

# Jazz Police

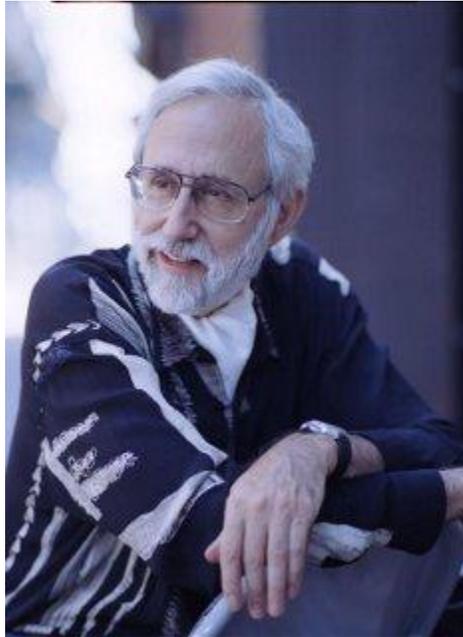
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## Jazz Therapy: Denny Zeitlin at The Kitano

Written by Andrea Canter, Contributing Editor

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Denny Zeitlin ©Andrea Canter

*“Zeitlin unfurls some of the most intriguing, idiosyncratic jazz piano to be heard these days...he plays with a degree of freedom and musical curiosity one doesn’t regularly encounter...Zeitlin sounds like no one else in the world but Zeitlin.” -- Howard Reich, Chicago Tribune*

Dubbed by Leonard Feather as “the most versatile young pianist to come to prominence in the early 1960’s,” Denny Zeitlin is known today as “the jazz world’s most visible Renaissance man” (*LA Times*). In addition to his career as a jazz performer, composer, and improviser, Zeitlin is a practicing psychiatrist in the San Francisco Bay area. And if one considers music therapeutic, then the jazz patrons in New York are in for a significant boost to their mental health this weekend when Zeitlin holds office hours at The Kitano in Manhattan, first in solo performance (November 18), followed by a trio evening with long-time cohorts Buster Williams and Matt Wilson (November 19).

Born in Chicago in 1938, Denny Zeitlin began playing piano as a toddler, initially studying classical music and discovering jazz in high school as a natural extension of his interests in composition and improvisation. Soon he was playing professionally in the Chicago area, where he had opportunities to sit in with Joe Farrell, Wes Montgomery, and Ira Sullivan. Meanwhile, throughout high school and college, he studied music theory and composition with Alexander Tcherepnin, Robert Muczynski, and George Russell.

He graduated from the University of Illinois in 1960 and then earned his M.D. from Johns Hopkins in 1964. After several highly acclaimed recordings for Concord, Zeitlin focused his musical efforts on fusing jazz, electronics, classical, and rock through the 1970s, leading to a number of recordings and the symphonic score for *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers* in 1978.

Refocusing on acoustic music, Zeitlin turned again to solo piano work and other projects, including composing for Sesame Street; appearing on network TV (the Tonight Show and CBS Sunday Morning); touring throughout the world at colleges, clubs, and major festivals; and performing with such jazz luminaries as Joe Henderson, Herbie Hancock, Pat Metheny, Tony Williams, Marian McPartland, Charlie Haden, the Kronos Quartet, and Paul Winter.



Buster Williams ©Andrea Canter

Meanwhile, Zeitlin also established a private psychiatric practice in San Francisco and Marin County, and teaches at the University of California. Merging his background in music and psychiatry, Zeitlin has developed a lecture-demonstration, "Unlocking the Creative Impulse: The Psychology of Improvisation," which has been well received in the U.S. and Europe.

Wrote Jules Epstein, "[his] technical skills are abetted by his psychiatrist's understanding of spontaneity as a key to analysis—like the technique of 'free association,' Zeitlin approaches melody as a line to be coveted, addressed and focused on, but also as a point of departure. His particular skill is in departing without losing sight of the original thought." *High Fidelity* noted, "He can rip the keyboard apart or coax the most delicate nuances from it with a virtuoso's assurance. And it is done not as showmanship, but as a means to a distinctly creative end."

Denny Zeitlin has released over 30 recordings, primarily in solo and trio formats. His most recent release ([Labyrinth](#), Sunnyside 2011), recorded live, has prompted wide acclaim as "an intimate affair brimming with verve, lyricism and improvisation" (Doug Simpson, *Audiophile Audition*) and "his most mesmerizing solo record to date" (Raul D'Gama Rose, *AllAboutJazz.com*).

On Saturday night at The Kitano (November 19), Zeitlin teams up with his usual trio mates, bassist Buster Williams and drummer Matt Wilson.

Among the busiest and most prolific of modern bassists, **Buster Williams** has always been more than a sideman, from his early days with Jimmy Heath, Gene Ammons, and Sonny Stitt (all before age 20), to his alliance with such vocalists as Sarah Vaughan, Nancy Wilson, and Betty Carter, to his work on projects as diverse as the Jazz Crusaders, Herbie Hancock's Mwandishi Band, Sphere with T.S. Monk and the Four Generations of Miles quartet.

In addition to his numerous supporting roles, Williams has also shone as a frequently-recorded leader and composer, most notably with his Something More quartet. *The Penguin Guide to Jazz* notes his "impeccable harmony" and a "rhythmic sense that is unflinching, feeling, and utterly original." His performances are always marked by his elegant and melodic lines, his ability to dazzle without calling attention to the effort.



Matt Wilson ©Andrea Canter

One of the most in-demand, creative drummers of his generation, **Matt Wilson** has a wide range of musical tastes and experiences.

He was first attracted to the drums after watching Buddy Rich on "I Love Lucy." Following his childhood in rural Illinois and college days in Wichita, Wilson landed in Boston, playing with the Either/Orchestra, Charlie Kohlhase, and John Medeski.

Moving to New York, he formed his own quartet and joined forces with such talents as Dewey Redman, Janis Siegal, Cecil McBee, Leni Stern, Fred Hersch, Michael Brecker, Ravi Coltrane, Lee Konitz, and Joanne Brackeen, and has appeared on dozens of recordings as leader and sideman. In addition to the Denny Zeitlin Trio, Wilson has recently toured with Trio M (Myra Melford and Mark Dresser), Ted Nash, Frank Kimbrough, Deana DeRose and Charlie Haden's Liberation Orchestra.

He formed the Matt Wilson Quartet in 1996; in 2002 he founded his other touring band, Arts and Crafts. A member of New York's Jazz Composers Collective, he also continues to lead his Carl Sandburg Project and provides workshops and clinics throughout the world.

For a cover charge that runs less than 25% of the usual fee for an hour of therapy, you won't find better sessions with a psychiatrist! Catch Dr. Zeitlin, alone and with his remarkable trio, this weekend at The Kitano.

*The Kitano Jazz Room is located within the Kitano Hotel at 66 Park Av (at East 38th Street). Sets at 8 and 10 pm, \$25 cover, \$15 minimum per set (full bar and light American and Japanese menu). Reservations recommended at 212-885-7119; [www.thekitano.com](http://www.thekitano.com)*