

1. First of all, please introduce yourself and your ongoing work or project.

I am a multimedia composer. I create digital, virtual and multi-sensory art pieces and installations. My main focus is the exploration of post-digital forms of communication, interaction and representation. I try to compose installation-like pieces that include the audience and allow a form of immersive experience.

My current project Av3ry is an AI program and a virtual persona, who is composing music, communicating with people and learning from interactions.

Av3ry combines natural language processing, algorithmic composition, data crawling and machine learning. She*he is constantly operating and creating music, poems and pictures in the moment - based on communication with interacting users. The music pieces are based on the criteria specified by the users. So the result is instant and individual - and send directly to a single user. The program extracts key features from the description of the users and tries to generate the pieces accordingly. Through the feedback of the users after listening to the result the algorithm can learn and fine-tune its parameters. In the same way the language generation is updated and adjusted through the conversations.

The main component is the on demand conversation and art generation of the bot. The goal is to create unique pieces of music and art in the given moment - and based on the criteria of the user interaction.

2. Why did you choose your current career? Does this match your expectations?

I first studies computer science and cognition with a focus on neural networks. But I had been a musician and electronic producer since I was a teenager. After I completed my first studies I focused on composition and ever since then combine these two fields - music and technology - in my works. I love my field of work because I am able and allow myself to surprise myself continuously. For me the most rewarding part is the constant exploration and trying new things. In that sense it is not always what I expected specifically - but the mode of working is what I had wished for.

3. Does designing programs also require inspiration? Are the programmer and artist identities somewhat similar?

These two disciplines are very interwoven for me. I compose and program at the same time, jumping back and forth between technical aspects and more aesthetic musical aspects. These two sides of my profession can't really be separated completely - and the programming and technical development is so integral in some pieces, that this also constitutes the creative aspect of these works. Nonetheless it is rewarding to switch between the two roles, as the difference makes it more fun to return to the other role again.

4. What inspired you to design Av3ry? Does this name have any special meaning?

The name originates from „Avery“, which is a unisex name. I did not want to assign a gender to this persona. The persona Av3ry is nonbinary. The substitution of the letter „e“ with the digit „3“ introduces the more computer-based aspect in the persona.

The initial interest was to design an autonomous entity that is able to learn and evolve over time. I wanted to create something that could surprise me, and also others. The aim was to create something with some sort of persona and agency. Something we can project on, something in which we can read intention. Like this we can also reflect one how we perceive another being, what are our expectations, what are we willing to interpret, what do we need for a coherent entity? For me the effect of this is, that we challenge the way we listen and read the outputs of Av3ry. I engage in a completely different mode of perception - as opposed to listening to an album or a track by an artist. It is the instantaneous and personalized form of directness and lack of foreseeability that I find interesting.

5. What do you hope this program can achieve? Or what feelings or thoughts can it bring to participants?

On the one hand, I hope to create unusual forms of interaction, music and art in general. The results of the program are sometimes strange, inhuman, surprising and radical. I find this a fruitful challenge of our own (and my) creative process. I wish it could provide new forms of listening. On the other hand it deals with the topics of a virtual entity - and I hope that this triggers reflections and considerations in the participants.

6. Do you think there is absolutely no substitute for human musicians? What is the future direction of AI music?

I see this work not as a substitute for human musicians - really more like an addition. It does some strange things a human would not do. And I then love to think about a concert or some other situation, where a human musician would actually behave like this and create this music. This bizarre thought makes me consider whether it would be great to make such radically extreme music on a stage. Seeing somebody do something and neglecting boundaries and rules can be inspiring and refreshing. I personally like to listen to Av3ry in that way.

In that sense I do not use Av3ry as a tool, which is one of the biggest, and probably the main (future) application of AI. AI will become an increasingly helpful toolbox to assist creative processes - and it will be used to generate music in certain fields like film scoring, computer games and similar applications even more. I personally prefer the application where the program has some sort of character - or at least autonomy. The uncanny, strange borders and side domains of what expression can be interests me the most.

7. What do you think are the most important technological advances in the past 100 years? And why?

8. In the next 10 years, in your field, what do you think is the most likely innovation or breakthrough?

9. What are your plans and projects next?

I am working on another project centered around AI: In that case it is a different approach which creates interpolated and newly generated musicians based on a video- and audio-database I recorded with a string ensemble. In that setting the live players will interact with computer-generated avatars, which have strange sonic and visual features.

Besides that I am working on several virtual reality projects. The next one will be a real-life computer game called „Genesis“, in which the audience members can control human avatars in an empty industrial hall.