

Maya Angelou

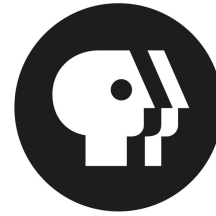
AND IRRISE

STILL IRRISE



A co-production of The People's Poet Media Group, LLC,
THIRTEEN's *American Masters* for WNET and ITVS
in association with Artemis Rising and with funding provided by
the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), the Ford Foundation,
the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Black Program
Consortium (NBPC) and the IDP Foundation.

**AMERICAN
MASTERS
PICTURES**



PRESENTS

MAYA ANGELOU: AND STILL I RISE

Directed by.....Bob Hercules & Rita Coburn Whack

Running time.....114 minutes

Genre.....Documentary

Year Released.....2016

Language.....English

Country of Origin.....USA

Format.....1920 x 1080, 24 fps, 1:66:1, sound: stereo

Distribution.....PBS Distribution, Amy Letourneau, 703.739.5093

aletourneau@pbs.org

Links.....Official website: www.mayaangeloufilm.com

<https://www.facebook.com/MayaAngelouFilm/>

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BBIsrRODV5m/>

http://www.imdb.com/title/tt5142750/?ref_=fn_al_tt_1

Film Clip link:.....<https://vimeo.com/162396642>

Password: Calypso

Virtual Press Office.....<https://www.dropbox.com/home/Maya%20Angelou%20Virtual%20Press>

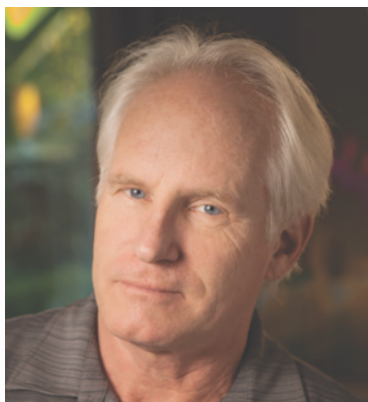
SYNOPSIS

Distinctly referred to as “a redwood tree, with deep roots in American culture,” icon Maya Angelou gave people the freedom to think about their history in a way they never had before. Dr. Angelou’s was a prolific life; as a singer, dancer, activist, poet, and writer she inspired generations with lyrical modern African-American thought that pushed boundaries.

This unprecedented film celebrates Dr. Maya Angelou by weaving her words with rare and intimate archival photographs and videos, which paint hidden moments of her exuberant life during some of America’s most defining moments. From her upbringing in the Depression-era South to her work with Malcolm X in Ghana to her inaugural speech for President Bill Clinton, the film takes us on an incredible journey through the life of a true American icon.

The film also features a remarkable series of interviews with friends and family including President Bill Clinton, Oprah Winfrey, Common, Alfre Woodard, Cicely Tyson, Quincy Jones, Secretary Hillary Clinton, John Singleton and Dr. Angelou’s son, Guy Johnson.

U.S. television premiere on the *American Masters* series winter 2017 on PBS.



BOB HERCULES
Co-Director/Co-Producer

Bob Hercules is an independent filmmaker whose recent films include *Joffrey: Mavericks of American Dance* and *Bill T. Jones: A Good Man*. The Joffrey film, narrated by Mandy Patinkin, tells the full story of the groundbreaking ballet company and their many rises and falls. It premiered in January, 2012 at the Dance on Camera Film Festival at Lincoln Center and aired on PBS’ American Masters December, 2012. *A Good Man* aired on American Masters in 2011 and played at many film festivals including IDFA, Silverdocs, Full Frame, DOXA and the Southern Circuit. Hercules acclaimed *Forgiving Dr. Mengele* (2005) won the Special Jury Prize at the Slamdance Film Festival and has been seen in film festivals around the world.



RITA COBURN WHACK
Co-Director/Co-Producer

Rita Coburn Whack is an independent filmmaker with Emmy Award-winning documentaries for *Curators of Culture*, *Remembering 47th Street* and *African Roots American Soil*. Other documentaries have aired on C-Span and the History Channel. Under her direction Maya Angelou’s Radio Show for Oprah Radio was awarded the Women in Radio and Television Gracie Awards, “Best Radio Program” 2008, “Best Radio Host” 2009 and the “Silver World Medal” in radio new york festival 2009. Author of the novel *Meant to Be* (Random House Strivers Row 2002) her company RCW Media Productions, Inc. produced Maya Angelou’s Black History Month Specials distributed by Public Radio International 2011, 2012 and 2013.

KEITH WALKER

Director of Photography

Keith Walker is a gifted cinematographer and visual storyteller. Most recently, Keith was D.P. *Mavis!* (the Mavis Staples story, SXSW 2015, HBO 2016).

Keith has shot projects around the world for many noted directors such as Steve James (*Head Games* and *No Crossover: The Trial of Allen Iverson*), Alex Gibney (*Catching Hell*, ESPN 30 for 30 series), and Tod Lending (Academy Award nominated for *Legacy*). Walker shot and co-produced the 2006 documentary *Senator Obama Goes to Africa* and was the Director of Photography for Bob Hercules' *Forgiving Dr. Mengele* and *Bill T. Jones: A Good Man* (PBS' American Masters, 2011). Walker has shot hundreds of segments for CBS' *60 Minutes* and received Dupont/Columbia University Award for a 60 Minutes story he shot in 2001.

Walker has also been the 'go-to' cameraman for Oprah Winfrey and has filmed her in locations ranging from Australia to South Africa to her story about Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans.

STEPHEN JAMES TAYLOR

Music Composer

Composer Stephen James Taylor scored the documentaries *Tom Bradley: Bridging the Divide* (2015), *Southside With You* (2015), *People Are The Sky*, (2015), as well as Marvel's TV Series *The Black Panther*, *Teachers Pet*, a Disney animated feature with wide theatrical release January, 2004, and many of Charles Burnett's films including *To Sleep With Anger* and the blues documentary, *Warming By the Devil's Fire* produced by Martin Scorsese.

DAVID E. SIMPSON

Editor

David E. Simpson edited *Life Itself* (the Roger Ebert documentary directed by Steve James) which premiered at the 2015 Sundance Film Festival. David also edited Bob Hercules & Gordon Quinn's *Bill T. Jones: A Good Man* (American Masters, 2011), Steve James' *Head Games* (2012), and Bob Hercules' *Forgiving Dr. Mengele* (winner of the Special Jury Prize, Slamdance 2006). David's own film, "Milking the Rhino," won numerous awards and played on PBS Independent Lens in 2009.

LILLIAN E. BENSON

Editor

Lillian Benson was one of the original editors of the landmark series *Eyes on the Prize*. She has gone on to edit many award-winning documentaries including *Get in the Way: The Journey of John L. Lewis*, *Wounded Knee* (Stanley Nelson) and *Great Performances: The Alvin Ailey Dance Company* (PBS).

MARQUETTA GLASS

Co-Executive Producer

Marquetta Glass was a Co-Executive Producer of the Hallmark series *Spirit Table with Dr. Maya Angelou*, *Celebrate Christmas with Maya Angelou*, *Hallmark Hall of Fame--The Run Away, Olympics-2000*, *Amazement Awaits*. Glass created the 2011 business alliance with BET to produce *Soul Mates* featuring Maya Angelou & Common.

Michael Kantor
Co-Executive Producer

Michael Kantor joined *American Masters* as the series' executive producer in April 2014 during its 28th season on PBS, and founded its theatrical imprint American Masters Pictures in January 2016. An Emmy and Peabody Award-winning filmmaker, his PBS series include *Broadway: The American Musical* (hosted by Julie Andrews), *Make 'Em Laugh* (hosted by Billy Crystal) and *Superheroes* (hosted by Liev Schreiber). He served as executive producer of *Give Me the Banjo* with Steve Martin, and distributes the American Film Theatre series including Edward Albee's *A Delicate Balance*, starring Katharine Hepburn, and Chekhov's *Three Sisters* with Laurence Olivier. Kantor has co-authored three books, served as a Tony nominator, and taught producing at the School for Visual Arts in New York City.

REUBEN CANNON
Co-Executive Producer

Reuben Cannon was Producer of *Down in the Delta* directed by Maya Angelou, *The Women of Brewster Place* (with Oprah Winfrey), and *Get on the Bus* (Spike Lee). He was also Producer, with Tyler Perry, of *Diary of a Mad Black Woman*, *Madea's Family Reunion*, *Why Did I Get Married*, *Daddy's Little Girls*, *Meet The Browns*, *The Family That Preys*, *Madea Goes To Jail*, and *Madea's Big Happy Family*. Reuben was also Executive Producer for the comedy series *Tyler Perry's House of Payne*.

Press Reviews



Winner, Best Documentary, 2016 Boulder International Film Festival
Winner, Best Documentary, 2016 Ft. Myers Film Festival

Audience Award, 2016 AFI Docs Film Festival
Audience Award, 2016 Cinetopia Film Festival

Audience Award and Best International Film, 2016 Encounters Film Festival

“ . . . a nuanced portrait of a woman who owned both the joy and pain of her life and poured all of it into her writing in an effort to liberate herself and others. This is a revelatory exploration of Angelou, a rebel who relished defying those who wanted to confine her in a box.”

—Michael Hewlett, Winston-Salem Journal

“ What Coburn Whack and Hercules do so well is capture Angelou's power and elegance, which seems to have increased as she got older. An important figure throughout the 60s, in the 70s and 80s she developed into a maternal figure for black America, ushering in the period of Oprah and black female empowerment. It's that longevity and creative drive that the film celebrates. No hagiography, it paints a portrait of a life lived to the full and dedicated to being true to oneself.”

—Lanre Bakare, The Guardian

“ It would be hard for any viewer not to find something new and meaningful in *Maya Angelou: And Still I Rise*. A must see.”

—Eric Ginsburn, Triad City Beat



Director's Statement:

Like many films we've worked on, there's always the narrative you have in your head about the subject and then there's the actual narrative that emerges after several years of filming. This proved to be the case on our film about the life of the remarkable Maya Angelou.

What emerged, surprisingly, were several stories from her life that were nearly unknown to most people and therefore quite intriguing to us. Few people knew that Maya Angelou performed in a revolutionary Jean Genet play called *The Blacks* in 1961 with a cast of actors that would all go on to great acclaim: James Earl Jones, Cicely Tyson, Godfrey Cambridge, Lou Gossett, Jr. and Charles Gordone.

Similarly, most people don't know that Maya Angelou had a career as a calypso singer and dancer in the 1950s and actually appeared in a movie called *Calypso Heat Wave*. We were able to track down the movie and it's a revelation to see her performing in beautiful black and white footage.

Another little known part of her story that emerged is Maya Angelou's life in Africa in the early 1960s. Though she talks about it in her books it's fascinating to hear her describe her trip to Cape Coast in Ghana, the terrible place where the slave ships embarked hundreds of years ago. Or to hear her describe the excitement of living in newly liberated Ghana and meeting with Malcolm X on his pilgrimage to Africa.

It was a unique privilege to be the first filmmakers to tell her full story and it was exciting to uncover some of these 'secret' stories that most people hadn't heard. That's the wonder of being a documentary filmmaker.