



### Else Marie Pade

pioneered electronic music in Denmark, using sound to recreate the solitude of her childhood and her time as a member of the Danish wartime resistance. A former student of Pierre Schaeffer, her work is finally being recognised after a lifetime of obscurity. By **Anne Hilde Neset**. Photography by **Mikael Gregorsky**

O H M

**It's not often** you find yourself conducting an interview at a residential home in Gentofte, an hour's train ride outside Copenhagen. A one-level complex of individual living units built in the 1990s, it's a typical Scandinavian home for the elderly, with cheery white-clad nurses in rubber clogs passing through its laminated hallways, and residents receiving visitors in communal areas to play cards, watch films or eat. "Else Marie, I should have guessed," remarks the nurse when we explain why we are here. "She is such a busy woman, the celebrity of the house," she beams.

When we enter Else Marie Pade's room, it's still hot from the lights of the documentary team that has just been interviewing her for Danish TV. 60 years after she started composing, having faced scepticism, disinterest and, in the worst scenarios, ridicule for much of her professional life, Pade is enjoying a resurgent interest in her work. And at 89 years old, she is still hatching ideas for pieces and installations.

Last month saw the release of *Svævninger* (literally *Beats* – the vibrations generated by the interference between two frequencies), a new work made with Danish sound artist Jacob Kirkegaard. Reminiscent of the longform tone meditations of Eliane Radigue and Laurie Spiegel, *Svævninger's* two pieces are named after cloud formations. Each runs for about 20 minutes, and is at once minimal and expansive, luxuriating in the gentle friction of sound waves colliding. Kirkegaard and Pade found common ground with their shared interest in beat frequencies. Pade had used this effect in her 1962 piece *Faust*; and Kirkegaard's *Labyrinthitis* (2008) explored the related phenomena of otoacoustic emissions – two soundwaves triggering a third wave inside the ear. Their collaboration was premiered at Copenhagen's Wundergrund festival in 2012. Having spent a lifetime inside studios composing music for radio, Pade had never before performed her work to an audience. On stage, the two figures sat behind a mixer and Kirkegaard's laptop. Occasionally Pade whispered something to Kirkegaard and he would adjust levels, as hypnotic, ghostly veils of high pitched tones undulated and quivered around the Danish Music Academy concert hall. A standing ovation at the end left Pade visibly moved. It was a touching moment.

Today, Pade is smartly dressed in a white buttoned-up shirt and floral skirt. Her small self-contained bedsit looks like most care home rooms, with vases and glass ornaments on top of small crocheted tablecloths, a plastic plant in the window, and a string to pull for assistance. But in one corner she has a piano with a large religious painting above it; in another is the huge tape recorder that has documented a life lived through her ears.

"You're here for an *English* magazine," Pade says humbly. (Our conversation is conducted in Danish, all her quotes are translated.) She's largely unaware of her reputation outside Scandinavia, which has risen in parallel to the resurgent interest in pioneers of electronic music elsewhere, such as Delia Derbyshire and Daphne Oram of the BBC Radiophonic Workshop. Pade could be their Danish counterpart: a lone female in a male environment making a living composing for radio drama. Even in her native country she was never really celebrated during her most active period in the late 1950s and 60s, despite being the first person in Denmark to compose with electronics. She