

ZAHRA MANI

M.A. Oxon
Composer & Musician
born 1978

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Zahra Mani is a musician, composer and sound architect from Pakistan and London. She has been living in Istria (Croatia) and Vienna (Austria) since 2001 and spends time in the UK and Pakistan.

Her music includes compositions for solo instruments, voices and ensembles, she composes for the radio and creates multi-channel sound installations and performances based on a Max/MSP patch that she continues to develop with Stephan Moore (Merce Cunningham Dance Company, www.oddnoise.com).

Her concerts involve live performances and improvisation in solo and ensemble constellations, in addition to sound installations and art in public spaces.

She plays the double bass, guitars, and piano, studied classical Indian music in Pakistan and studied tabla and sitar at an introductory level. Her compositions and performances also involve electronics, whereby her emphasis lies on an "organic" sound and she works exclusively with analogue sound sources and materials recorded and created "naturally", which she records herself using various devices.

She studied German and Philosophy at Oxford and in Vienna, and took part in the interdisciplinary MFA course at Bard College in Annandale on Hudson, NY, where she studied music and composition with tutors including Pauline Oliveros, Maryann Amacher, Richard Teitelbaum, Larry Polanski, Laetitia Sonami, Miya Masaoka, George Lewis, etc.

As a result of her studies in Oxford and Vienna she speaks, apart from English (mother tongue), fluent German, and can speak, read and write Urdu and Italian, with a basic command of Croatian and French.

Language is implicated in her sonic work as a means of expression and structure, just like musical and every day sounds. Her self-constructed sound archive is a constantly growing collection of recordings that she edits and mixes and integrates in her performances and compositions.

Her cultural background (she comes from a Pakistani / English, Muslim / Jewish family) is perhaps the basis for the fundamental openness that is also reflected in her music. She spent her childhood in London with regular intervals in Pakistan, including

summers and travels in the Himalayan Foothills of the former North-West Frontier Province (now KP) and the cities, mountains and valleys of northern Pakistan.

The self-explanatory approach to alienated perception, inhabiting the foreign and the other, affects her work and is evident in the flow of hearing and playing in her music.

Zahra Mani lays no boundaries around her sonic sphere and is open to experimentation, whereby her compositions and variations enable a constant play between lyricism and chaos. celebrating the seemingly indefinable contours of structure in sonic abstraction. Nothing is locked out and the diction is defined by heightened attention and demanding perceptive presence. The relative possibility of silence is an inherent condition and basis of her sonic language.

Her work is full of contrast and questioning self-contradiction, where mountainous layers of sonic surface give way to minimalistic reduction in a spatial spread of breathing acoustic densities.