

Jason's Notes: Nov. 16, 2009

Earlier this year, I was contacted by the Washington Performing Arts Society to do a series of podcasts for them featuring interviews with the artists who are performing in their 2009-10 jazz series. One of those artists is **Sonny Rollins**, and I had the pleasure of talking to Sonny again earlier this week. (You may remember that he was on [The Jazz Session #49](#) on Election Day last year.) Before the interview, I asked my wife Jennifer what one question she'd pose to Sonny if she were interviewing him. She said, "I'd ask him if jazz is still relevant." I asked him that question, and here's what he said:

"I think that the relevance of jazz depends on what you think jazz is. For instance, if you think that jazz is a piano trio playing in a small nightclub — they're good musicians, maybe have a girl singer — and you come in and there are people smoking and sitting at tables ... if that is your conception of jazz then of course jazz is not relevant, because that refers to a time and place. Jazz is something which is much bigger. Jazz has to do with freedom of expression. So is jazz still relevant? Of course, because there are always people trying to express themselves in music. I think of jazz as having the big umbrella, so that a lot of styles of music that have merged over the years all fall under the umbrella of jazz. The act of trying to create something musically and spontaneously is something that is a part of life. It's like the weather — it's always there. Jazz as something that fits into a narrow little remembrance, no, that kind of jazz is not relevant. But jazz is as relevant today as the yearning for people to be free. That's how relevant jazz is."

When Sonny was a young man, he spent a summer in my hometown of Lenox, Mass. This summer, I recorded more than a dozen interviews there at the **Tanglewood Jazz Festival**. I'm releasing the first batch of them next week. (See the list below). Still in the hopper: Chris Potter, Ben Powell, the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, and more.

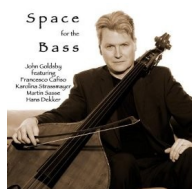
This week on the show: John Goldsby (TJS #110, Monday), Hermon Mehari of the band Diverse (TJS #111, Wednesday) and Martin Urbach (TJS #112, Friday).

Next week: Three shows recorded at the 2009 Tanglewood Jazz Festival. Benny Reid (TJS #113, Monday), Edmar Casteneda (TJS #114, Wednesday) and Paquito D'Rivera (TJS #115, Friday).

Peace, love and jazz,

Jason

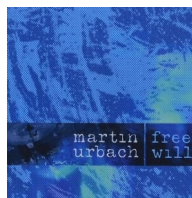
This week on *The Jazz Session*:



TJS #110: John Goldsby. Bassist John Goldsby has worked in Germany for the last 15 years, playing in a state-sponsored jazz orchestra in Cologne. On his album *Space For The Bass* (Bass Lion, 2009), Goldsby explores the role of the bass in a variety of small-group settings. In this interview, Goldsby talks about why he's chosen to make his home in Germany since the mid-90s; his view of the bass and its place in an ensemble; and how an improbable gig in Louisville, KY, put him on the bandstand with some of the great names in jazz. **SHOW AVAILABLE NOW. [LISTEN](#)**



TJS #111: Diverse. The band Diverse consists of students from the University of Missouri at Kansas City. They all study with saxophonist Bobby Watson. They won a contest that included a recording contract with Origin Records, and the results is *Diverse* (Origin, 2009), a well-crafted selection of original music. In this interview, trumpeter Hermon Mehari talks about how the band got started; why they ended up playing some tunes in the contest that were written the same day as the performance; and what comes next now that they've made a record and opened for Roy Haynes. **SHOW AVAILABLE STARTING 11/18/09.**



TJS #112: Martin Urbach. Drummer Martin Urbach is a citizen of the world. His travels have taken him from his native Bolivia to New Orleans and then New York. His experiences along the way are expressed musically on *Free Will* (self-produced, 2008). In this interview, Urbach talks about his musical and cultural upbringing; his flight from New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina; and why after so many years playing instrumental music, he's now writing songs with words. **SHOW AVAILABLE STARTING 11/20/09.**