

# Ken Richters as Mark Twain On Tour

## Ken Richters - Biography

**Ken Richters** first began performing in the early 1970's as a singer and featured dancer with a number of regional theaters throughout New England. Since that time, he has displayed a unique blending of talents rarely seen in a single performer. A familiar face to television audiences around the country, he has been seen in a number of weekly series and made-for-television movies. His motion picture work includes a starring role in the award-winning independent film *Jean*, which was produced by the American Writer's Theater Foundation and Tom Fontana and filmed entirely on location at the Eugene O'Neill Center.

His performances as Mark Twain was first brought to national acclaim in 1981. Following a sold-out engagement in Washington, D.C., television newscasters from across the country had great fun covering Twain's salty comments to members of the United States Congress. Since that time, the production has been performed nearly 2,000 times in all 50 states, Canada, and Europe. The millennium found Ken Richters as Mark Twain sharing the stage with another great American author, Tom Wolfe, as part of *Harper's Magazine* star-studded 150th Anniversary Gala celebration in New York. Following that performance, PBS had him provide the voice of Mark Twain for their controversial documentary series *Culture Shock*.

Literally following in the steps of America's favorite humorist, Ken toured Eastern Europe on behalf of the U.S. State Department — with performances throughout Russia and Ukraine, retracing Twain's "Great Pleasure Excursion" as detailed in *Innocents Abroad*. In addition to performances throughout Russia, 'Innocents Abroad, Again' toured Ukraine, with stops in Kyiv, Odessa, the previously closed Soviet city of Sevastopol in Crimea, and Livadia Palace — the Royal Summer palace of Russian czar Nicholas II in Yalta. The San Francisco Book Review gave his resulting travel-book, *Not So Innocently Abroad — Official State Department Goodwill Tour, or Sinister Government Plot to Disappear Me* five stars and wrote "Broad wit and razor-sharp insight. What a treat!"

Between television and motion picture engagements, he has performed extensively in the legit end of show business, starring in such live stage productions *Big River*, *Oklahoma*, *They're Playing Our Song*, *Promises Promises*, *Company*, *Man of La Mancha*, *George M*, and *The Man Who Came To Dinner*. He also made his "operatic" debut receiving rave reviews in the featured role of "Frosch the Jailer" in Connecticut Opera's production of *Die Fledermaus*.

Well known for his considerable vocal range, he has become a favorite in the field of commercial and industrial performing. He has been the on-camera and live industrial spokesman for more than 50 large U.S. and European corporations, including the *International Paper*, *IBM*, *Lloyds of London*, and *Sony*. Television and radio commercial credits include *Coca-Cola*, *Sears*, *Eggo Waffles*, *Kimberly Clark*, *AT&T*, and *Federal*

*Express*, and was the national commercial voice for *A.J. Wright Stores* - a division of the TJX Corporation for six years. He is also the featured narrator on more than 50 educational CD-ROMs for McGraw-Hill. Visitors to the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C. can hear Ken's work with Walter Cronkite narrating the history of Fast Attack Submarines.

In addition, Ken spends time each year working on a number of special projects. He has been the opening act for many show-business veterans including The Temptations, Vikki Carr, Robert Flack, the Smothers Brothers, and the late Laura Branigan and Henny Youngman; co-starred with Academy Award actress Nina Foch in her life's retrospective, *An Evening with Nina Foch*; and performed with Olympic Gold Medalist Oksana Baiul. He often works behind-the-scenes doing private coaching and consultation with corporate executives, politicians, and bestselling authors, to assist them in preparing for public appearances.