

Alone Together: A Musical Milestone Revisited

I am delighted that Advance Music and Hans Georg Brunner-Schwer have collaborated in what is certainly one of the most important jazz reissues in recent years. When I first heard this recording in the late 1970s, I immediately recognized the extraordinary musical depth and the unique creative approach which Clare so vividly expressed in these improvised performances. The musical events of the past twenty years have soundly confirmed these original impressions. In fact, these recorded performances are as good a proof as any that great art transcends the times in which it happens to be created. The music sounds as fresh as ever, and is more than a gentle reminder of how much popular and critical acclaim has, in the meantime, been given to music of far less significance. If I had to make a list of the ten most important solo jazz piano recordings of all time, this recording would definitely be on the list.

Perhaps it is not so important to point out that many harmonic devices which Clare was already using in the 1950s have often been erroneously credited to younger musicians, whose music happens to be momentarily fashionable. Clare himself is the first to acknowledge in which piece by which composer or improviser he first became aware of this or that harmonic color or tantalizing dissonance. And his influences range from Meade Lux Lewis, Erroll Garner, Duke Ellington, Billy Strayhorn, Gerry Mulligan and Lee Konitz, to Bela Bartok, Dimitri Shostakovich, Igor Stravinsky and Alban Berg. Of course, these are all blended together into the unmistakably personal sound of Clare Fischer. The important point, however, is that Clare is one of the truly rare human beings who knows exactly what he is doing,

and never pretends that it is anything more or less than exactly what it is. Of course, „exactly what it is“ is, in Clare's case, never anything less than music which is technically brilliant, emotionally stirring and physically infectious. Clare's music comes from the head, heart and hands, and it communicates equally to the intellect, feelings and body of the listener, just like great music always has. I'm especially delighted that Advance Music has recently released complete transcriptions of *Yesterdays*; *Du, Du, liegst mir im Herzen*; „Excerpt“ from *Canon Passacaglia* and *Everything Happens to Me*, as well as five solo piano improvisations from Clare's recent Concord CD, *Just Me*. The transcriptions were painstakingly done by me, personally, and they should be both a revelation and a joy for musicians who are interested in the specific details of Clare's harmonic approach. The collection is available under the title, *Alone Together/Just Me*. We are all most happy that a representative body of Clare's work as a pianist and improviser is now publicly available in printed form for the very first time. I frequently recall some sage advice which was given to me in my twenties by a great friend, mentor, human being and master musician, Clark Terry. He said, „It's fun to be fooled, but it's more fun to know.“ Clare Fischer is a very special creative musician for anyone who really wants to know.

Bill Dobbins