

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Larry Ridley

PERSON

Ridley, Larry

Alternative Names: Larry Ridley;

Life Dates: September 3, 1937-

Place of Birth: Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Work: New York, NY

Occupations: Jazz Bassist; Music Professor

Biographical Note

Jazz musician and music professor Larry Ridley was born on September 3, 1937 in Indianapolis, Indiana to Lawrence and Nevolena Ridley. He was taught to play the violin at the age of five, but later became interested in jazz music and learned to play the bass. Ridley graduated from Shortridge High School in Indianapolis, Indiana. He went on to attend Indiana University in 1955, but completed his B.S. degree at New York University in 1971. He earned his M.A. degree in cultural policy from the State University of

New York Empire State College in 1993, and his Ph.D. degree in performing arts from the University of Maryland, Eastern Shore in 2005.

After attending the Lenox School of Jazz summer program in 1959, Ridley moved to New York City to pursue a career as a professional jazz musician. In the 1960s, Ridley was active in the New York jazz music scene, playing on tours and in studio recordings with a wide range of notable jazz musicians, including Horace Silver, Sonny Rollins, Philly Joe Jones, John Coltrane, Duke Ellington, Lee Morgan, and Jackie McLean. In 1971, he was hired as a professor of music at Rutgers University's Livingston College, where he developed the college's jazz education program, creating both bachelor's and master's degree programs in jazz performance. From 1970 to 1973, he toured the world as the bassist for Thelonious Monk. Ridley released his own album, *Sum of Parts*, in 1975. From 1981 to 1985, he played as part of the tribute band *Dameronia*, in honor of the composer Tad Dameron. In 1985, Ridley formed his own group, the *Jazz Legacy Ensemble*, releasing two albums *Live at Rutgers University* and *Other Voice*. Ridley retired from Rutgers in 1999, but continued to teach at the Manhattan School of Music and Swing University at Jazz at the Lincoln Center. He chaired the National Endowment for the Arts' Jazz Panel. He also served as the coordinator of the Jazz Artists in Schools program, executive director of the African American Jazz Caucus and northeast regional coordinator for the International Association for Jazz Educators.

Ridley received numerous awards and accolades for his work in jazz music and education. He was inducted into the International Association for Jazz Educators Hall of Fame, the *Downbeat Magazine* Jazz Education Hall of Fame, and the Indianapolis Jazz Foundation Hall of Fame. He was honored by a Juneteenth 2006 Proclamation Award from the New York City Council, and was the recipient of the Meade Legacy Jazz Griot Award, the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation

Jazz Legacy Award, the MidAtlantic Arts Foundation's Living Legacy Jazz Award, and the Benny Golson Jazz Award from Howard University.

Larry Ridley was interviewed by The Historymakers on November 30, 2016.

Related Entries

State University of New York / Empire State College

[STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

Master of Arts

University of Maryland Eastern Shore [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

Doctor

William D. McCoy Public School 24 [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

George Washington Carver School 87 [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

Shortridge High School [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

Jacobs School of Music of Indiana University

[STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

Bachelor of Music

New York University [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

Bachelor of Science

Duke Ellington Orchestra [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

The Montgomery-Johnson Quintet [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1951 to ?]

Bass Guitarist

The Jazz Contemporaries [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1951 to ?]

Bass Guitarist

Slide Hampton's Octet [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1960 to 1966]

Band Member

Horace Silver Quintet [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1966 to 1971]

Bassist

Rutgers University [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1971 to 1972]

Professor of Music

Rutgers University [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1972 to 1980]

**Department Chair for Livingston College's Music
Department**

Jazz Legacy Ensemble [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1985 to ?]

Leader, Bassist, and Artistic Director

African American Jazz Caucus, Inc. [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 2001 to ?]

Executive Director

National Endowment for the Arts [MEMBEROF]
[from 1976 to 1978]

Panel Chairman - Jazz Panel

National Endowment for the Arts [MEMBEROF]

[from 1978 to 1982]

**National Coordinator for the Jazz Artists in
Schools Program**