

University of New Hampshire



Beginning our Third Decade!

Our One Hundred Thirty-Sixth Program
1999-2000



The Prodigious Kenny Werner

Sponsored by the Department of Music and the New Hampshire
Library of Traditional Jazz

**8 p.m. Monday, November 22, 1999 Johnson Theatre
Paul Creative Arts Center, Durham, NH**

THE ARTIST

Kenny Werner, piano

A visit by a true explorer of pianistic possibility felicitously affords us an excuse to ruminate further about the instrument itself and its peculiar role in the unfolding of the jazz tradition. (This is particularly tempting given the writer's status as an unregenerate sometimes practitioner himself.)

Pianists are multiply blessed because unlike most other musicians they get to play more than one note – or even melody or rhythm – at a time. In fact, managing simultaneously the three elements of melody, harmony, and rhythm in a jazz context with only two hands has been a formidable challenge since the beginning, as Gunther Schuller so incisively details in his discussion of one of the first explorers, Jelly Roll Morton, in his book *Early Jazz*. (Perhaps this is why the pianists in the houses of prostitution at that time were known as “professors”!) At any rate, it does appear that many early pianists may have had more formal or “classical” training than their counterparts on other instruments. Certainly there was a different mind set involved; Louis Armstrong’s remark that “by the time I was fifteen I could play anything I could sing” would have only limited relevance to pianists.

Given that the instrument can provide complete self-contained musical experience, then it was inevitable that it be the medium where imagination could combine with technical prowess in achieving personal improvisatory communication with an audience. It is an area where “many are called” but few make the cut; however, it remains the natural locus of individual exploration of the entire jazz language.

Although still a young man, Kenny Werner is approaching legendary status because of the eloquence and power of his playing and the creative quality of its content. Moreover, he has authored an influential book, *Effortless Mastery*, designed to help performers on any instrument develop a successful psychological, physical, and spiritual approach to “liberating the master musician within.” It is suffused with the richness of personal experience and growth, and a profound appreciation of what it means to be human; small wonder that Kenny has traversed the ground from dysfunctional prodigy to inspired and inspiring exemplar and colleague. He is at the center of contemporary jazz activity, but his contacts also include Charles Mingus, the Mel Lewis Jazz Orchestra, and recently a recording with our good neighbor Scott Reeves from the University of Southern Maine. And of course he has made numerous solo and trio discs – one features the music of Bix Beiderbecke and James P. Johnson!



Kenny Werner, piano

At the start of his book, Kenny lists fifteen musicians, including Scott Joplin, Louis Armstrong, Bix, Jelly Roll, James P., Fats Waller, and Duke Ellington; he asks what they have in common, and then proclaims. "They were all innovators! Innovation is the tradition!" This may be a different twist on tradition than some hold, but it is honest, insightful, and accurate – (and nine of the fifteen are pianists!). When the late stride pianist Don Ewell was here in 1983, he was asked about his listening habits. He noted Waller, James P., Teddy Wilson, etc., and then said something like this: "For all of my love and respect for Art Tatum, I don't listen to him much because he scares me, and I don't like to be frightened!" But maybe once in a while under secure circumstances he sneaked a little such aural stimulation.

Perhaps the composer Ferrucio Busoni (a non-jazzer) provides us with the best perspective; "Take it for granted from the beginning that everything is possible on the piano, even when it seems impossible to you, or really is so."

Got to it, Kenny!

Tape recorders and cameras are not permitted due to contractual arrangements. Please turn off beepers and watch alarms. Your cooperation is requested.

THE SERIES

The UNH Traditional Jazz Series began in 1979. It promotes the enjoyment and understanding of the art through concerts featuring musicians of regional, national, and international prominence. The program represents a unique endeavor to expand interest and honor outstanding talent and achievement.

Musicians wishing to do so are encouraged to offer their recordings for sale or mail order during intermission; a brief announcement may be made. The sponsors have no financial interest in such sales beyond offering a courtesy service to the artists and the public.

Program Notes -- Paul Verrette

Production -- David Seiler

1999-2000 SCHEDULE

- September 13: The Real Herb Pomeroy Quintet, featuring John La Porta
♦
- October 25: "The Men They Will Become"; Eli Newberger, Jimmy Mazzy, & Butch Thompson
♦
- November 22: The Prodigious Kenny Werner
♦
- January 24: A Tribute to Red Norvo; Ed Saindon, Howard Alden, & Steve Novosel
♦
- February 28: Fabulous Fiddle Fest: Three Generations; Claude Williams, Billy Contreras, & Lesa Terry
♦
- April 10: "Do Nothing 'Til You Hear From Us"; Buddy DeFranco, Dave McKenna, & Joe Cohn
♦
- May 1: Benny Powell and Jane Jarvis

OTHER SPECIAL JAZZ PERFORMANCES AND EVENTS

- October 2: *Family Weekend Concert, Seacoast Big Band, Dave Seiler, directing. This night of swing music includes dancing and refreshments. Granite State Room, Memorial Union Building.*
♦
- January 18: *Harry Jones Memorial Education Fund Concert, Seacoast Big Band, Dave Seiler, directing, with special, surprise guest artist! Proceeds to assist senior high school students who will major in music. Johnson Theatre, Paul Creative Arts Center, PCAC.*
♦
- March 12: *Gala Jazz Concert, Dr. Clark Terry, trumpet and flugel horn; Bud Shank, alto sax artist; with Mark Elf, guitar; Chris Neville, piano; UNH Jazz Band, Dave Seiler, director. Johnson Theatre, Paul Creative Arts Center, UNH.*

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For tickets call (603)862-2290