

Pianist Practices Psychiatry and Jazz

By David Steinberg

JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

In childhood, Dr. Denny Zeitlin had a sense that he wanted to pursue two interests — psychiatry and music.

"My psychiatric career began during recess in the playground," Zeitlin said in a phone interview from his San Francisco office. "I found myself listening to kids talk. I was a good listener, and even then I was very interested in people."

He had taken up a musical instrument a few years before practicing amateur psychiatry in the playgrounds of Highland Park, Ill. In grade school he studied classical piano, and later in high school he heard something "that was shot out of a cannon."

What he heard was jazz. "I was always composing and improvising more than what was on the written page of sheet music, so jazz was a made-to-order medium for me,"

Zeitlin said.

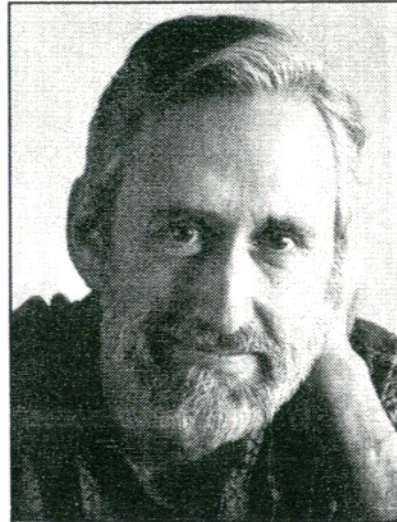
As a teen-ager, Zeitlin's height made him seem older than he was. Even at the age of 15, nightclub owners thought he was 21. By not telling them his age, he got to perform in clubs on Chicago's South Side as a teen-ager.

And his parents trusted him to drive the family car home from his early-morning club dates.

"That was back in the '50s," the 54-year-old Zeitlin said. "That was the way jazz was learned — like informal workshop apprenticeships. We didn't have jazz schools back then."

During his years at Johns Hopkins Medical School, he gigged with the likes of Wes Montgomery, Ira Sullivan and Joe Farrell. Since med school, Zeitlin has been splitting his time between music and medicine, including five albums on Columbia in the 1960s.

Those recordings led to performances at the Newport and Monterey



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jazz festivals, appearances on the "Tonight" show and a first-place award in several Downbeat magazine jazz critics poll.

Zeitlin will be in concert with 50-year-old bassist David Friesen tonight at Restaurant André. At the concert, they will do some jazz standards and original music each has written. In addition, each will do solos.

Friesen gave a solo concert at the restaurant earlier this year.

IF YOU GO

Who: Denny Zeitlin and Dave Friesen

When: 8 p.m. today

Where: Restaurant André, Fashion Square courtyard, Lomas and San Mateo NE

How much: \$10 concert only, \$28 concert and dinner, which is served at 7 p.m.; call 268-5354

The two have been performing and recording together for the past five years. Friesen appears on half the cuts on Zeitlin's album "In the Moment" on the Windham Hill Jazz label. And Zeitlin has been a guest artist on Friesen's recordings.

They are coming out with a duet album, titled "In Concert," later this summer.

"I think he has a marvelous, unique voice, a marvelous melodic and rhythmic sense," the pianist said of his bassist friend. "He's extremely empathetic. There's a lot of trust when we play together, allowing each to take musical risks, and the other person is there for you."

"Our playing complements each other. In a (grammatical) sense, we know how to punctuate the other's sentence with the right kind of marks."