four @-@ piece . How far can we suggest a larger ensemble ? [I want] to create the illusion of a larger ensemble " .

= = Awards = =

In 2009 and 2010 , Down Beat critics selected Taborn as the electric keyboard rising star winner . In 2011 , he was chosen as winner of the electric keyboard category , as well as rising star in both the piano and organ categories . In 2012 , he was given the North Sea Jazz Festival 's Paul Acket Award , which is presented " to an artist deserving wider recognition for extraordinary musicianship " . JazzTimes ranked Taborn in their 2013 critics ' poll as best piano player . In 2014 , the Jazz Journalists Association awarded him the Pianist of the Year award .

In 2014 , Taborn was given a Doris Duke Artist Award , worth up to \$ 275 @,@ 000 and given to " exemplary individual artists in contemporary dance , jazz , theatre and related interdisciplinary work who have proven their artistic vitality and commitment to their field . "

= = Discography = =

= = = As leader = = =