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Andy Milne & Benoit Delbecq: Where Is Pannonica?

By [Martin Gladu](#)



Andy Milne & Benoit Delbecq
Where Is Pannonica?
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Welcome to the third dimension. The product of their 2008 winter residency at the Banff Centre in Alberta, Canada, *Where Is Pannonica?* seals the longstanding, twinlike affinity between pianists [Andy Milne](#) and [Benoit Delbecq](#) in one truly astonishing soundscape. And although *Nantes* puts itself forward as an answer to the title's inquiry, it's possible the question is instead concerned with identifying all manifestations of the late jazz loving baroness' influence--as one would with a certain Waldo--hiding in this musical shivaree. Sure there are plenty of clusters, oblique intervals and other quirks associated with the baroness' friend, pianist [Thelonious Monk](#), but clear evidence of the bebop patron's whereabouts remain illusive. The search continues.

As the baroness' patronage and encouragement has long been replaced by the less endearing prospects offered by state-subsidized programs, private foundations and residencies, improvising artists in 2009 often find themselves rattling empty piggy banks. Milne and Delbecq, however, not only benefited from a rare mix of the three aforementioned levies--though dispersed between six different funders--but could also count on the good people working at the Banff Centre. Why are such apparently meretricious aspects of this project worthy of mention? Well, part of the answer is found in the music itself.

First and foremost, this is modern, improvisatory and exploratory (read non-commercial) music at its creative best. As such, the uttermost high-fidelity technologies--at both the capture and delivery stages--are required fully to communicate the artists' intentions. To this end, *Where Is Pannonica?* was recorded and mixed in 24 bits/88.2k in 5.0 "surround sound" and designed specifically for SACD multi-channel playbacks. Mounted onto the disc, a bonus, 15-minute video documents the album's making and explains how the technological means meshed with the composing in the preparation of the final 5.0 mix. At the centre of all the action are two marvelous-sounding Steinway D pianos, prepared for the occasion with an assortment of wooden, metal and even furry objects. Dlooper, a digital application designed to generate sampled, multi-tracked loops, also mingles in the colloquy on three of the album's tracks.

For example, on the enthralling, mbira-esque round "Divide Comedy," the device's eerie ambiance-setting loops add a depth of field that Delbecq mines to great effect. On "Chander Logic," it is a rhythmic chant--one such as those used by Milne's former employer, saxophonist [Steve Coleman](#), in his compositions for MBASE--that maps out the languid, tango-tinged feel atop which the pair throw tersely modulated melodies. Milne's "Water's Edge Part I" and "Part II" veer towards a similar rhythmic repetition, but with a chordal obbligato as the main substrate.

Encapsulating many facets of Milne's and Delbecq's aesthetic, *Where Is Pannonica?* explores the relation between art and audio technology in such a way as to uncover new paths of expression and new dimensions in recording. Despite the technologically-assisted sound spectrum, this pairing of pianists is a match made in organic heaven--one bound to leave the emerging breed of techno-artists longing further to develop such felicitous experiments, where spatio-temporal technologies, composition and performance intersect. To borrow NASA's motto, the future is now.

Tracks: Portrait of Giorgio Thelos; Task Sharing; Divide Comedy; Ice Storm; Le Meme Jour; Mu-Turn; Chander Logic; Pyramides; Water's Edge Part I; Water's Edge Part II; Trespassing; Uhren; Pyramides.

Personnel: Andy Milne: piano; Benoit Delbecq: piano, electronics.

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