Brian Belet

Mililani, Hawai'i
bbeletmusic@gmail.com

I wonder if the buzz surrounding AI in music is based largely on the oft-perceived illusion that new tech is automatically good tech. Granted, I am now in the dinosaur composer ranks, yet I work with tech and have delved deeply into stochastic processes in my electro-acoustic compositions (and live performer improvisation in my acoustic instrument works) for over forty years. With that preamble, I cannot imagine any scenario in which AI would be beneficial, or even moderately interesting to me. I want my music to be the result of my thoughts, my endeavors, and my labor. And the actual labor, the old-fashioned hard work of putting pen on paper to write notes, of trying and re-trying electronic gestures to get just the desired sound, of setting maximum and minimum limits and logical if-then branches for parameters subjected to stochastic algorithms that I have written (or at least modified) to suit the specific needs of the soundscape at hand – this time consuming labor is the fun part of composing, the intense contemplation that allows thoughts to fully develop and for unexpected new results to bubble to the surface. Why would I want an AI algorithm, that someone else constructed, to attempt short cuts within this process? It seems pointless and artistically defeating to me.

The primary argument that I have read in favor of AI in music, as in AI writing text, is to generate initial ideas. Do not you and I have enough ideas of our own? I certainly do. I don't need AI to suggest melodic lines, or harmonic structures; just as I don't need AI to generate a draft letter of recommendation or this current brief essay, which I am directly writing and rewriting over a period of several weeks.

Thankfully, in the end, we are discussing music here, and not a field that carries life and death consequences. So, no one will get hurt whether we use AI or not – good for us! I am leery of AI creeping into other areas of our lives. Search algorithms, especially in social media, are already an evil conspirator. I read this week in *Science News* about steps toward using AI-guided robots to perform medical surgery. Count me out for that! As with so much of our rapidly advancing technology, just because we can do something does not automatically imply that we should do that thing. Again, for us, it is only music we are discussing. Still, any reliance on AI in music runs the risk of losing the composer's voice in the mix, and why would we want that? To embrace or reject AI in music is an individual choice, at least for now, and I simply have no need for it in my work.