

# Interview with Henry Grimes

## Artist in residence in Poschiavo



Henry Grimes, Cheltenham Jazz Festival 2009, foto di John Watson, jazzcamera.co.uk

*Cornelia Müller: Welcome to Poschiavo, Henry Grimes. I would like you to talk about music. What is music?*

Henry Grimes: Music is important, very important. It is sounds and gatherings of sounds and release of hitherto unfamiliar territory. You learn things from music that you never knew before. When we come by music now, it is everything you heard before in your life and more. It should be a spokesman for the souls and spirits of people who love music.

*How does music work?*

It comes from ancient wish, prior to this time and on. So when all music is there, it still is coming from this issue. It's much like the worship from the days when perhaps nobody considered this worship. It's true there is church music and other kinds, but the simplicity of it is that you love to be exposed to the experience of music. The experience affords exposure to other realms and ideas beyond the usual. We know personal music, and so does everyone else who loves music.

*Is there any special interest in the music for you?*

Yes, there is a lot – of course jazz and classical music, it's all related, it's all exposure to one reality. We love it, and this is why.

*Maybe you can relate to some important events in your life and in music, there might have been some special impact in your life, that made you want to play music and focus on music?*

I've been focused on people I know who make it, get beyond that, and really enjoy the benefit: what you can hear, what you can learn. Some things appeal and other things just come on in that light.

*So the violin was your first instrument?*

Yes. My sister's graduation from school: That's what made me take up the violin. My oldest sister was at all-girls' high school, she was a senior going into college, and I was still in junior high school, age 12. It was perfectly inspiring. I was really enlightened by these beautiful

young ladies graduating from school – playing in a string orchestra – so when I went home I told my mother “you have to get me a violin” – which she did.

*When did you pick up the bass?*

Just when I was in high school, I had about two years to go in high school, and then it all happened. I was about 16, 17.

*Long life with music....*

I picked out the bass because I was interested in making money by playing music. That's why I gravitated to the bass, economic reasons. The bass is one of the best instruments to make money. I used my own reasoning, I would not use anybody else's, but the violin and the bass were right there enlightening, and every force would come together in place. And now I play both instruments in concerts.

*Margaret Davis: Tell about the music program in high school and what you had to do there to graduate.*

I had to take up five instruments and that was my entire high-school career and after I left high school I went to Juilliard for a couple of years.

*And since then you play with other musicians and bands.... Did you have your own band?*

Yeah, all along that time, sometimes I had my own band, sometimes not, mostly not. Everybody was in the same situation, inspiring each other to lead, you lead this time until somebody comes up and he leads. You know, we experienced musical organizing. A lot of musicians could get other musicians to join up into groups and bands. I was very happy to be a musician and also get a little experience as a musical organizer.

*Margaret Davis: mostly you play duos now, concerts with one other musician, from looking at your recent history, and sometimes solo, and then sometimes you lead a trio or a quartet. Tell her about the sensational quartet in London a few weeks ago.*

Yes, sensational – I had Bobby Few (piano), Elaine Mitchener (voice), Mark Sanders (drums) and myself. It was very spiritual music that we were playing that night in London at Café Oto. That was just fantastic! I wish you could have heard it.

*Maybe I could, was it recorded?*

*Margaret Davis: Not that we know of. Maybe it turns up on YouTube....*

*One last question: we are here in Poschiavo in the middle of nature....*

Beautiful.

*What about nature and music?*

Ideally that's the best thing to play for. And you can do that. Maybe you don't think about what nature is while playing your instrument, it's true, I mean, there is more immediate connection to other musicians, but nature is a good ally to have, trying to fight all these battles, helping you go right instead of going wrong, you know.

*That's true. Thank you very much.*

Thank you very much, I hope you liked the interview.