

David Gonzalez - Biography

With speech, sound, mime, dance and above all, inspired imagination, nationally acclaimed master storyteller/performer David Gonzalez is keeping the ancient art of storytelling alive. From London's Royal National Theater to Broadway to hundreds of schools across North America, Gonzalez has performed to more than 5,000 audiences worldwide. A winner of the *Helen Hayes Performing Artist of the Year Award*, Gonzalez is applauded for his vocal, physical and narrative talents and gift for mimicry, comic timing, and wordplay. Relying on the majesty and variety of language, the limitless landscape of imagination, the pulse of music and the beauty of art, he creates and performs multimedia productions that capture audiences of all ages and cultures.

Described as "a New York Puerto Rican version of *Bill Cosby*," Gonzalez tells ages-old world myths and stories, tales from his Puerto Rican and Cuban culture, and from his childhood experiences in the Bronx. As poet/guitarist/band leader, Gonzalez has created three jazz-infused shows that combine his contemporary, resonantly rich poetry with the Afro-Cuban rhythms, swing, funk, and rumba of Latin jazz. The critically acclaimed *iSofrito!* featuring the Larry Harlow and the Latin Legends Band, and *MytholoJazz*, have both enjoyed sold-out runs at New York's New Victory Theater. *City of Dreams*, featuring the Poetic License Band, will receive a New York City run at Jazz at Lincoln Center's Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola in January 2009.

As a celebrant of human possibility, Gonzalez uses a fresh, evocative language to share a wide array of stories about struggle and tribulation. *Double Crossed: The Saga of the St. Louis*, is a powerful virtuosic performance that recreates the tragic and heroic voyage of European Jews fleeing the Holocaust. Commissioned by the Smithsonian Institution's Discovery Theater, *Double Crossed* has toured nationally including a run at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Other recent projects include *Finding North*, a one-man play based on the Underground Railroad hero John P. Parker commissioned by the Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park to commemorate the opening of the Freedom Center, and the 2007 premiere of *Rise for Freedom*, a libretto commissioned and produced by the Cincinnati Opera.

Dedicated to producing community-driven projects, Gonzalez has received several recent commissions to create multimedia works with social justice themes. As part of the University of Maryland's "Performance as Politic/Artist as Activist" 2009 season, Gonzalez will develop *Wounded Splendor*, a two-year community residency project that will culminate in a 2010 world premiere.

Coupled with video images of the natural world and music by composer/pianist Daniel Kelly, *Wounded Splendor* brings together poetry and monologues inspired from interviews with activists and experts in the environmental movement. In addition, the Empire State Plaza Performing Arts Center commissioned works that premiered this past year as part of The Egg's 30th anniversary: *Jimi and Mr. B* took audiences on a journey of New York's performing arts history; and *Oh Hudson*, a suite of historical and colorfully

descriptive poems with music by Mark O'Connor, Don Bryon, and Daniel Bernard Roumain, commemorates the Hudson River's quadricentennial, a New York City premiere is scheduled for Spring 2009.

Gonzalez's kinetic magnetism and street-style hip humor have been entertaining and inspiring children for years – hundreds of thousands of happy kids. Since 1994, the Lincoln Center Institute has presented several of his family-friendly shows. According to *Inside Arts Magazine*, Gonzalez "...engages the audience with material from the heart of the culture: myths, folk tales, and fairy tales...that ring true of young audiences." Two of his more popular kids shows, *Aesop Bops!* and *The Frog Bride*, are scheduled to tour the nation throughout 2008-2009, in conjunction with the Fall 2008 release of their complementary DVDs. *The Frog Bride*, nominated for a 2006 *Drama Desk Award* for "Unique Theatrical Experience," recently enjoyed an extended run at the Philadelphia Theater Company. *Aesop Bops!* played 17 performances at the The Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, in 2007. Other projects include: *Mariel*, winner of *Macy's New Play Prize for Young Audiences*, an Afro-Cuban musical co-written with Grammy-nominated songwriter John Forster; a new version of Saint Saens' *The Carnival of the Animals*; and performances with *The Little Orchestra Society* and at the *2008 Calgary International Children's Festival*.

As a public speaker and poet, Gonzalez has been featured at *Lincoln Center's Out of Doors Festival*, Bill Moyers' documentary *Fooling with Words* on PBS, and *All Things Considered* on NPR, as well as Proctor & Gamble, JP Morgan/Chase, and other corporations. He was one of the featured performers at the *2008 National Storytelling Festival*, Lincoln Center's *2008 Imagination Conversation* symposium, and the *2008 Alliance for a New Humanity* conference alongside Deepak Chopra at the World Trade Center in Barcelona, Spain.

Gonzalez received his doctorate in Music Therapy from NYU's School of Education, where he later taught for 10 years. He was the host of *New York Kids* on WNYC for eight seasons and is a contributor to NPR's *Studio 360*.

"...as long as David Gonzalez is around, the venerable and very fine art of storytelling is in safe hands." New York Times