



Patrick Zimmerli - Book of Dreams

Musicians:

Patrick Zimmerli - Soprano and Tenor Saxophone

Kevin Hays - Piano

Satoshi Takeishi - Drums

Picture this: It's March 2020 and Patrick Zimmerli is holed up in Eastern France with his family in the Vosges mountains. Outside his wife's family farm there is a pasture, filled with the particularly hardy stock of cows that are prevalent in the area. Patrick thinks the cows might benefit from some music in their lives. So for the next 10 weeks you can find him in the early evenings serenading his bovine neighbors on solo saxophone. According to Patrick, they seem to appreciate it.

I'm sharing this anecdote here because it feels so germane to this recording. New Yorker, Patrick Zimmerli, blowing his tenor to the *vaches*, in the midst of a global pandemic—it's one of those images, or occurrences, that feel like it is right at the edge of conscious thought.

The material on *Book of Dreams* was composed by Patrick over a period of nearly 20 years. Patrick's primary work is as a composer of larger commissioned projects. While working on these commissioned works, the pieces and arrangements on this album would suddenly come to him, almost fully formed. Perhaps, in the middle of working on an Oratorio, Patrick would awake with a meditative stripped-down arrangement of "Insensatez," or, while composing say a Piano Concerto, the haunting melody of "Algo Mas" would bubble up from the submerged mind. He started a file to collect these pieces and named it *Book of Dreams*. Often written very early in the morning, these pieces came without conscious effort—gifts from the unconscious.

As a producer, my first question is often, "What's a project you've had under your hat for a long time that's looking for an outlet?" Newvelle was built with this kind of record in mind.

Patrick Zimmerli and pianist Kevin Hays go way back to the early 80s when they both were selected as National YoungArts award winners. This is Kevin's third go-round with Newvelle, and I've written a lot about him in the past: his flawless technique, burnished tone, and boundless melodicism. Both young musicians were heavily lauded. In fact, by the time Patrick had graduated high school, both he and Kevin had won numerous

national awards. Both arrived on the scene in NYC in the early 90s, already performing with some of the top musicians in the field.

However, Patrick was soon to take several musical left turns. He started falling hard for the deep structural complexity of classical modernists like Milton Babbitt, and Elliott Carter. His writing grew more elaborate and challenging. It was in his second working quartet that Patrick met the extraordinary drummer Satoshi Takeishi through his brother, bassist Stomu Takeishi. This band, alongside Newvelle stalwart Ben Monder, would work for weeks on elaborate compositions of Patrick's—counting out rhythms and singing melodies before even picking up their instruments. While Patrick was writing these more and more elaborate and precise works, the occasional melody would slip in and get filed in his *Book of Dreams*.

There's no bassist on this album, which leaves space for the particular compositional style of Patrick's. Kevin can play orchestrally here, with the full Steinway at his disposal, and Satoshi can dance around the edges. And they can go as big, or bigger, as any standard quartet. That huge tone that Satoshi gets is partially from a taiko drum head that he uses instead of a floor tom. In the studio, Patrick was more specific with his direction than almost anyone I've seen leading a record date. Despite its spontaneous providential arrival, this is music that is conceived fully before ever vibrating in the air. The resulting sound-texture and concept that this trio gets is completely unique. A dream captured.

- Elan Mehler