

Hans Koller & Friends

Recorded live at Städtische Festhalle Pirmasens, November 13, 1959

À bout de Souffle

It all starts with a brilliant solo on tenor horn. *Benny's Blues*, so cool, the kind of playing you only ever heard at Saint Germain des Prés or Hackensack, the legendary recording studio where Rudy van Gelder worked magic on numbers like Adderley's "Somethin' Else". A baritone joins in, followed by 12 crammed and unfettered bars of trumpet from that supernatural talent, as mesmerising and in demand in Paris as he was in New York. But wait a minute, that's Martial Solal on piano not Hank Jones, and the man on trumpet is not Miles, but Roger Guérin. For this is the Städtische Festhalle, Pirmasens, the town of shoemakers. It is autumn 1959. Jazz is in vogue, the television now has its place in living rooms up and down the land and at the movies Freddy Quinn has gone missing for a while in "Unter fremden Sternen". But those present at the "SWF Jazz Session" in Pirmasens that evening were treated to a magical Franco-German "rencontre" without a trace of the shadows cast by wartime enmity. 1959 had been a good year for Hans Koller. He had developed an almost brotherly relationship with Oscar Pettiford, and recorded the soundtrack to a UFA nostalgia movie with Albert Mangelsdorff, Günther Leimstoll and Horst Jankowski. He had also long been a favourite son of jazz impresario Jo Berendt, a man who knew a thing or two about the jazz scene in Germany's divided republic and how best to give exposure to his protégés on stage, radio, TV and at festivals.

Dawborn's Mood. Koller and Solal this time with Percy Heath and Connie Kay, the rhythm section of the Modern Jazz Quartet, also on stage that evening in Pirmasens. Solal in the style of John Lewis, rather amazing actually, given that years ago in France he had received the higher ordinations from Sidney Bechet and Don Byas and saw himself as a disciple of Art Tatum – but here more inclined towards the alien sounds of a "nouvelle vague". *Mister B Blues* – another of Koller's compositions, reminiscent of a German TV crime series and an era that coined the evocative term "Straßenfeger". *Margaret Rose* – a ballad this time, dedicated to Britain's princess and written during a UK tour: rhythmically tight, a democratic distribution of 12 and 24-bar solos, almost reserved in comparison with the giant figure of Stan Getz and übercool Dave Brubeck. But what was it exactly? This unique, distinctive blend of "Stahlnetz", Ben Webster and self-will; and the power of his tone, the obsessive nature of his playing – outstanding! And Koller, as ever, the man in charge, never out of control, never short of breath. It's what always set him apart, a musician with swing in his DNA. "Sound Koller", as Albert Mangelsdorff lovingly and respectfully called him. By 1960, Pirmasens was long forgotten and things had moved on: Oscar Pettiford – out of the blue – died in Copenhagen; Truffaut was at the movies with "Shoot the Piano Player" and Koller met up with Ellington for studio recordings in the Black Forest. In July he was awarded the Grand Prix du Meilleur Soliste Européen at the Jazz Festival in Juan Les Pins, where he bumped into Martial Solal, who had just bought himself new shoes. The two had a drink and went to the cinema. As everywhere that summer, the Côte d'Azur was showing Godard's sensational film debut "À Bout de Souffle" – with music by Martial Solal. Koller was speechless. Solal, incidentally, still lives in Juan Les Pins today.

Side A (21:35)

1 **Benny's Blues**

HANS KOLLER / 11:11

2 **Oscar**

HANS KOLLER / 5:18

2 **Dawborn's Mood**

HANS KOLLER / 5:05

Side B (17:40)

4 **Mister B Blues**

HANS KOLLER / 4:51

5 **Margaret Rose**

HANS KOLLER / 5:29

6 **All The Things You Are**

JEROME KERN / 7:18

Bonus Track (mp3 for download)

7 **There Will Never Be Another You**

HARRY WARREN / 9:31

Hans Koller (ts)^{1-5,7}, Martial Solal (p)^{1-4,6,7}, Michel de Villers (bs)^{1,2,4-7}, Roger Guérin (tp, fl)^{1,2,4,6,7}, Fred Dutton (b)^{1,2,4,5,7}, Hartwig Bartz (dr)^{1,2,4,5,7}, Percy Heath (b)^{3,6}, Connie Kay (dr)^{3,6}