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To perform and serve The Los Angeles Police Concert Band

By Christina Challey

With a wave of his baton and his energetic style, Richard Allen is conducting the Los Angeles Police Concert Band into in a new era. As the newly selected musical director/conductor, Richard



Chief Beck and Richard Allen

brings to the band an exciting range of musical experience and expertise.

Maestro, as he prefers to be called while on the podium, but just Richard otherwise, is a Los Angeles-based conductor, composer, arranger and performer. He began his training early, at the age of 5, as a classical pianist. His first teacher was Dony Bronston. Dony studied under a woman in Paris, who had studied under Franz Liszt. So, Richard, as a pianist, is considered a third-generation Franz Liszt! With a photo of his concert-pianist grandfather as inspiration, his mother as his biggest influence, and both parents attending all his performances, Richard began to win many competitions and was voted best pianist at school. He said, "I



Richard Allen

didn't get the girls like the jocks, but my rewards were... well, I didn't get the girls."

Richard went on to study composition and jazz at the prestigious California Institute for the Arts, and film composition at UCLA. Music college required him to learn the mechanics of most instruments. He can play them all, although he admits, not all well. "Professionally he plays flute rather well, saxophone somewhat mediocre and clarinet not so much." Then there was the time he was hired to play piano at Disneyland. At the last minute on his first day, he was told the marching band needed a drummer! So, he strapped on a bass drum and cymbal, ready for the first set. The snare drum player said, "Just go boom on one and three and I'll do the rest." So Richard spent the next five years on one and three! His gig at Disneyland lasted a total of 10 years and included playing in the world-famous Disneyland Big Band and The Golden Horseshoe Variety Show.

Although he didn't set out to be a conductor, fate stepped in and provided Richard with his new calling. At the age of 20, he was assigned his first show, "Anything Goes," as the pianist. When Richard asked the director who is the conductor? The director answered

"you!" The job went well, and from then on he decided that carrying around a baton was a lot easier than a piano. He went on to conduct for many theater companies, cruise lines and special productions and events. A highlight of his career came a few years ago when he conducted for The London Symphony at Abbey Road Studios in England, with "96 of the world's finest musicians at the end of my baton," followed by The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, again at Abbey Road Studios.

As a composer and songwriter, Richard feels his forte is in taking a simple melody and turning it into something magical. For many years now he has been working with Academy Award-winning composer Richard M. Sherman. He remembers working on one song with him and suggesting a slight change in the melody. He said, "a most humbling moment when you are playing piano and staring at his Oscars and hearing, 'that sounds great to me.'"

Now as conductor of the LAPD Band, Richard wants to bring some fresh ideas and music to the band—have the band members be excited every time they play—and continue the Band's honored tradition in supporting the men and women in blue, who put their lives on the line every day. ♦

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