

Mike Wiley Productions

Residency/Professional Development Teacher & Student Workshop Descriptions

Booking: www.mikewileyproductions.com

*“Americans can be notoriously selective
in the exercise of historical memory.”*

-Ralph Ellison

Workshop Overview

Workshops explore the way humans document and interpret their lives through storytelling and dramatic art.

Documentary theater takes the grist of human life in all of its raw forms, sifts through in search of true and cathartic elements, and transforms those details into stories for the public. This style of performance flows from the theater artist’s ability to study people closely, interview them, and ultimately embody them using their voices and their words.

Performances are interpretive reproductions of that study. More often than not, trained actors filter their own life experiences through the lens of their characters. The documentary places the actor’s life experiences secondary and therefore can be transformative for artists at any level of expertise. In a self-absorbed, me-first culture, this art form forces us to, as Anna Deavere Smith says, place “other” before “self”--“You are” before “I am”.

Documentary theater provides inroads to exploring historical events and contemporary issues.

The art form draws from the concept that theater/film/performance/arts are valuable tools of communication that can mirror and stimulate social change.

Please note: you need not be an experienced actor or playwright to participate in these workshops. The overall principles, goals and processes of each of the workshops described are adapted and customized to the particular grade level or discipline focus of each group addressed.

Documentary Theater: Bringing History To Life

Teacher Workshops

Curiosity is a driving force in pursuing knowledge. Arranging lessons and materials to inspire students' curiosity is a powerful educational tool. It is the same tool that documentary theater artists use to create a play. By starting in the middle of unknown territory, teaching artist Mike Wiley will help you discover how to inspire students, arouse curiosity, and employ 21st Century skills to investigate a topic. The result is an interactive lesson that creates empathy and validates student contributions to the learning process.

Participants in the workshop will be immersed in the documentary theater creation method used in **Mike Wiley Productions**. Participants will be immersed in images and quotes and sounds from the production, allowing for exploration and revelation as they create their own original drama.

Curriculum Application: Language Arts, Social Studies, Theatre Arts.

Student Workshop Components

Students will delve into various aspects of storytelling through documentary theater. We will begin with life studies--subjects that we silently observe and then re-create physically. Film footage, oral histories, newspapers, diaries, letters and other archival sources will furnish raw materials for narratives that speak to histories larger than ourselves and to audiences beyond the academy. We will move on to interview subjects, first someone we know, and then a stranger, re-creating our subjects via their words and vocal rhythms. At the close of the workshop, final evaluation will consist of writing and performing an informal staged reading of the work for an audience of invited guests.

The Teaching Artist

Mike Wiley is the playwright and director of multiple works in documentary theatre, including **The Parchman Hour**. He has more than twelve years' credits in theatre for young audiences, plus film, television and regional theatre. An Upward Bound alum and Trio Achiever Award recipient, he is an M.F.A. graduate of the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. A gifted playwright and actor, Wiley's overriding goal is expanding cultural awareness for audiences of all ages through dynamic portrayals based on pivotal moments in African-American history and, in doing so, helping to unveil a richer picture of the total American experience.

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