



Documentary
Songwriters



Teaching Artist Training Program

Individual Introduction Course

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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 sharing 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 and vulnerable within a space of growth. You will have the opportunity to practice every skill that we learn, both musical and interpersonal, in real-world, participatory 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



Teaching Artist Raphaël Meulemans in Gotland, Sweden

What is a Documentary Song?

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 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."

"I learned my skills are valuable. I learned there's a community of people who feel equally passionate about human connection through music."

-Clara Schneid, Teaching Artist Training Program Participant

Summary of Features

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.

- **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.

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.

- 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:

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?



Our Current Teaching Artists

United Kingdom and Europe

Jonny Westhorp, *Bristol, England*

Raphaël Meulemans, *Gotland, Sweden*

Europe and Middle East

Melodi Var Öngel, *Adana, Turkey*

Western US and British Columbia

Clara Schneid, *Portland, Oregon*

Caroline Rex-Waller, *Portland, Oregon*

Sean Golightly, *Flagstaff, Arizona*

Stephanie Judy, *Kaslo, British Columbia*

Midwest

Cecelia Swanson, *Cleveland, Ohio*

Rebecca Shasberger, *Cleveland, Ohio*

Andre Cardine, *Indianapolis, Indiana*

Mid-Atlantic and Southern US

Khalid Taylor, *Bethlehem, Pennsylvania*

Mimi Bornstein, *Washington DC*

Alex Wilder, *Nashville, Tennessee*

Zach Arfa, *Houston, Texas*

Joaquin Contreras, *Humble, Texas*

Daniella Hope, *New York City, New York*

New England

Chloe Isis, *Brunswick, Maine*

Malcolm Brooks, *Rockport, Maine*

Will Foote, *Portland, Maine*

Caleb Edwards, *Boston, Massachusetts*

Chris Finn, *Camden, Maine*

Hazel Delehey, *Lewiston, Maine*

Matt Smith, *Biddeford, Maine*

Kiyoshi Hayashi, *Boston, Massachusetts*

Alex Adams, *Raymond, Maine*

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.

“I felt like I experienced a lot more personal and emotional growth than I thought I would. I knew I was going learn about songwriting, but the emotional intelligence and self awareness I gained from going through the workshop was not something I was expecting! I think that speaks to all of the amazing presenters and organizers throughout the week and also how emotional Documentary Songwriting can be.”

-Kiyoshi Hayashi, Teaching Artist Training Program Participant



Teaching Artist Khalid Taylor hard at work in the studio.

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: \$1250

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

Documentary Songwriters
PO Box 20076
Cleveland, OH 44120

Tuition is nonrefundable

Faculty List:



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.



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.

Your training will consist of ten, 60-minute sessions with Malcolm or Will +two, 90-minute practice sessions. Scheduling will be based on your availability.