

Print Run

New music books

Unpicking Norwegian knitting patterns and setting them to music, **Cory Arcangel and Stine Janvin** investigate what makes a score. By **Louise Gray**

Identity Pitches

Stine Janvin & Cory Arcangel

Primary Information Pbk 72 pp

What is a score? Is it a set of musical notations on manuscript paper? Is it a picture? Is it a series of written instructions? As so many composers have shown – Cornelius Cardew, John Cage, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Pauline Oliveros and the Fluxus artists (the list is far longer and stretches back to the 15th century at the very least) – a score is all of these things. And so it is with Stine Janvin and Cory Arcangel's *Identity Pitches*, which use three traditional Norwegian knitting patterns for lusekofte (lice jacket) jumpers as their launch pad for creating conceptual scores, which are then to be performed by any number of players, equipped with whatever instruments they choose.

The transliteration of instructions from one medium or technology to another as a way of creating something new is a timeless strategy. It offers a continuing engagement with what has gone before to discuss something of the present in which we live. In recent years, many artists have used data sets of various types as a raw material for music making. In this respect, one of the most virtuosic artists working in this way is the composer Jennifer Walshe's seriously high jinx in AI, but, equally, one might look at Beryl Korot's translations of loom patterns into multimedia works or anyone sonifying data for use as a compositional source.

Janvin, a Norwegian vocalist and sound artist, and Arcangel, a US conceptual artist well known for his data frying and now transplanted to Stavanger, are completely correct in reading their chosen patterns – the Setesdal, Fana and Selbu – as ripe for a new kind of performativity. Each pattern

has certain rules – an x signifies a tone, a square a pause, for example – with vertical structures signifying simultaneous sounds across the parts, and the time of the performance reading from left to right. Numbers on the patterns – often rendered visually, as a grid – link to harmonic information, and the process is enriched further by the artists' clear curiosity about Norwegian knitting, instruments and tunings, and how they might be related.

This relational aspect is at the heart of *Identity Pitches*. Janvin and Arcangel might use traditional information, but they also reinvent it as a way of creating new meanings. The book is small – under 80 pages and printed in an edition of 2000 – but the scores themselves are arresting patterns, with the printed artists' dialogue offering the reader a deeper understanding of the process at work here. At the end of the book there are three vividly coloured *Deep-Tuned Patterns* that take the patterns a step further down the path of continuous translation. Deep is the word here, as it points towards the practice of Pauline Oliveros and her injunction to deep listen, that is, to listen at all times to all things. A former student of Oliveros, Arcangel had his personal eureka moment in her suggestion that artistic inspiration might come from multiple sources. Like Oliveros, Arcangel's work has often taken him inside systems – the logic of a Nintendo game, for example – as a way of understanding something about access, agency and representation.

In terms of score structure and organisation, there are echoes of Oliveros's *To Valerie Solanas And Marilyn Monroe In Recognition Of Their Desperation*, a work that strives to put equality at its centre. For Janvin and Arcangel, deep knitting offers much to think about. □

Desperado: An Autobiography

Tomasz Stańko with Rafał Księżyk

Equinox Publishing Hbk 358 pp

"I have a penchant for the unstable," avers Tomasz Stańko. "If I'd been born later, I'd have been a rock musician or a hip-hop artist. This is all nonconformist music." The Polish trumpeter (1942–2018) was a restlessly creative player. As he comments here, "I'm an artist because I'm drawn to what doesn't exist. I find this world boring. There's always something missing."

Stańko was a vital figure in jazz and improvised music from the early 1960s onwards. His key early influence was pianist-composer Krzysztof Komeda, the tragic muse of Polish jazz, and he first became known as a member of Komeda's band (1963–67): "Word got out that I was a modern trumpeter who played mad music," he explains. He revered Komeda,

and comments that "he was like a guru... One thing that Komeda was a genius at: control over form... I was entirely fulfilled working with [him], as if I was playing my own music..."

John Coltrane and Ornette Coleman were unavoidable influences, but an important mentor was Don Cherry. Discussing the latter's "dirty sound", Stańko comments that "He was fundamental to my avant garde education". Later associations with Cecil Taylor, Lee Konitz, Edward Vesala and Tony Oxley have reinforced Stańko's stature. He's an immediately recognisable stylist, whose rough, flared tone, with flurries shooting into the upper register, originates with Miles Davis, but became one of the most individual in modern jazz. He was also, crucially, a fine jazz composer.

Desperado is an extended set of

interviews with journalist and broadcaster Rafał Księżyk, published in Polish in 2010 and now translated into English by Halina Maria Boniszewska. It's been rightly described as no holds barred. Księżyk is an equal partner for the discussions on music, and Stańko comes across as candid and insightful. The interviews took place during his late career eminence. The trumpeter's superb ECM album *Matka Joanna* appeared in 1994, and was followed three years later by the artistic triumph of his Komeda tribute *Litania*. He spent a decade leading a trio of young compatriots featuring brilliant pianist Marcin Wasilewski, and his final band was a New York quartet including David Virelles.

Księżyk clearly researched deeply and interrogates the trumpeter on bands, sessions and recordings. An editor could

have taken out some of the resulting repetition. Drug use was involved in what Stańko called "living on the edge". However, it is over-discussed. Generally, the book has too much detail and long-windedness that could have been edited down – though this is a common problem.

But we do learn much of interest. Stańko says that he was always a rather isolated person: "I don't have that many friends. I have acquaintances." He quips that "what I've always liked about jazz is that you can have an accountant standing alongside a madman, and the two of them feel great together, because they've played well together."

The book is well-produced, with a chronology and discography as well as numerous photographs. It's an important account of the work of a major musician. Andy Hamilton