



Anna Ceeh in Conversation with Zsolt Olejnik

AC: You grew up in Hungary near the border of the former Yugoslavia. What kind of childhood memories do you have?

ZO: It was a small-town environment, its prevailing atmosphere transmitted by friendly local people, and the proximity of nature. Its advantage, which is also its disadvantage, is that it is out of circulation. Options were limited, and if I focus only on music, it was a challenge to learn about and locate the events, underground parties, and artists that inspired and launched me on the path that I am on. The effects of the nearly ten-year-long Yugoslav crisis and war that took place in the neighboring country were only indirectly and slightly felt in daily life.

AC: What kind of influences were there? Where did they come from? Did you have vinyls or even tapes?

ZO: Parties organized by friends, where there was fresh electronic music that could be heard there and nowhere else; the first underground radio in Pécs, where special-interest music was played in prime time; time spent with friends, when we talked at length about the various records we had, artists, and musical trends; and I could go on and on. All these were decisive, and they are so today.

AC: When did it start for you with the electronic music? And how?

ZO: From the early 1990s there was rapid development, and remarkable sound tracks were created and became genres. This simply fascinated and inspired me and made me sit down to fabricate tunes and implement my own ideas. More and more records were available, and it was possible to listen to a wide spectrum of music, from the night programs of music channels (e.g., from the broadcast of Housefrau, later Berlin House, or from the techno programs of the French MCM). With the expansion of the Internet the door became completely open.

AC: In the mid-1990s you started doing radio shows. Are you still doing them? What was the format of your radio shows?

ZO: My programs are mixes; therefore they are only about music. To date, most of them have been broadcast into the ether in Pécs, so there is a strong bond. If we look at the style, within a program it is homogeneous, but all in all, it covers nearly every genre that is close to me, from quite marginal, experimental electronics to techno, dubstep, etc.

AC: Can you talk a little bit about Porouser, the platform for minimal and conceptual art and experimental electronic music.

ZO: Porouser was always an online playground and personal showcase. The team behind it designated the objective of developing sound installations, mostly Internet-based sound applications. The idea was to produce contemporary electronic music works, sound compositions, which were made on the basis of the samples and sequences created with these online apps. Two compilation albums have been released based on this conception, with more than twenty contributing artists. After eight successful years, continuous participation in Prix Ars Electronica during that time, and numerous live acts at festivals like X-Peripheria, the project was closed down in 2006.



AC: What about your work under the pseudonym Nicron? Where does the name Nicron come from?

ZO: It is very simple: it was made from the word micron with a change of letters, and it refers to the elaborated sounds and the microscopic sound structures that I'm using. I started using this pseudonym ten years ago, in 2001.

AC: You are an architect and musician. Do you think these two professions are related?

ZO: Both are processes that require creativity and emotions, and the end product of these is created for some kind of goal. Architecture takes possession of a piece of space and personalizes it; music, in contrast, takes possession of the moment, a concrete piece of time. The timelessness of separated space can be resolved by sounds assigned to it, and architecture may put a sound composition into space. This interplay can join them and can make them into one.

AC: As a flash developer and graphic designer, you work with the newest digital technologies. Is that also the case for your sound productions?

ZO: It is inspiring to create in an environment that is innovative, in which the freshness and dynamism of the technology can be felt. It opens up new perspectives, provides new tools, and thus broadens the horizons of the artist. It changes you, makes you develop and progress, which, I think, a musician always needs.

AC: Is your sound only digital?

ZO: Yes, it is. I assemble only computer-generated tones into complex sound fabrics.

AC: What do you think of analog music technologies or analog tools?

ZO: The technology is based on different foundations, but the goal is the same: the expression of the individual through sound and by rendering sounds into compositions. Analog instruments can express the musician's feelings and thoughts as effectively as digital, software-based ones or any other kind of sound devices, or maybe their fusion. It is always the relationship between the artist and the instrument that decides what the right choice is.

AC: Where did your main influences come from in terms of electronic music?

ZO: The source of the main effects is, in my opinion, progressive electronic music, which has been continuously developing since the nineties, released by label companies such as Mille Plateaux, Chain Reaction, Raster-Noton, 12k, or the Vienna-based Mego.

AC: Are there architectural projects that could visualize the sound?

ZO: If we start from the theory of Friedrich Schlegel, according to which architecture is frozen music, every building is a three-dimensional projection of a particular state of a sound, or a sound composition.

AC: How would you describe your sound?

ZO: In a nutshell, I aim to create such sound compositions that are unique in structural setup and phonation using precise sound placement, clear sound shapes, abstract structures, and beats.



AC: Do you prefer solo work or collaborations?

ZO: I like both methods and find them exciting, but I mostly compose alone.

AC: *The Morning Line* project takes place at the Schwarzenbergplatz, in the heart of the city. This project represents the twenty-first century, especially in the field of sound, or the innovative sound system with series of audio zones. How do you see this as an architect and sound producer?

ZO: The architectural realization of *The Morning Line* is exciting, the organic space composed from identical building blocks and patterns is clear and spectacular, with relationships that can be interpreted in the language of mathematics and music. Built on the characteristics of the structure, the sound composition almost creates itself.