**PRESS RELEASE**

**MARTIN SPEAKE AND DOUGLAS FINCH**

**Pumpkin 006**

***Sound Clouds***

1.    Prelude

2.    Ballad I

3.    SCAMPER

4.    On the way

5.    Mirage

6.    Chorale

7.    Stück

8.    Ballad II

9.    Berceuse

10.  Sound Clouds (to Iannis Xenakis)

11.  Flugue (to Dmitri Shostakovitch)

12.  Elegy I

13.  Elegy II (Bells)

14.  Hoedownup

15.  Waltz

“Free Improvisation” and “Free Jazz” are often associated with unbridled cacophony, unorthodox technique and disregard for melodic and rhythmic invention.

In many cases this preconception is justified, but the fact is that at its best, the meeting of highly skilled and accomplished musicians, adept in producing art in the moment, embodies the essence of jazz and of music itself as a means of communicating what’s going on in the heart and mind of a musician at that exact moment. As the legendary Art Blakey said “This music comes from the creator, to the musician, to the audience”- a direct, uninterrupted connection!

Ornette Coleman was rooted in the blues when he proclaimed his music as “The Shape of Jazz To Come” and there was perhaps never a more liberated musician than Charlie Parker, but the framework in which they expressed their freedom differed.

Martin Speake is an alto saxophonist with a deep knowledge and understanding of both of those titans and experience of playing within European, Indian and North African musical traditions.

His meeting with pianist Douglas Finch is not Martin’s first recorded duet encounter with another master improviser, but it is perhaps his finest spontaneously improvised set to date.

This CD, the 6th to be released on Martin’s Pumpkin label, features a selection of 15 tunes, all composed in the moment by Martin and Douglas.

The album was recorded on the 10th July 2013 at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, mixed on the 29th July 2013, engineered by Kit Venables, mastered by Peter Beckmann and Produced by Martin Speake and Douglas Finch.

Douglas Finch is a musician with an equally broad and profound experience of improvised music, though comes from a more “Classical” background.

He says of the meeting:

*“Martin and I met musically in February/13, playing a couple of short free improvisations to a group of classical music students in a workshop.*

*Having never played together before, there seemed to be an immediate recognition – that we were ‘singing from the same hymn sheet’ despite our coming from the different musical worlds of ‘jazz’ and ‘classical’.*

*A few months later we went into the studio and recorded these fifteen tracks, with no re-takes or edits, and virtually no forward planning or rehearsal.*

*Everything in this CD appears in the order we played them, which we did with hardly any breaks – the evidence being the gradually eroding tuning of a few notes on the piano, as we didn’t leave any time for touch-ups, despite it taking quite a beating at times.*

*I think that the wide range of colours and emotions Martin elicits, and the sheer seductiveness of the saxophone under his hands led me into uncharted territory, which is where I like to be as an improviser.*

*To me there is a sense of a journey through this album. At times, within a single piece there can be so many changes of direction that the listener might feel a bit giddy. But there are also periods of repose, where we were happy to stay in the same place for a while.”*

For Martin, the collaboration was as inspiring and challenging:

*“Playing and recording with Douglas was an unexpected delight. We had been teaching in our separate departments (jazz and classical) for a number of years at Trinity Laban Conservatoire and not come across each other until we were put together to collaborate with students in an improvisation project.*

*Douglas was a revelation to me and although our individual musical vocabularies are totally different there seems to be a place we can meet when playing.*

*He hears everything and whatever I play he can make something of it that is fresh and unique.*

*It is very exciting for me to hear where we go with each idea, which is really the unknown. Because he is not a jazz player, the traditions of accompanying, soloing and improvising within that musical language are absent, which forces me to play differently.*

*I love the tradition that Douglas is able to draw on. The whole history of classical music is there at his fingertips and he is that rare classical musician as he can improvise in the moment with that awareness.*

*We have managed to create varied moods throughout this recording to keep ourselves, and hopefully you the listener, interested."*

As a listener, I can assure Martin that this hope was realised. It’s obvious that the artists had an extraordinarily creative experience but at all times the music speaks to the listener with a heartfelt and eloquent sincerity.

**Sean Corby 21/5/14**

Due to be released Summer 2014