



Copland, Marc

Alter Ego - Lausanne 2022

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The initial concept was simple: to honor the two newly overhauled Steinway D pianos in our venerable Studio 15 at RTS-Radio Télévision Suisse in Lausanne. After a public concert broadcast presenting fifteen piano duets, each one more sparkling than the last, the germ of an idea took hold: to produce a special recording session with a single pianist, faced with the difficult task of playing duets with previously recorded tracks of him- or herself. And to add a bit of “tension” to the affair, we decided to make this moment a “live” studio recording with forty spectators who would be close to the action, listening with headphones to the here-and-now pianist playing a spontaneous duet simultaneously with his previously-recorded alter ego. What remained was to find that rare pearl, a pianist with enough poetry, audacity and creativity to make a project which would inevitably draw comparisons to the Conversations with Myself of Bill Evans – a legendary project that burst upon the scene in 1963 and was instantly recognized as something new, sensitive, and intimately personal.

Having admired the work of Marc Copland for decades, and after working to organize and produce countless concerts with him in the French-speaking part of Switzerland throughout those years, I couldn't imagine any other musician for this particular project. It remained only to ask him the question: “Marc, what would you think of recording at the Studio in Lausanne, with two pianos, for you to play duets... all alone?!?”

I remember the look on Marc's face, and the little moment of suspense before his answer. In the following months, through phone conversations, emails and texts, the idea was given a firm footing and a chance to grow. The result was that in late September of 2022, we found ourselves in Studio 15 of RTS in Lausanne: Marc, sound engineer Renaud Millet-Lacombe (he of the superlative ear, a central cog in the process), around forty passionate and happy listeners, the two pianos, and this producer, all there to participate in an exciting musical journey.

It turns out that the most difficult thing in recording with and against one's alter ego is for the one self not to give in to the urge to create an easy, painless, and comfortable “welcome mat” for the other self – not to make a foundation totally devoid of surprises. Ideally, the first take should be neither overly reassuring or predictable, but rather full of twists, turns, risks, and traps that require partner number two to be attentive and responsive at all times. As he launched time and again into this perilous exercise of responding to the first partner, partner numero deux had to be the musical analog of a tightrope walker performing without a safety net. All the magic of the operation came down to this paradox: in the same moment, the second partner must hold in the palm of his hand both an amnesia of what came before, in order to display surprise at the appearance of the unexpected, as well as this amnesia's complete opposite-- a sharp memory

of partner #1 that allows the clever scaffolding of reactive, interwoven musical structures! And finally, as is often the case, the contribution of an extremely attentive and captivated audience supplied some magic pixie dust – Marc even went so far as to question them as to their preference for this or that take, in a manner as relaxed as it was natural.

With the “technical” framework thus established, there remained the best part of the game to discover: the Music! And this unfolded as if by enchantment, according to themes whose melodic-harmonic entanglements Marc rightly thought would allow for intelligent self-discussions. His choice fell on a few standards that the pianist likes to try to reinvent with each new rendition (Spartacus Love Theme, Glad to Be Unhappy, Some Other Time), two Monk themes which always allow particularly rich melodic developments and deconstructions (Round Midnight and Let's Cool One), two titles by masters, Eighty-One (Ron Carter) and Crescent (John Coltrane), a theme by his much-missed old friend John Abercrombie, written on the welcoming piano of Ralph Towner (Another Ralph's), and finally two original compositions (Day and Night and Talkin' Blues). Very nicely balanced, this program allowed a rich panorama of atmospheres and approaches that opened up to Marc Copland all the possibilities of wandering, all the emerging questions and answers, propelling him into a magnificently inventive thread of conversation with his unpredictable alter ego!

The result is a collection of interactions between Monsieur Marc and Mister Copland that are unpredictably relevant, surprising, and intelligent; a journey of rare richness that, as you will soon see, reveals more and more of itself upon at least one... re-listening but even better upon repeated listenings.

Yvan Ischer
Producer-Journalist
RTS-Radio Télévision Suisse
Swiss Radio Days Jazz Series Consultant

Band member

Marc Copland	Piano
Marc Copland	Piano

Tracklist

- | | | |
|-----|--|-------|
| 1. | Day & Night
M: Marc Copland | 07:06 |
| 2. | Eighty-One
M: Ron Carter | 05:58 |
| 3. | Round Midnight
M: Thelonious Monk | 07:24 |
| 4. | Let's Cool One
M: Thelonious Monk | 05:12 |
| 5. | Talkin' Blues
M: Marc Copland | 04:28 |
| 6. | Spartacus Love Theme
M: Alex North | 05:32 |
| 7. | Another Ralph's
M: John Abercrombie | 04:54 |
| 8. | Crescent
M: John Coltrane | 05:00 |
| 9. | Glad To Be Unhappy
M: Richard Rodgers | 05:54 |
| 10. | Some Other Time | 06:33 |

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M: Leonard Bernstein

11. **Chat & Notes**

M: Yvan Ischer

04:37