



HELENA ESPVALL & MASAKI BATOH

SELF-TITLED

DC359 ►► LP/CD

Songs:

POLSKA

KRISTALLEN DEN FINA

UTI VÅR HAGE

TROLLMORS VAGGVISA

BENEATH HALO

BICINIUM

ZERANIUM

JAG VET EN DEJLIG ROSA

NEKO NEMURENAI

DEATH LETTER

KLING KLANG

KYKLOPES

Helena Espvall and Masaki Batoh are known to open-eared music listeners for their collaborations with other artists – artists with names such as **Ghost**, **Espers**, **Damon & Naomi**, **Fursaxa**, **Tom Rapp**, **Lukas Ligeti**, **Bert Jansch**, among many others. By collaborating with each other, they've made one of the most beautiful recordings either one of them has yet participated in.

They first met at a festival in the United States in 2006. **Batoh** presented **Helena** with a handmade bamboo instrument; short on spare celli, she gave him a copy of her solo CD. Afterwards, they stayed in touch. At some point **Helena** suggested an improvised musical collaboration. **Batoh** wrote back and said: "Actually I'm too busy now to think about music...if my idols **Moondog**, **Henry Cowell** or **Toru Takemitsu** wanted me, I'll refuse their orders."

Several weeks later he had a change of heart. He contacted **Helena** and said that he felt they should record not improvisations only, but songs as well. **Helena** made a demo of some Scandinavian folk songs that she remembered in her spirit from growing up in northern Sweden, thinking that maybe they'd record one.

The recording session was held in Tokyo over four days in December 2007. For instruments fans, this session might be a treasure. So many strings were used: 6- and 12-string guitar, banjo, cello, hurdy-gurdy, harp, contra bass, chappa Tibetan bells, Kin (Buddist metallic bowl), timpani, bass marimba, vibraphone, thunder sheet & on & on.

Six of the Swedish traditional tunes were reconstructed, along with **Batoh's** arrangement of "Death Letter," a classic **Son House** delta blues song. Additionally, a European medieval tune was addressed in its own arrangement and expression. "Zeranium," a dreamy folk tune that **Batoh** wrote for **Damon & Naomi** (they didn't use it), was re-arranged for this session as well.

The improvisations were done on the last recording day, with no overdubs. "Completely free" was the essential concept. For one of them, they were joined by **Batoh's** fellow **Ghosts** **Takuyuki Moriya** (contra bass), **Kazuo Ogino** (piano, celtic harp) and the santur player **Mayumi Nagayoshi**. The same morning **Helena** had received notice that her grandmother suddenly had died, and that a dear friend had chosen to end his life. Two death letters in one day...there is great emotion reflected in the improvisations. And great depth and beauty throughout the whole **HELENA ESPVALL & MASAKI BATOH** album.

POINTS OF INTEREST

- This is a sweet new record of two respected talents from the world of music.
- **Masaki Batoh** is famed for his leadership of Japan's **Ghost**. **Helena Espvall** has played with **Espers** as well as **Bert Jansch**, **Damon & Naomi**, **Fursaxa** and **The Valerie Project**, among others. Both **Helena** and **Batoh** have solo releases to their names.



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