

# Rauno Tikkanen is Merced College's New Fulbright Exchange Teacher and New Concert Band Director



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Rauno Tikkanen is a long way from home. And while Merced may not look much like his native Finland, Tikkanen is settling into life as a Merced College professor of music.

“I’m here to meet new friends, have new ideas, and to enjoy a new life in this country,” Tikkanen said. “I’m also excited about sharing my musical experience with this community.”

The 46-year-old clarinetist, saxophonist, and conductor is participating in the College’s first Fulbright Teacher Exchange program, trading teaching assignments this year with music professor Mark Doiel, who has taken Tikkanen’s place at the Kuopio Academy of Music and Dance in the city of Kuopio in eastern Finland. The Kuopio Academy is one of Finland’s most prestigious teaching institutions and is responsible for training the country’s music and dance teachers.

Tikkanen has performed all across Europe and is currently the director of Kuopio Academy of Music and Dance. He was recognized as the Kuopio Jazz Musician of the Year in 1991 and has plans to perform in Estonia in the premier performance of a jazz opera written by Finnish composer Heikki Sarmanto. Sarmanto has composed for American jazz saxophonist Sonny Rollins.

Tikkanen began studying music at the age of 6 and focused on the clarinet in his early teens. He has been a principal solo artist for the past 14 years. Finland, he notes, has a rich musical heritage and music education is stressed in the country’s schools. In fact, it’s common for each primary grade to have its own concert band.

While American community college students take music for a variety of reasons, Tikkanen says he’s discovered that his students are willing to learn and have been very cordial to him.

As the conductor of the Merced College Concert Band, Tikkanen has been in rehearsal for the band’s first concert on October 19. Selections will range from George Gershwin and Cole Porter to the music of the big band era. This concert will also feature Merced College instructor John Albano on the guitar. In return, Tikkanen will be playing with John Albano and his Merced College Jazz Orchestra on November 30.

And what were his musical inspirations growing up in Finland? “I listened to everything: Cat Stevens, Bad Company, Average White Band, Tower of Power. I love all kinds of music.”

Tikkanen is living in the Doiel residence in Atwater with his wife, singer Kirsi, their two teenage sons and five-year-old daughter.

