

Nordic Confluences

Interpreting the Socio-Cultural Narratives of Nordic Confluent Jazz Music

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CERTIFICATION

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification.

I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis and all sources used have been acknowledged in this thesis.



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	v
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Methodology and Literature Overview	14
2. HISTORICAL CONTEXTUALISATION OF PARTICULAR NARRATIVES	21
2.1 Keith Jarrett's European Quartet	37
2.2 Edward Vesala and Iro Haarla	47
3. EXPRESSIONS OF PARTICULAR NARRATIVE AND THE SCHOLARSHIP OF FOLKLORE	73
3.1 Folkloristics	106
4. NARRATIVES OF UNIVERSALISM: CONFLUENT MUSIC, COMPOSITION AND PEDAGOGY	140
4.1 Composition in the Foreground	163
4.2 Pedagogy	178
5. EXPRESSIONS OF UNIVERSAL NARRATIVE, COMPOSITIONAL TECHNIQUES, CHANGE AND GLOBALISATION	187
5.1 Metamorphoses and Change	212
5.2 Globalisation and Universalism	223
6. CONCLUSION	247
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	263
APPENDICES	299
Norwegian Traditional, <i>Gamal bruremarsj fra Nord-Gudbrandsdalen</i> . Transcribed by Daniel Rorke from Jan Garbarek, Arild Andersen and Edward Vesala. <i>Triptykon</i> . 1972, ECM 1029. Compact Disc.	299

Keith Jarrett, <i>Questar</i> . Transcribed by Daniel Rorke from Keith Jarrett. <i>My Song</i> . 1978, ECM 1115. Compact Disc. (With consideration of the original score).	300
Jan Garbarek's Improvisation from <i>Questar</i> . Transcribed by Daniel Rorke from Keith Jarrett. <i>My Song</i> . 1978, ECM 1115. Compact Disc.	301
Bob Brookmeyer, <i>American Tragedy</i> , Extract from the original score (Usage comprises less than ten percent of the total score).	307
Trygve Seim's Improvisation from <i>Mmball</i> . Transcribed by Daniel Rorke from The Source. <i>The Source</i> . 2005, ECM 1966. Compact Disc.	308
Jan Garbarek's Improvisation from ' <i>Long As You Know You're Living Yours</i> '. Transcribed by Daniel Rorke from Keith Jarrett. <i>Belonging</i> . 1974, ECM 1050. Compact Disc.	310
Arve Henriksen's Improvisation from <i>Leaf and Rock</i> . Transcribed by Daniel Rorke from Arve Henriksen. Strjon. 2007, Rune Gramofon RCD 2061. Compact Disc.	312

ABSTRACT

This thesis intends to identify and position two differing, yet interacting, narratives of socio-cultural meaning that surrounded certain formative and influential Nordic jazz music. In the latter part of the twentieth century, a small number of jazz musicians from Nordic countries gradually became well known throughout the world for playing in a highly individual manner. Their music was one of confluence, in which the established traditions of jazz music melded with a deep empathy for Western art music, and also folk music of both local and distant sources. The resultant melting pot of influences was an art that was at once extraordinarily globalised yet simultaneously retained a strong regional identity. Much of the music of these artists became known and marketed as "The Nordic Sound" and what quickly followed was a slew of analogies comparing the minimalism and timbral aesthetics of the music to the stark Nordic landscape of the tundra and fjords. As the interpretation and understanding of the artists' work developed, they became important figures in a regionally specific socio-cultural narrative, and are frequently positioned in relation to the great cultural iconography and folklore of the Nordic peoples. At the same time this music represents a universalism within the jazz idiom, and the proclivity for jazz to intersect with musical material from many cultures and related identities.

The aim of this work is to establish the enduring relevance of this music in relation to the dual narratives of both a specific, localised Nordic identity, and also the greater diaspora of jazz music as it metamorphosed into a globalised improvisational language capable of assimilating and existing within a variety of music traditions, often simultaneously. This thesis will address the historic conditions surrounding the introduction of jazz music into the Nordic lands, the way in which these narratives of identity and change are expressed in the various subjects' art, and show points of intersection with relevant scholarship and theoretical frameworks. In conclusion it will be shown how the interaction of the two narratives, those of the regional and global sociology, have interacted to form an enduring aesthetic in the making of jazz music, which is rendered

poignant and cultural significant both domestically in the Nordic countries and also within the aesthetic consciousness of jazz music as an art form.