

Performer

Beyond his role as an educator and accomplished Jazz performer, Kenny Rittenhouse is a versatile musician with a distinguished 30-year career. He was a prominent member of The U.S. Army Blues Jazz Ensemble, showcasing his exceptional skills in section playing and as a Jazz soloist. Kenny has shared the stage with renowned artists such as Doc Severinsen, Arturo Sandoval, Bobby Shew, Terell Stafford, Sean Jones, Etienne Charles, James Moody, Ernie Watts, Bill Watrous, Wycliffe Gordon, Lou Rawls, Ernie Andrews, Kevin Mahogany, and Ralph Peterson.

As a current member of the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra (SJMO), his musical expertise continues to captivate audiences. He toured with the SJMO on the “Jazz Beyond Borders” tour to San Francisco, Chicago, Houston, New York City, Hong Kong, Beijing, Tokyo, and London, featuring Hubert Laws and Kurt Elling.

Furthermore, he led The Kenny Rittenhouse Ensemble, a dynamic group celebrated for seamlessly blending traditional straight-ahead Jazz with elements of Funk & R&B. Their performances are characterized by high-energy vibes and a profound connection with the audience. As a former member of the Pittsburgh Jazz Orchestra, he performed concerts featuring Jazz legends Freddie Cole, Ahmad Jamal, and Jimmy Heath.

Kenny's musical versatility extends to his orchestral performances, including the East Coast premiere of “An African American Requiem” by Damien Geter, performed with the NEWorks Philharmonic Orchestra at the prestigious Kennedy Center. Additionally, he collaborated with the Middleburg Film Festival Orchestra, featuring the “Film Music of Terence Blanchard,” demonstrating his ability to excel in diverse musical genres and settings.

Kenny's talent also extends to the world of musical theater, where he has performed in the pit orchestra for numerous acclaimed productions. These include Dreamgirls (Pittsburgh Playhouse), Ain't Misbehavin' (Arena Stage), After Midnight (Signature Theatre), Catch Me If You Can (Arena Stage), How the Grinch Stole Christmas (National Theatre), Chicago (National Theatre), Shout Sister Shout and 1776 (Ford's Theatre), as well as Soft Power and Play On (Signature Theatre). His ability to move seamlessly between the worlds of Jazz and musical theater underscores his versatility as a musician.

Educator/Director

Kenny Rittenhouse, a highly esteemed music educator, served as the adjunct Jazz Trumpet Professor at George Mason University from 2006 to 2020 and at Morgan State University from 2020 to 2026, where he instructed his students in both the Classical and Jazz genres. Currently, he is an adjunct Trumpet Professor at American University, bringing over 30 years of experience, including his distinguished tenure in The United States Army Band (Pershing's Own), to the classroom. His commitment to education is further reflected in his role as the Music Director for the Bethesda Blues & Jazz Youth Orchestra, where he nurtures young Jazz musicians and enhances their musical journey.

Kenny earned his Bachelor's Degree from West Virginia Wesleyan College in 1988. He later obtained a Master of Music in Jazz Studies from the University of Maryland in 2006. Additionally, he undertook graduate studies in trumpet and Jazz at the Eastman School of Music, where he studied with Barbara Butler, Bill Dobbins, and Rayburn Wright, and at Duquesne University, studying under Roger Sherman of the Pittsburgh Symphony. These educational experiences enhanced his expertise in both Classical and Jazz music, shaping his successful career as a music educator, performer, and director.

In his capacity as the Music Director for the Bethesda Blues & Jazz Youth Orchestra, he has featured as guest artists the acclaimed trumpeter Sean Jones and legendary drummer Cindy Blackman Santana, enriching the educational journey for his students. Through his leadership, he has curated unique educational series, Sitting In With The Masters and The Young Artists Series, offering invaluable opportunities for students to learn directly from industry experts. Kenny's dedication to fostering talent and his passion for music shine through in his role as a director, shaping the next generation of musicians.

Composer/Arranger

Kenny is the composer and arranger of over twenty big band and Jazz orchestra charts that have been performed by The U.S. Army Blues Jazz Ensemble, The U.S. Army Band Jazz Orchestra, the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra, the Mid-Atlantic Symphony Orchestra, and the Mid Atlantic Jazz Festival Orchestra. He has also composed and arranged over thirty charts for the Bethesda Blues & Jazz Youth Orchestra. He was the second-place winner in the 2017 National Federation of Music Clubs "American Music in the Armed Forces" competition with an original Jazz orchestra arrangement of "Theme for Penelope." At Severn Records Studio in Annapolis, Maryland, he served as the principal horn arranger and contractor/performer in the horn section for over ten recording projects, including notable artists such as The Fabulous Thunderbirds.