

Music to Silence to Music: A Biography of Henry Grimes. By Barbara Frenz. London: Northway Publications, 2015. 315 pp (hardcover). Photos, Notes, Bibliography, Index. ISBN 9780992822255. £20

Barbara Frenz's new book about Henry Grimes, translated from German by J. Bradford Robinson, aims to "revitalize" the storybook narrative of the bassist's life and to "shed greater light on" his achievements and artistic concept. She is successful to varying degrees regarding both objectives, and it is fitting that *Music to Silence to Music* is almost as atypical in the field of jazz biography as Grimes' career has been in the field of improvised music. Frenz's work, a superb update on the current state of Henry Grimes research, paves the way for future Grimes studies and is a welcome addition to jazz literature.

Henry Grimes was born in 1935 in Philadelphia, where he made the most of a strong high-school music curriculum and a vibrant local jazz scene that included many future stars. After studying at Juilliard in the early 1950s, he became an integral player in the New York City jazz community, working with almost every major figure of the time. He appeared in the *Jazz on a Summer's Day* documentary filmed at Newport and was a regular member of Sonny Rollins' group, with which he recorded several albums for RCA and toured the US, Europe, and Japan. Grimes' achievements in the mainstream of jazz lend weight to his work at the cutting edge of avant-garde, "free" jazz, a field in which he continues to be a true leader. His work for the ESP-Disk label, including his only LP as a bandleader and many sideman appearances, helps define the essence of the "new thing" of the 1960s. Grimes can also be heard on such canonical albums as Cecil Taylor's two Blue Note LPs and Roy Haynes' only date as a leader for the Impulse! label. Grimes' career, though, took an unexpected turn in the late 1960s when he was stranded on the West Coast after traveling there with Jon Hendricks' band. Not being able to find enough work and forced to sell his bass, Grimes proceeded to spend over 30 years in exile from the music business. Frenz describes Grimes' life during these years, culminating in his "rediscovery" in 2002. With help from a cadre of fans and musicians, he acquired a new bass and triumphantly returned to an improvised music scene in which he is now a beloved elder statesman with a busy performance schedule.

Frenz, a German historian, interviewed musicians who worked with Grimes including Sonny Rollins, Andrew Cyrille, and Clarence Becton, in addition to her extensive talks with the bassist himself. The portrait of the artist that emerges is of a quiet and kind individual who was never inclined to the decadent lifestyle favored by many jazz musicians. Readers will not find the gossip or tales of fast living that so frequently characterize jazz biography; it's clear that Grimes has always been singularly focused on the music. Grimes' own words reveal a personality steeped in spirituality and holism. His responses to questions are rarely what one would expect, but always thoughtful, intelligent, and cryptic in the tradition of deep jazz philosophers like Miles Davis and Sun Ra.

Surprisingly, the book is perhaps most interesting in the account of Grimes' "lost" years, his decades away from music. Many jazz biographies read well through the golden era but lose steam in the late 1970s and '80s, when the music industry was suffering. The narrative of Grimes' life through this period, though, makes for a more fascinating read than his earlier glory days. Living in poverty in downtown Los Angeles, Grimes found a new muse: creative writing. Frequenting the Los Angeles Public Library, he educated himself in literary history, theory, and criticism, and filled notebooks with his own

writing. In 2007, Grimes published a collection of his poems, several examples of which are reproduced in the present biography. Grimes' music and poetry both display subtle wit and originality in bearing witness to the artist's struggle, while also maintaining a sense of place within tradition.

The more gripping immediacy of Frenz's account of Grimes' years away from music may be due to greater temporal proximity and the ability of Frenz to rely more on her own original research. Her work leans on a strong foundation of seminal books by Baraka, Spellman, Wilmer, and Jost, but at times, especially in the earlier part of the book, she relies too much on contemporaneous journalism. The chapters on Grimes' New York years veer closely to what might be called narrative discography (i.e. turning discographical data into prose) interspersed with quotes from album liner notes and reviews from *Down Beat* and various European periodicals. All too often, the words of jazz critics fail to carry a great deal of lasting insight, especially when they are selling a product; if anything, this aspect of the book demonstrates the futility of using a lot of words to try to describe music. Throughout, Frenz writes with an underlying sense that she is trying to convince the reader that Henry Grimes is a Great Man, which seems unnecessary. Her audience is more likely to be composed of knowledgeable jazz fans who have already reached that conclusion. She has meticulously documented her research using extensive endnotes; in total, about 230 pages of prose are accompanied by 1,167 endnotes. Turning to the back so often to see references makes reading the book a bit of a chore. These flaws have a net effect of sucking the life out of Grimes' early story somewhat. Even for a serious, hard-working musician like Henry Grimes, touring the world as a young man must have been a lot of fun, but there is little sense of that in Frenz's account.

The shortcomings in this text, though, are secondary to the pleasing fact that we now have a painstakingly-written account of Grimes' life and work. Frenz writes with great respect for her subject, resulting in a substantial work with themes that extend beyond music history and scholarship. Her biography of Henry Grimes should be included in any collection supporting jazz, popular, and American music studies. *Reviewed by Carlos Peña*

Jeru's Journey: The Life & Music of Gerry Mulligan. By Sanford Josephson. Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Books, 2015. 214pp. (softcover). Sources, Discography, Index. ISBN 978-1-4803-6024-2

Gerry Mulligan (1927-1996) is a towering figure in the history of jazz. In a career lasting six decades, he has left his mark as an influential baritone saxophonist, composer, arranger, and bandleader. His relevance and importance in jazz history is cemented by his work with Miles Davis and the Birth of the Cool, his piano-less quartet with trumpeter Chet Baker, and his Concert Jazz Band, all within the realm of Cool Jazz during the 1950s. However, Mulligan would go on to live until 1996, developing as an arranger and composer, maintaining a high profile as an active performer, and leaving behind a large body of excellent work that is obscure and more often ignored. Sanford Josephson's new book, *Jeru's Journey*, fills in the empty gaps of Mulligan's career and does an excellent job at presenting a complete picture of Mulligan's life and career without emphasizing any particular period.

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