
Dr. Ronald Johnson, conductor, educator, professor emeritus of music at the University of Northern Iowa, lifelong student of the world, colleague, and dear friend to many, passed away on February 5, 2022 in Iowa City after a sudden and brief illness. Johnson was a member of the faculty in the School of Music at the University of Northern Iowa, conducting the Wind Symphony and the Chamber Wind Players, from 1982 until his retirement in spring of 2017. Prior to his time at UNI, Ron served as Director of Bands at Modesto Junior College in California. He received his formal education from Texas Tech University; California State University, Northridge, and the University of Illinois. He appeared as guest artist with professional and municipal ensembles in China, Germany, Hong Kong, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland. During the 2004-2005 academic year, he received a Fulbright Senior Lecturer Award, under the auspices of the U.S. Department of State, and served as a member of the Music Faculty at the University of Pécs in Hungary. The recipient of many honors over his years as a conductor and educator, Ron was most proud of his investment in L'Ordre des Chevaliers du Sinai (The Religious and Military Order of the Knights of St. Catherine of Sinai) in Vatican City in 2002. In 2020, Ron published *Magic Happens! My Journey with the Northern Iowa Wind Symphony*, a book documenting his transformative 35-year journey at the University of Northern Iowa, [available now on Amazon](#).

His legacy lives on in the students, colleagues and friends in whom he instilled the drive to aspire to the highest expressions of being in performance, scholarship, and in leadership. He will be deeply missed. As per Ron's wishes, a funeral will not be held. Instead, details of a memorial concert will be released in the coming months. Stay tuned to the School of Music website and Remembrances of Dr. Ronald Johnson Facebook group for up to date information.

In 2017, Jenifer Rieck, UNI School of Music alumna, donated \$30,000 toward the establishment of a wind ensemble endowment in honor and celebration of Dr. Johnson's retirement. The Leonessa fund is named after Rieck's LLC company and Leonessa d'Italia, the nickname for the city of Brescia, Italy. Brescia was one of Dr. Johnson's favorite places and a destination for many of the UNI students who toured Italy alongside him. The Leonessa fund was created to indefinitely promote wind band conducting and exchanges, scholarships for majors and non-majors alike, and touring assistance for the UNI Wind Ensemble. Dr. Galyen and the School of Music will have discretion over future fund usage. In lieu of flowers, we ask that you contribute to the advancement and legacy of the UNI Wind Ensemble in memory of Dr. Ronald Johnson.

To donate today, please contact the University of Northern Iowa foundation via phone (319) 273-7118, [online](#), or by sending a check to the UNI Foundation: 121 Commons, Cedar Falls, IA 50614-0239, with Ron Johnson/Leonessa Endowment noted in the memo.