



Documentary Songwriters

Teaching Artist Training Program

(Virtual Edition)

July 19-25, 2021

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DocSong
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Director's Letter

Dear Future DocSong Teaching Artist,

There are three things that set our training apart:

First, we teach a collaborative method of songwriting that **creates lyrics directly from spoken stories**. We harness the power inherent in human speech to create deeply emotional songs.

Second, we are committed to giving you the necessary skills to **integrate this songwriting method with your ongoing work**. In addition to learning the steps of the Documentary Songwriting Method, you will learn how to create a safe space that invites others to share, you will learn how to plan and follow through with projects, and you will learn valuable self-care and emotional processing tactics to implement when dealing with emotional stories.

Finally, our training rests in **experiential education**. Each day, you will be challenged to be open, vulnerable, and in a space of growth. You will have the opportunity to practice every skill that we learn, both musical and interpersonal, in real-world scenarios.

If you are ready to listen deeply and expand your musical offering and teaching techniques, then this course is for you. Join us as we learn to spread the power of high-quality songwriting across the globe.

Nora Willauer
Executive Director
Documentary Songwriters

What is Documentary Songwriting?

Documentary Songwriting is a unique, step-by-step method of co-writing music that fosters empathy, boosts self-confidence and strengthens community. It demystifies creativity and allows someone with no musical background to express themselves through high-quality songs.

Documentary Songwriting has been used to enhance understanding between Turkish and Greek Cypriots at the UN Buffer Zone on Cyprus, to tell the stories of refugees from the Middle East seeking asylum in Belgium, and to tell women's #MeToo stories. Our projects have been featured on TEDx and on NPR's Morning Edition.

Participants in Documentary Songwriting gain self-esteem when they can turn their experiences into song. A participant says of the process: "It was a glimpse into real human experience and emotion, unfettered by script and censorship. It was one of the precious moments in life that I truly felt I was witnessing (and a part of) something real."

"It is a fascinating process to see one of my very personal stories transformed into a song. For my refrain, every time I sing it, I become more grateful. Hearing other people sing along with me makes me feel more connected to them."

- Meiyue Liu, Camden, Maine

What is a documentary song?

A documentary song is a song that comes from a person's spoken words about an actual, lived experience. The song documents the emotions of the experience through music.

Three qualities of a docsong:

- **Authenticity:** The song arises from the spoken words of an individual's lived experience.
- **Accessibility:** The melody and words can be sung by people without trained voices.
- **Artistry:** The song expresses a shared exploration of ideas and suggestions from its Story Source and Teaching Artist.

Two Roles:

The Story Source:

- recounts a personal experience
- generates the very beginnings of a melody
- contributes ideas and feedback throughout the complete writing and arranging process
- helps ensure that the song that emerges conveys the emotions of their story

The Teaching Artist:

- listens deeply to the story source
- leads them along the docsong process
- contributes ideas and feedback throughout the complete writing and arranging process
- provides songwriting expertise and perspective to ensure that the general listener might understand and feel the emotional message of the song

Both the **Story Source** and the **Teaching Artist** provide ideas and collaborate. Together, they explore different ways to shape the song and give it an identity that is authentic to the story source and accessible to future listeners.

Summary of features:

- It is a method of creating songs from spoken words. You don't wait for inspiration.
- It is collaborative. Two or more people work together.
- It goes beyond *witnessing* a person's story. It *transforms* the spoken words into an art form – in this case, a song.
- No musical knowledge is needed from the person who tells the story.
- It is a step-by-step process. It is flexible, but you still know what to do next.
- The process invites vulnerability and openness, leading to a heightened sense of emotional well-being.
- The finished song can be shared worldwide, building empathy and community through authentic storytelling.

“The process of turning the words of a heartfelt story into a song was honestly fun and almost therapeutic. To not only share a story but to convert it into something artistic—Malcolm and Melodi have transformed my memories into a little gem that glows beautifully! Thank you both so much for helping me appreciate these memories even more!”

- *Camila Solis Torrez, Cochabamba, Bolivia*

Learning Objectives:

- Learn to communicate effectively and empathetically with communities in crisis
- Attend workshops and collaborate with industry professionals
- Build confidence through experiential learning
- Develop skills necessary to implement the Documentary Songwriting Method in your profession



Milestones:

Throughout our training week, you will have opportunities to put into practice what we are learning. Each day you will be matched with a community member, and you will write a song from their story over the course of the week. On Friday and Saturday, you will participate in two songwriting workshops with communities who have no experience with the Documentary Songwriting Method. You will use your new skills to guide these participants through the process. And finally, on Sunday of the training, you will have the opportunity to be a part of our end-of-training performance.

Outcomes:

At the end of this training, you will receive a certificate of completion. You will have the opportunity to register as a Documentary Songwriting Teaching Artist. Contingent upon positive evaluations, you will be able to lead paid workshops for DocSong.

Curriculum Overview (7 Modules for 7 Steps):

The Teaching Artist Training curriculum is divided into seven modules that provide insight into the seven steps of Documentary Songwriting.

Module 1: Draw forth a story

- How do I connect with possible story sources?
- How do I establish trust with a story source?
- How do I make sure that a story source tells me a story that has sufficient emotion to warrant a song?
- What makes a viable song?
- How do I identify what the emotional message of the story is?
- How do I manage a public session, with an audience?
- How do I manage my own emotional responses as I go through this process?

Module 2: Distill into a free verse poem

- How do I know what to keep and what to eliminate in order to turn a large amount of text into a short amount of lyrics?
- How do I know if I have enough material from which to draw lyrics?

Module 3: Shape into lyrics

- How do I know what to eliminate in order to turn a large amount of text into a short amount of lyrics?
- How do I know if I have enough material from which to draw lyrics?
- How do I know how many lines long the chorus and verses should be?
- How do I choose a model song form to guide me in guiding my story source?

Module 4: Design a melody for one verse and a refrain

- How do I get them to sing? And how do I get them to sing something distinctive?
- How do I create the arc of a melody from a shorter melodic idea?
- How do I decide how much direction I should give them?
- How do I complete the process so that

the story source doesn't feel the need to keep improvising and refining?

- How can I tell if a song is singable?

Module 5: Edit the *remaining verses* to fit the melody

- If I have many verses, how many do I have to edit to fit the melody?
- What are ways to edit a verse to fit a melody?
- How do I decide when the lyrics are done?
- How do I know if the song could use a bridge?
- How do I design a bridge?
- How do I know if the melody and lyrics are done?

Module 6: Arrange the chords

- How do I know what key to play in?
- How do I tell if the song is in a major or minor key?
- How do I find the most probable chords to fit the melody?
- How do I know when to change chords?
- What if none of the most probable chords sounds right underneath a note?
- What are the possible rhythmic patterns and how do I test them out with the melody?
- How do I decide whether to use fancier chords than the most probable I, IV, and V major or minor chords?

Module 7: Perform the song in a *recording* or a *live setting*

- How do I arrange the song for performance?
- How do I rehearse it, record it, and share it?
- How do I manage the post-workshop reflection period when the story source or I have follow-up ideas to improve the song?

Prerequisites:

- Openness to working in a collaborative setting with stories that could be sensitive in nature
- Openness to singing in solo or group settings
- Proficiency with a chordal instrument
 - Knowledge of finger patterns, scales
 - Knowledge of basic chords and progressions (I-IV-V, I-V-vi-IV, etc.)



Our Typical Teaching Artists:

Typical Documentary Songwriting Teaching Artists hold some degree of structured music training. Many have graduated from college music programs and are seeking to broaden their skillset and increase their impact in the world. Some Teaching Artists are music educators who are looking to bring a new method of teaching and learning into their classrooms or private studios. Regardless of their background, our Teaching Artists are committed to continuous growth: they are constantly seeking new ways to empathize with others, to communicate more effectively, and to create authenticity in their work.

“It was only after going through the process that I fully realised the benefit to my emotional well being. I told the story of an armed robbery that I was a victim of, a story that happened many years ago and was definitely buried under many layers of my mind. After being able to share the experience, make music while expressing my core emotions, I feel emotionally stronger and true to myself.”

- Jonathan Westhorp, Manchester, England

Application Process:

Secure your spot by emailing nwillauer@docsong.org with:

- Name
- Address
- Email
- Phone #
- Instrument
- 500 word overview of your personal mission statement and what you hope to gain by completing this training.
- If you are interested in applying for financial assistance, please create a 5-minute video that details:
 - Why you should receive scholarship
 - An overview of your current financial situation
 - Any extenuating circumstances

Tuition: \$1500

Deadlines:

May 31, 2021: Applications due+\$25 non-refundable application fee

June 15, 2021: Financial aid determinations made

June 31, 2021: Final tuition payments Due

Payments can be made at docsong.org/donate, or by sending a check to:

Documentary Songwriters

PO Box 20076

Cleveland, OH 44101

Training Schedule:

Sunday, July 18

- 7-8pm: Happy Hour and Introductions

Monday, July 19

- 9-10:30: “Learning to Listen”—*Workshop with Lisa Whitfield*
- 10:30-12: Drawing Forth a Story—*DocSong Module 1*
- 12-1: *Lunch*
- 1-2:30: Creating a Free-Verse Poem—*DocSong Module 2*
- 2:45-3:30: Individual songwriting with community story source
- 3:30-5: “Creating Equality Through Music”—*Workshop with Voices United*
- 5-7: *Dinner Break*
- 7-8: Watch intro videos for Tuesday+Open Discussion

Tuesday July 20

- 9-10:30: Shaping Lyrics—*DocSong Module 3*
- 10:30-12: Crafting a Melody—*DocSong Module 4*
- 12-1: *Lunch*
- 1-2:30: “Advanced Techniques in Melodic Design”—*Workshop with Dr. Malcolm Brooks*
- 2:45-3:30: Individual songwriting with community story source
- 3:30-5:00: “Tell Me More”—*Questioning workshop with Dr. Jody Kerchner.*
- 5-7: *Dinner Break*
- 7-8: Meditation and Self-Care Opportunity

Wednesday July 21

- 9-10:30: “What can we learn from Music Therapy?”—*Workshop with Maddy Silver-Riskin, MT-BC*
- 10:30-12: Creating verses to fit the melody—*DocSong Module 5*
- 12-1: *Lunch*
- 1-2:30: Adding Chords—*DocSong Module 6*
- 2:45-3:30: Individual songwriting with community story source
- 3:30-5:00: “Conquering the Ask”—*Fundraising workshop with Josie Davis*
- 5-7: *Dinner Break*
- 7-8: Watch intro videos for Thursday+Open Discussion

Thursday July 22

- 9-10:30: The Art of Recording on a Budget—*DocSong Module 7*
- 10:30-12: Planning and arranging session for Sunday’s performance
- 12-1: *Lunch*

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- **1-2:30:** “Songwriting with Kids” —Lesson planning workshop with Caroline Rex-Waller and Will Foote
 - **2:45-3:30:** Individual songwriting with community story source
 - **3:30-5:** “The Arc of Storytelling” —Workshop with Dana Rae Warren
 - **5-7:** *Dinner Break*
 - **7-8:** Yoga Class

Friday July 23

- **9-12:** Songwriting round-robin with community members
- **12-1:** *Lunch*
- **1-3:** Finish and arrange songs from the morning
- **3:30-5:** “Bringing a Song to Life” —Masterclass with producer Alex Wilder
- **5-7:** *Dinner Break*
- **7-8:** *Attend livestream concert*

Saturday July 24

- **9-1:** Community Workshop with Finding Our Voices, a grass-roots organization dedicated to breaking the silence of domestic partner abuse.
- **1-2:** *Lunch*
- **2-5:** Finish and arrange songs from the morning
- **5-7:** *Dinner Break*
- **7-8:** Happy Hour and Reflection Time

Sunday July 25

- **9-10:** Yoga for Relaxation
- **10-12:** Dress rehearsal
- **12-1:** *Lunch*
- **1-2:** Time for questions
- **2-3:30:** “Putting Self-Care First” —*Workshop with certified yoga teacher and social worker*
- **5-6:** Final performance
- **6-8:** *Dinner Break*
- **7-8:** Happy Hour and Debrief

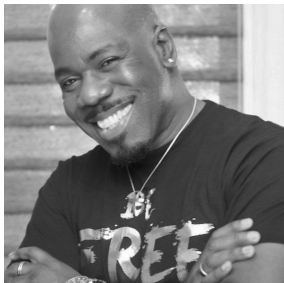
Faculty List:



Mimi Bornstein is a choral director, song leader, pianist, workshop and worship leader, singer, and composer with a belief that when we sing we change who we are, and when we change who we are we change the world. Mimi serves as founder and director of Voices United LLC, an organization dedicated to creating musical connections as pathways for promoting equality, opportunity and inclusion for all.



Malcolm Brooks, PhD, is a composer and the founder of Documentary Songwriters. His work is heard on PBS, NOVA and the History Channel. He has written music for films that have won honors, including two Emmy nominations and a Peabody award. He serves on the faculty at Bay Chamber Concerts and Music School and holds degrees from Columbia, Berkeley, and Prescott. Malcolm is interested in writing documentary songs with people who are trying to understand their self-identity.



Charles Brown is a singer, choir director, composer, vocal arranger, choreographer, coach, and minister. He was born and raised in New Haven, Connecticut, "where I learned early on that my behavior and value on Yale University campus (as a non-student local) was vastly different than in the hood where I lived, 2 miles outside." Thus, uniting people through the arts became an early passion.



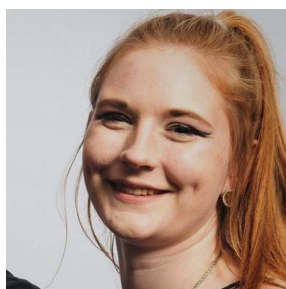
Josie Davis has performed in a wide range of venues from Carnegie Hall in New York to the Monte Music Festival in India. She is interested in how music can be used as a form of cultural empowerment to build bridges and strengthen communities. Currently, she splits her time between playing in Palaver Strings and Halcyon String Quartet and working at Bay Chamber Concerts & Music School. Josie holds degrees from Oberlin and Harvard.



Will Foote is a vocalist and songwriter. He has been instrumental in bringing documentary songs to venues ranging from folk festivals to intimate settings. He traveled to a center in Antwerp, Belgium to listen and write songs with people seeking asylum. Along with writing and performing, Will also teaches the documentary songwriting method in various ways, from high schools to elementary school programs. He is a graduate of St. Lawrence University.



Jody Kerchner is a professor at Oberlin College. She specializes in secondary school music and choral music education. She is the founder and conductor of Oberlin Music at Grafton, a prison choir at the Grafton Correctional Institution. An active clinician, she has presented keynote addresses, research papers, and pedagogy workshops internationally at conferences in North and South America, Asia, Africa, and Europe.



Maddy Silver-Riskin, MT-BC, is a board-certified music therapist currently working with children and adolescents undergoing trauma treatment. Maddy began as a volunteer, student music therapist at the Medina County Juvenile Detention Center (MCJDC) in 2019. Since then, Maddy has established a music therapy program at MCDJC. Maddy is the first and only music therapist employed by Christian Children's Home of Ohio (CCHO).



Caroline Rex-Waller is committed to amplifying stories that honor the dignity and worth of all people. She is an experienced facilitator, educator, and curriculum writer with a strong background in the Humanities and literacy-based programming. She is skilled in curriculum development, program management, and facilitation. She received her M.A.T. for Social Justice from Marlboro College, and her M.A. in English Language and Literature from the Bread Loaf School of English.



Dana Rae Warren is a filmmaker, teacher, and consultant with more than 25 years in the national television documentary and independent film worlds. She has developed particular expertise in shaping stories in the edit room. "Sharing The Craft of Storytelling" is one of Dana Rae's greatest and most soulful pleasures. She has worked with both adults and children of all ages at schools and organizations including The Sundance Institute's program at the International Film & Television School in Cuba and Bates College.



Lisa Whitfield has been an active musician in the Cleveland area for over a decade, after having spent nearly 20 years performing in the NYC metropolitan area. She is on the faculty of the Chamber Music Conference Chamber Music Conference (at Colgate University, formerly at Bennington College), where she has served as a faculty representative to the board of directors, and she is currently serving as the co-chair of the board's DEI working group.



Alex Wilder is a songwriter, producer, audio engineer, and multi-instrumentalist from Maine, currently based in Nashville, TN. Alex writes and produces songs that use spoken stories as their basis with DocSong. He also performs freelance work. Alex's work can be heard on recordings from Elsie Gawler, the Push Farther Project, Oshima Brothers, and others. He has recorded for Bay Chamber Concerts and Oberlin Conservatory. You can read more about Alex at alexwilder.com.



Nora Willauer is the Executive Director of Documentary Songwriters and is a passionate musician, devoted not only to her instrument, but also to the relationship between music and community. She is the founder of "Songs of #MeToo," a multimedia presentation that pairs documentary songs written with victims of domestic violence and sexual misconduct with the preludes to J.S. Bach's Cello Suites.