



Derek Piotr – Divine Supplication

written by  [Thomas Blake](#) 9 August, 2024

[Derek Piotr](#)'s work exists in a hazy zone, a grey area between archival field recording, abstract pop, old-timey folk and modern composition. But there is nothing hazy or grey about the music that emerges from these apparently disparate corners: Piotr has an uncanny knack for clarity, an ability to weave the strands of strangeness and familiarity together in such a way that the final pieces often feel like heirlooms, half-remembered things retrieved from dusty boxes which spark bright, lucid memories.

The elusive singularity of Piotr's music might have something to do with the wholly unique way in which he constructs his songs. *Divine Supplication*'s title track, for example, is a roots-up reworking of a comparatively obscure song called *That Point When* by **My Brightest Diamond**. The new version's warped electronics are inspired by 1990s microsound, while the vocals of **Maja Ratkje**, pulled into unrecognisable shapes, are allowed to float freely over the top. It shares very little with the original, except perhaps a strange and uneasy sense of comfort and an undeniable grace.

Divine Supplication was born out of personal turmoil, and the sheer variety of sound on the album reflects that. It's far from a depressing listen though; in fact, there is a stubborn joyousness to it, and sometimes a sense of peace. Piotr is unwilling to let tragedy take a firm foothold, though he recognises its presence. Openness is one of the few constants: he lets in influences from three-quarters of a millennium of musical history, from the Mediaeval recorder-led pieces *Nobilis Humilis* and *S'on Me Regard* to the percussive electronic glitchiness of *Avoiding Friction* and the dislocated, industrial club sounds of *East Tennessee*.

Perfect Matrimony – which features a sample of Piotr's sixteen-year-old self and a contribution from electronic pioneer **Fennesz** – begins with spoken word samples and edges forward on a bedrock of found sounds and manipulated electronica, before Piotr's intensely personal lyrics cut across the apparently unwelcoming sonic background, pulling the whole song in a more melodic direction. Eccentric Piotr may be, but he is far more than just a purveyor of random bursts of sound: each piece feels lovingly curated, formed into something moving or interesting or exhilarating. Even the minute-long *I Bowed* manages to pay homage to the Appalachian landscape in a disarmingly contemporary way.

Bell, Book, Candle begins with punchy, synthesised percussion and then proceeds to spook itself with eerie stabs. *Falling Away* uses **Ivan Cheng**'s chopped-up clarinet to replicate the dehumanising, disconcerting effects of grief. Perhaps the best moment is saved until last: *A Not-Quite Locked Door* is drawn-out and beautifully cathartic, and ends with a delicate passage of minimal IDM. Think *Selected Ambient Works* if Steve Reich had been involved.

Piotr has scattered small but important details everywhere across *Divine Supplication*: unexpected samples, leaps back and forward in time, found or appropriated sounds. There is something in his practice that aligns with plunderphonics, but it goes deeper than that, both in an emotional sense and also in terms of the level of creativity on show at any given moment. It's hard to think of a recent album with more going on than this one. It's also hard to think of an album that deals with personal difficulty in a more engaging, passionate and transformative way.