



Willie Myette
Jazz Keyboardist, Composer, Author, Teacher

Artist Profile

There is a way that most people do things. There are trends and styles; common mistakes and Murphy's Law. However, Berklee College of Music graduate, Willie Myette has been bucking the system for most of his adult life. Shortly after graduating from Berklee in '96 with a degree in Film Music, Willie set out to live as a jazz performer. He started by returning home to Rhode Island, where his father had taught him piano.

Like those before him and after, he taught to make a steady income. Wanting to teach jazz and improvisation to his students, he looked for materials that mirrored his own free-formed musical upbringing. What he found was material that did not encompass the freedom and creativity that he was accustomed to. So, he wrote his own music for his young students. Giving his songs catchy titles like *Jessica's Blues* and *Dustin's Da Man*, JazzKids® was born with the goal of teaching young students how to improvise.

Willie has written almost a dozen books on teaching improvisation to young students. In addition, he has presented JazzKids at conferences around the U.S. and workshops in the United Kingdom. Soon, the attention at these conferences caught the attention of some very big names in the publishing industry. MelBay, a company best known for its guitar method, published Willie's first collection of JazzKids songs. Alfred Publishing, perhaps

one of the biggest names in printed educational music, has signed Willie to create music for them.

Willie has not stopped there. We all know that old adage, “Those that can’t, teach.” Once again this mold has been broken in Willie’s case. While perfecting the JazzKids method in the 90’s, Willie was also busy performing and writing. In 2002 he met bassist and Berklee professor John Funkhouser. This meeting of the musical minds proved to be quite fruitful. Adding to the dynamic relationship that already existed between Willie and drummer Mike Connors, bringing Funkhouser aboard created a truly special musical group.

In 2004, combining his love of hiking and jazz, Willie formed the group Katahdin’s Edge with Connors and Funkhouser. Their 2004 release, *Step Away* on Myette’s own Incline Records label, garnered stellar reviews by the media. C. Michael Bailey from allaboutjazz.com wrote “This is a superb piece of avant-garde jazz that should satisfy fans from everyone from Harry Connick to Medski, Martin and Wood.”

Now was the time to hit the road. In September of ’04, the trio began their first North West tour. Willie remembers, “It was exciting to be bringing our music to the opposite end of the country. But, it was also scary not knowing how it would be received.” Well, their performance at MusicFestNW in Portland proved that this group had something to say and people were ready to listen. After launching into the funky groove of the CD title track *Step Away*, and displaying their “no holds barred” approach to jazz, the group was asked to double their set for the excited crowd.

After the tour, the group focused on radio play and future bookings. Katahdin’s Edge was added to the playlists of over 90 radio stations nationwide. This is an impressive feat for any independent record. With fans likening the group to the Bad Plus and E.S.T. Myette focused on creating new material for their next tour. In April, the band performed at the Triple Door in Seattle, a hot spot for some of the biggest names in jazz.

In late 2005, Willie and Katahdin’s Edge recorded their second studio release, *The Ridge*. At the end of the year, the group was invited to perform at the famed South by Southwest festival in Austin Texas.

“Hiking a mountain is difficult,” says Willie. “You have to watch where you put your feet. Otherwise, you might have a *really* bad day. Music is like this too. You need to promote your art, but always remain true to your calling.”

Myette proves that he can walk that line. The road less traveled can still lead to spectacular and unexpected results.

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