Maya Angelou
AND STILL I RISE

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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
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

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


DAVID E. SIMPSON
Editor


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 the uncover some of these ‘secret’ stories that most people hadn’t heard. That’s the wonder of being a documentary filmmaker.