

Monday, March 26, 2012

[EIC's 10Q's w/ Derek Piotr](#)

"..between the scary, the mechanical, the maniacal & the emotionally inept.."



Derek Piotr

Maladroït Mechanized Acuity

Derek Piotr Bio:

Derek Piotr is a Poland-born sound artist based in New England, whose work focuses primarily on the voice. He has been intern to Meredith Monk, and had his work featured on The Wire's Adventures in Modern Music program.



Hello, how are you?

I'm well; currently sorting releases for the 2012 and planning my live show a little more extensively, planning visuals and whatnot. I'm also in the middle of talking to radio stations for a new radio play I've composed.

What are you currently listening to?

Lately I've been listening to a lot of [Morton Feldman](#) and Harry Partch, but it being winter here, Björk's album 'Vespertine' is on rotation too. Gudrun Gut's album '[I Put A Record On](#)' is getting a lot of spins, as is Steinbrüchel's '[Skizzen](#)'.

Who were/are your biggest influences when it came to sculpting your sound?

When I was about 16 and started putting my first experiments on the web, Last.fm recommended a bunch of similar artists to my work, and one of them was AGF. I am totally in love with her debut record, 'Head Slash Bauch', and her work in general. HSB really got inside my head while I was in high school, and I felt like I had to do something about it, so I contacted her and asked her a few questions, which snowballed into two years of trading emails with her and culminated in her offering to help produce my debut, 'AGORA'. I have been very fortunate. She continues to be someone I trade ideas with and share beautiful things with. [Meredith Monk](#) is also a big inspiration for me. I was intern to her in summer 2010 and that experience has really informed how I incorporate vocals into my work. A lot of her vocal pieces never have any language to them, so she opened the door to wordless vocal work for me, in a big way.

Care to tell us a little about '[AGORA](#)' and it's remix partner; theme, favorite song, etc.?

'AGORA' is my debut full-length record. It sort of grew out of my love for the sound mp3s get when they've been fileshared a zillion times over soulseek or something: there's a kind of hollow hiss that distorts and crushes the audio. So I intentionally added a lot of grain and hiss to this record. I have also had a fascination for a long time with Eastern melodies and scales, so when I wrote the manifesto for this album I knew it had to include samples from different countries. One of my best friends is a Pakistani vocalist, so she ended up contributing to this record as well. The word agora had been floating around in my writing since 2009, but aside from the ancient Greek implication of a meeting point (which this record was), it also means "now" in Portuguese, which is kind of a nice urgency. so the title has many meanings. working with AGF on the material was incredible, she's very precise, humble, and open-minded. for one piece on the record, Value System, she used the same patch on my voice that she used on her record 'Head Slash Bauch'. Hearing my own material put through that filter gave me goosebumps.

Other collaborations that I had wanted to happen for a long time finally happened during the making of 'AGORA', some vocal work with Zach Thorpe and production collabs with beatsmiths Salakapakka Sound System and HeeG. the title of the record seemed to conjure a very literal meeting point for a lot of things, which I find quite interesting.

the "gatherings" continued when I decided on curating a remix album, 'AGORA Regathered'. I have always loved listening to remixes; I think they're an interesting way to extend an artist's body of work. Actually I find often that remixes of my work are particularly inspiring to me; it can kind of blueprint techniques with my material that I could try. I find that really powerful and fertile. People I never would have expected to say yes answered my calls and provided remixes, among them Blevin Blectum, Steinbrüchel and Scanner. I received about 60 remixes during the curation process and I worked very hard with some of the mixers to ensure all of the remixes that ended up on the release would be in flow with one another; this sometimes meant asking for redos or remixes of different tracks from the same producer...it was far more labor intensive than it maybe should have been, but I feel it was well worth the effort.

I have a new record coming out in the spring, called 'Airing'. The sonic world of this album is based around the sound of the bell, and also incorporates a bunch of samples of radio static, hence the title Airing (Air. ring.). I am sort of going back to the early electroacoustic composers with this release, I aimed to have a lot of "classical" instruments on it this time, versus 'AGORA' which is more digital, so I bought a toy piano and some croatles and played them on this record. I also visited Boston last spring, so I played violin at Berklee and recorded that, it ended up on one track on the record. conventional musicality is not such a bad thing! I also decided to multitrack my own voice on this record, that is something I wish had explored a little more on 'AGORA'.

If you could collaborate with any artist of your choosing, whom would it be with and why?

I have been very fortunate to work with or alongside a lot of artists I admire, but I think it would be nice to collaborate with [Gudrun Gut](#) or even [Steinbrüchel](#) more extensively. I think it could also be really interesting to work with St. Vincent; her record '[Actor](#)' is to this day one of my favourites and I'd love to push her sound even further into experimental territory.

Any side projects/collabs we should know about?

At present I am finishing up a collaboration with a countertenor named Mikah Meyer. We recorded in a cathedral in December, organ and voice, and I am now layering and processing and adding some delicate electronics. It

should be released by March.

I am also in the middle of a project I have called "Radio Mantras"; I have created extended forms of this piece: <http://derekpiotr.bandcamp.com/track/radimantra> , and also a remix by Safety Scissors will appear on that release. I am planning it as both an EP and a radio show, which should be out by June. many more collaborations are in the making, but some that were released last year include a vocal only improvised EP with Ivan Cheng under the name Gobs: <http://gobs.bandcamp.com/> and a remix EP with Salakapakka Sound System of one of the AGORA tracks: http://freemusicarchive.org/music/DEREK_PIOTR_SALAKAPAKKA_SOUND_SYSTEM/Behaviour_state/

What movie would work best on mute with your music as it's soundtrack?

hmm...I don't watch movies much so this I am not sure of. I read a review of my album where David Lynch was mentioned, so perhaps one of his films, though I'd probably prefer to soundtrack an art film, or a nature or cultural documentary.

What's your least favorite thing about the music industry?

I think the industry, at least the electronic music industry, has gotten to the point where digitized releases are the easiest thing to promote and create, so that's mostly what's available. I am pretty certain that even 5 years ago I could have found someone to press my record, but funds and time are so low lately for labels that I decided to just go ahead and do limited run CDRs for the 'AGORA' material. It's all gotten quite DIY, which maybe isn't such a bad thing, but I have felt the sting for pressing a proper album for 'Airing' on my own.

You can only keep/listen to ONE album for the rest of your life. Which album would it be?

Either Björk's '[Medúlla](#)' or AGF's '[Head Slash Bauch](#)'. I cannot choose.

Are you living your dream?

In a lot of ways, yes. my music is widely distributed and I am working with people I want to work with, those two things are such gifts. But I'm ambitious, and I feel like I still have so much to do. I hope I continue to find the ways to do it.

Thanx Derek!

[Derek Piotr](#) is about to release his second LP in May, also he recently released [a remix companion to 'Agora'](#) that you should check out...

Posted by maestro.-.mischief [0 comments](#) [Links to this post](#)

Labels: [10 questions with, agf, bjork, derek piotr, experimental, gudrun gut, indie electronic, Industrial, ivan cheng, meredith monk, mikah meyer, safety scissors, salakapakka sound system, steinbruchel](#)