



Richard Brown

September 10, 1947 - March 19, 2025

Richard Brown was born into the world of music on September 10, 1947, the son of a violinist and music store owner. He started playing music at an early age in his hometown of Philadelphia when he took up the accordion at his father's urging. Alas, being the next Lawrence Welk was not his destiny, as Richard soon realized his musical future lay elsewhere... specifically the drums. It was a passionate love affair that took Richard around the world; from the steps of the Capitol performing for presidents in The US Army Band to Broadway playing in the music pit for countless shows to the bright lights of Las Vegas with Ann-Margaret and beyond. In his illustrious career that spanned 7 decades, Richard entertained royalty and the common man, dignitaries and the general public. It didn't matter who you were, Richard was determined that the music he made entertained and touched you. If you were going to listen to him, he was going to give you all he had because he was a true champion of music and its power to move and influence.

Richard began his musical career at the age of 18 playing with The Chamber Symphony of Philadelphia and Philadelphia Lyric Opera. After earning his bachelor's degree under the tutelage of Mr. Owens at Temple University, Richard joined The US Army Band in 1969 and served honorably for 4 years. When his enlistment ended in 1972, Richard won a coveted position in the Houston Symphony Orchestra under the baton of the legendary Sergiu

Commissioner. So, this east coast boy packed his bags, strapped on his spurs and moved south. It wasn't love at first sight, but in a short time Richard made himself at home, playing in the symphony for 8 years.

Richard returned to his east coast roots, moving to New York City in 1980 to play the critically acclaimed restaging of West Side Story with John DeMain and continued a successful run as a freelance percussionist playing shows including Showboat, The First, solo shows for Shirley MacLaine & Liza Minnelli, as well as working in recording studios and subbing with The Metropolitan Opera and The New York Philharmonic. During this time, he also began working for Ann Margret performing with her for 15 years in all her live shows, both in Las Vegas and on tour.

Richard's relationship with music went beyond playing professionally, so following in his father's footsteps, Richard returned to Houston in 1985 when The Shepherd School of Music at Rice University appointed him full-time Professor of Percussion. For over 35-years, Richard helped shape the Shepherd School into one of the foremost music programs in the country. He taught and molded generations of percussionists with his unique blend of technical rigor and compassion. One of Richard's greatest gifts as a teacher was guiding his students to discover if music was their life's calling or just their avocation; knowing that if you wanted to succeed as a musician, you had to have a drive and passion matching his own.

But true to his calling, Richard couldn't leave performing behind, so he earned the principal percussionist position in the Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and eventually became the personnel manager for HGO as well. Additionally, he subbed regularly with the Houston Symphony Orchestra, this time under

Cristoph Eschenbach. Oh – and all the while he was building an enduring contracting empire, booking gigs for every type of event imaginable.? Need a twenty-piece orchestra for the preeminent ball of the season? Call Richard! Motown themed big band? Call Richard! Need a bagpipe for a funeral? Call Richard! Mariachi band? Call Richard! Music for your Bar Mitzvah at age 82? Call Richard!

And “call Richard” people did, as anyone who spent time with him can attest to because he lived on his phone.? Somehow it was oddly endearing when he’d pull the phone out mid-meal because you just knew that he was helping someone while most likely making them laugh. Richard was a sight to behold as he juggled six things at once and delivered on all of them with grace, speed and aplomb.

Of course, a man this busy needs a little vacation, so Richard took one every summer in Jackson, WY...while playing as the principal percussionist and serving as personnel manager and ultimately artistic advisor for the Grand Teton Music Festival. Richard poured his passion and ideas, sometimes willingly accepted, other times fought for, into the music festival for 40 years, helping it grow into one of the premiere orchestral music festivals in the world. And along the way, Richard fell in love with the town of Jackson. Who knew a city-born Philadelphian would be a good fit in a one stoplight town (well it used to have one stop light).? But fit in he did, and Richard became such a presence in Jackson that he was often referred to as “The Mayor.”

Lest you think Richard was just a workaholic (which he most certainly was), Richard loved his life and as cliché as it, lived it to the fullest. Richard loved

big and found fun (and usually a joke or two) in even the smallest of things. He was always up for an adventure – horseback riding, whitewater rafting, driving an oversized SUV in Italy – ready to try something new – as long as there was a little something sweet to eat at the end of the day. Professional success provided him the ability to travel the world for fun with his wife Susan by his side, sometimes bringing his son David and his family along for the journey.? Whether it was Italy or Turkey or Mexico (so much time in Mexico!), Richard happily embraced the world and took it in with wide-eyed wonder and that knowing grin.? Just ask Cousin Benny!??

Richard loved his family with all his heart and would proudly proclaim so to anyone he met. For 40 years Richard shared his heart and his life with his love, Susan. Meeting cute in the most rom-com of ways while chaperoning a school field trip, something was in the air that day as they made an instant connection against the cacophony of the middle school kids. And even though Susan remained in New York when life brought Richard back to Houston, their bond remained strong as they found a way to build a beautiful life together half a country apart. Susan provided a wonderful balance to Richard...and injected a keen sartorial sense that Richard took to like a duck to water.? Who will ever forget his vibrant jackets bouncing along behind the drum kit or his chic linen shirts picked up during his travels?

Richard is also survived by his son David (oft mistaken for his younger brother much to David's chagrin), his daughter-in-law Melissa and his granddaughter Jules...who let's be honest, was the apple of his eye from the moment he laid eyes on her. She could do no wrong and as far as Richard was concerned, they should eat dessert whenever they wanted.? He enjoyed getting to know Melissa while traipsing around Tuscan villages with her on the family vacation. And of course, Richard was incredibly proud of his son and their bond grew

stronger over the years. He talked often of David's accomplishments, reveling in each success despite the fact his son ignored his advice to eschew the arts and become a mathematician.?

A man with such a large heart had more than enough love to share, and Richard built a magnificent found family as well, composed of friends, colleagues and especially former students. Richard will live on in the hearts and minds of the people he left his mark on during his life.?

So, all these words later and the truth is this...there is no easy way to encapsulate the life of Richard Brown, he defies categorization.? He's a man who reached the highest imaginable professional heights, yet still found pleasure in the simplest of things: sitting behind the drum set, banging out a country swing beat; reading his granddaughter that children's literary classic "Everybody Poops;" recounting his favorite off-color joke to make his son blush; or watching All My Children with his wife. Simply put, he is 'Richard,' and in his honor, a drum roll please...

Celebrations of Life worthy of Richard Brown will occur in Houston, TX and Jackson, WY and the family will share details as they are available.

In lieu of flowers, the family is asking for donations to two entities close to Richard's heart: The Grand Teton Music Festival and the Jackson Hole Jewish Community Center.