

Richard Jay Ripani, Ph.D. Biography

Since receiving an undergraduate degree in music education from George Peabody College of Vanderbilt University in 1977, Dr. Ripani has become a sought after performer and music educator. More recently his studies have continued at Austin Peay State University, M.M. in instrumental conducting, 1997, and at the University of Memphis where he completed a Ph.D. in Musicology, Ethnomusicology, and Southern Regional Studies in 2004. Dr. Ripani has also undertaken post-graduate studies in education and technology at both Austin Peay and Middle Tennessee State University. In May 2004, he was selected for the *President's Award for Teaching Excellence* at Cumberland University.

His doctoral dissertation, *The New Blue Music: Changes in Melody, Harmony, Rhythm, and Form in Rhythm & Blues, 1950-1999*, won the graduate document award in 2004 from the Rudi E. Scheidt School of Music at the University of Memphis. In addition, this same work is currently in press and will be released as a book by the University Press of Mississippi in summer 2006. Dr. Ripani was included in *Who's Who Among American Universities and Colleges* in 1977, and is also a member of both *Pi Kappa Lambda* national music honor society and *Phi Mu Alpha* music fraternity

As a professional performer, Dr. Ripani has many accomplishments to his credit. He has played on numerous recording sessions in Nashville studios, including major label productions. Among these recordings are one double platinum and two gold albums. He received the Country Music Association's "Super Picker" award in 1990 for his keyboard performance on the CMA album of the year, *Pickin' on Nashville*. As a live music performer, he has played with and/or conducted orchestras for musical artists across North America and Europe. Just a few of the artists Dr. Ripani has performed with are: Ronnie Milsap (keyboards/musical director), Lee Greenwood (keyboards), The Kentucky Headhunters (keyboards), Dobie Gray (keyboards), Ronnie McDowell (band leader/arranger), The Jordannaires (keyboards), and many others. During the 1980s, Mr. Ripani also acted as orchestra conductor at the Aladdin, Riviera, and Nugget Hotels in Las Vegas and Reno, Nevada.

TV programs on which Dr. Ripani has performed include the Tonight Show with Johnny Carson (keyboards & orchestra conductor), the Jay Leno Show, the Mike Douglas Show, the Merv Griffin Show, the Barbara Mandrell Show, Austin City Limits, Nashville Now, and Music City Tonight. As a songwriter he has many published songs to his credit, including one, "Can't Stop a Woman in Love," that was included on the top-ten jazz album *Deedles*, by artist Dianne Schurr.

As an educator, Dr. Ripani has been successful at both at the K-12 level and at Cumberland University and the University of Memphis. As a teacher of keyboards and electronic music he has been fortunate to have had many fine high school students who qualified for significant college music scholarships. He has also presented many clinics and lectures at K-12 schools in the region that were supported the Tennessee Arts Commission and the Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee.

From 1997 until January 2005, Dr. Ripani was a full-time faculty member at Cumberland University. During that time he has acted as instructor and/or director of the

university jazz bands, university jazz combo, advanced music theory, theory of improvisation, class piano I and II, private applied piano, music listening, percussion ensemble, and acted as assistant band director. For several years, Dr. Ripani was also coordinator of *Jazz Fest*, an all-day jazz festival at Cumberland featuring many area high school bands as well as university jazz groups. He also was also the driving force behind the creation of the Cumberland Arts Academy, a community school for students who wish to receive a high quality education in the fine arts.

In January 2005, Dr. Ripani accepted the position of director of bands at Hume-Fogg Academic Magnet High School, in Nashville. His duties at Hume-Fogg include directing the Wind Ensemble, Concert Band, two Jazz Ensembles, Jazz Combo, Woodwind Quintet, Brass Quintet, and other small ensembles, and teaching music history and studio technology.