

For Lennie Tristano – Solo Piano 1970 & 1997

Sal Mosca

Fresh Sound FSR-CD506

While transferring his late friend's personal recordings to Rutgers' Institute of Jazz Studies, Don Messina found a reel-to-reel tape with the note 'Solo Tape for Lennie Tristano, February 2, 1970'. It was a real find – the first album-length recording of solo piano by Mosca, over five years before Sal Mosca Music on Interplay – that we finally hear.

Mosca's searching improvisations graced some of the most important Tristano School recordings, but his multi-lined, two-handed style developed independently of his teacher's, especially in later years. Interviewing him some time before his death in 2007, I got the impression of a self-sufficient, totally dedicated artist. He focuses on standards, he said, 'Because they're the best songs...they speak of the people...of Broadway...of love and they're by some of the greatest composers'.

From its very free introduction, Mosca creates an eventful kaleidoscope from the materials of 'You Go To My Head'. 'It's The Talk Of The Town' has a straighter groove and more direct style. 'All The Things You Are' begins in media res, theme-less, and sustains its taut, concentrated improvising for eight minutes. The song was a Tristano School favourite, and this rigorous exploration equals any. Some tracks are done as medleys. The album concludes with two tracks from 1997, a beautiful version of the rarely performed Bix Beiderbecke composition 'In A Mist', and a piquant short arrangement of 'Stella By Starlight'. A superb testament to the intensely swinging work of a great improviser.

Andy Hamilton, May 2022

International Piano