The Keyboard Studies program at Washburn University offers multiple degree plans for students aspiring to become solo performers, collaborative artists, organ performers, school teachers, conductors, composers and music therapists. The solid keyboard curriculum and a liberal arts environment allow piano and organ students to develop skills to the highest level.

Commitment to students' success is our faculty’s number one priority. Recent graduates have been accepted into prestigious masters and doctoral programs, have won regional and national awards and have been appointed to teaching positions in public and private schools.

The value of the Washburn undergraduate music program is its ability to provide a broad foundation of excellence for students preparing for a variety of music careers. The Greater Topeka Area also offers many opportunities to gain hands-on, paid experience while enrolled. Come visit!

A Message from the Student Organization:

The Washburn Piano and Organ Society is dedicated to the professional development of aspiring musicians with special focus on pianists and organists. As up and coming musicians we venture outside Washburn and reach out to our community. We travel to public schools to share our love of music with young students; we visit piano studios to learn teaching ideas from independent music teachers; and we give concerts at retirement homes and churches to serve the community. Our goal is to gain experiences that not only help us to mature our artistry, but also allow us to network and collaborate with others on a professional level. Come join us!

Will Kubie, the President

Valeriya:
"With a remarkable and supportive faculty, Washburn University is an excellent place to get undergraduate degree."

Nadia:
"... The professors are eager to support the students and help them to achieve their goals. The school set up a path for me to complete my masters and doctoral degrees in music after graduating from Washburn."

Clara:
"The five years I spent at Washburn were the most valuable in my life."
Dr. Shiao-Li Ding  
Director of Keyboard Studies  
Professor of Music, Piano

DMA in Piano Performance  
Boston University

Master of Music  
University of Michigan

Bachelor of Music  
Central Conservatory of Music, Beijing, China

As a pianist, Dr. Ding has given solo performances, lecture-recitals and presentations at national and international conferences in Berlin, Germany; Vienna, Austria; Stavanger, Norway; Bangkok, Thailand; Kula Lumpur, Malaysia; Singapore; and Beijing and many cities in China. In the United States, she has given solo performances in Kansas, Michigan, Massachusetts, Indiana, Illinois, Vermont, and many other places. She commissioned and premiered a group of piano etude by Unsuk Chin. Her own composition “Postcards from China,” has won a Palatino Award and published recently by the Central Conservatory of Music, in Beijing, China.

Dr. Ding’s research interests include historic recordings of Sergei Rachmaninoff and piano works of contemporary Chinese composers. Her articles have published in Clavier as well as in Chinese publications Journal of the Central Conservatory of Music and Piano Artistry.

At Washburn, she teaches Studio Piano, Piano Accompanying, and Group Piano classes.

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Julie Rivers  
Instructor, Piano

B.M. in Piano Performance and Post-Graduate Work  
University of North Texas  
Texas Christian University  
Texas Wesleyan University  
Forth Worth Conservatory of Music

A native Texan, Julie Rivers made her debut as piano soloist with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra under a Rockefeller grant. She toured with Texas, Kansas, Mid-America Arts Alliance Touring Programs and is featured in The World of Women in Classical Music, by Anne Gray.

Rivers is an ASCAP composer with ASCAP Awards each year 1998-2011; Owner of EarthStar Recordings; KMTA Commissioned Composer; State Composer of Kansas (Kansas Federated Music Clubs); four-time first place winner League of American Pen Women Composition Contest; one of seventeen pianists selected nationwide for The HeartAid Project CD benefiting families of 9/11.

At Washburn she teaches Piano, Piano Pedagogy, Piano Ensemble and Piano Literature. She taught at the University of North Texas, Interlochen Center for the Arts, Inspiration Point Fine Arts Colony and studios in Texas and Kansas. She has an independent studio of forty-five students and adjudicates for state and national organizations.

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Dr. Cynthia Neufeld Smith  
Instructor, Organ

D.M.A. in Church Music, Organ Performance, and Choral Conducting  
University of Kansas  
Master of Music  
Bowling Green State University  
Bachelor of Arts  
Bluffton College

Dr. Neufeld Smith serves as organ instructor at Washburn and accompanies the Washburn mixed choir and the more select Washburn Singers. Her role as part-time Associate Pastor and primary organist of Southern Hills Mennonite Church, Topeka, means that she brings “real life” church experience to her organ teaching. She also teaches courses in worship and worship arts through the Kansas Center of the Anabaptist Mennonite Seminary. She has served as occasional music leader for the regional conference of Mennonite Church USA, and performed as organist in various venues in Kansas, Indiana, Ohio and Ontario.

The organ program at Washburn seeks to prepare students for careers as organ performers and teachers. Courses in Organ Pedagogy, Organ Literature, and Improvisation supplement applied organ lessons and standard music classes.

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