



Please join us!

Online through Expo Pass

Friday-Saturday, April 1st and 2nd, 2022

Information for Teachers

What: The Georgia Mountain Storytelling Festival showcases the art of storytelling with an emphasis on both traditional and contemporary stories. Festival events include two days of outstanding storytelling performances; workshops for students and visitors to learn storytelling, speaking, and performance skills such as how to connect with audiences through humor and how to find your own voice as a speaker; special programming for children; and much more. Each year, the festival brings five nationally known, award-winning storytellers to north Georgia.

The 2022 festival will feature Sheila Arnold, an African-American storyteller who brings history alive; Bil Lepp, an Appalachian humorist who weaves tall tales with wit and wisdom; Sam Payne, a singer/songwriter who mesmerizes with stories and songs touch the heart; Gayle Ross, a Cherokee storyteller who shares the stories of her ancestors, and Kim Weitkamp, a storyteller and musician who delights with her humor and heart-felt tales.

When: Festival events will take place online on Friday, April 1-Saturday, April 2, from 9AM to 9PM, and recordings of the stories and presentations can be accessed online for 30 days after the festival, so teachers will have time to work them into their lesson plans at their convenience. With a festival ticket, you and your class can view as many of the events as you like! Your students will benefit from attending, whether you show them one session or many.

Why: Our featured tellers are recording videos especially for students, and all of the festival's programming is designed to be both educational and fun. Through viewing the festival's performances and workshops, students can study theater, speech, history, sociology, art, music, literature, and more in an exciting and memorable way. In the past, teachers have had their students reflect on their festival visit through a variety of assignments, including:

- What did you learn about public speaking from watching the performers? Which one was the most effective speaker, and why?
- Create a work of art inspired by a story that you heard at the festival.
- How did one of the storytellers use sensory details (sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell) in his or her story? What did those details add?
- What message or lesson did you take away from one of the stories? Explain that message, and then analyze how the storyteller conveyed it.
- Write down a story that is important in your family, and then compare and contrast it with a family story told by one of the storytellers.
- Compare and contrast any two stories you heard at the festival.
- How did listening to one of the storytellers affect your understanding of his or her culture? What did you learn?

What's the cost, and how do I get into the festival online? The festival is free to teachers and their classes, so this is the most affordable educational opportunity you'll have all year. You don't need to register each of your students if you're going to show the stories in class. Just sign up for a free teacher ticket, and let us know the number of students in your classes. The registration form is short and user-friendly. Go to [Festival Registration](#) to register. Prior to the festival, you'll be able to see a full schedule of events on our website, and you will be emailed a link to use to access the online event.

Where can I get more information on the Georgia Mountain Storytelling Festival? Email info@gamountainstoryfest.org or call us 828-389-2654. The festival's website is www.gamountainstoryfest.org, and we can be found on Facebook under Georgia Mountain Storytelling Festival. Tickets can be reserved through [Festival Registration](#).

Where can I find additional storytelling resources online?

- [Learning Library - International Storytelling Center](#)
- [Circle of Stories . For Educators | PBS](#)
- <https://www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/echo07.lan.stories.lporaltrad/storytelling-oral-traditions/>
- <https://timpfest.org/a-list-of-storytelling-resources-for-teachers-our-thanks-for-all-you-do/>
- [KWHS Educator Toolkit: The Power of Storytelling](#)

What are people saying about the festival?

"I've been thinking about how much your volunteers have worked to incorporate storytelling (and the storytelling festival!) into an informative multi-ethnic educational environment with a community outreach/storytelling-for-children component; And I'm also tickled to my toenails to be one of your past festival storytellers. I'd do it again anytime!" --Lyn Ford, storyteller and educator

"Being from outside the States, I learned a lot of Appalachian culture and traditions thanks to this festival." --student participant

"I was overwhelmed by the enthusiasm of your volunteers and the story listeners. People were open to all kinds of story; that was lovely. I also loved that you had breaks for people by offering other types of performances, i.e., music, historic character presentations, workshops, and puppetry. That is exceptional and unique for the Storytelling Festivals I have attended. Also, I loved the intimacy with the audience; good conversations abounded." --Sheila Arnold Jones, storyteller and educator

"This kind of culture sharing needs to continue." --student participant

"This was a storytelling festival at its finest. The stories and story songs were authentic, moving, and beautifully told. They touched the audience in a deep way. And even though the audience came from different political, religious, and ethnic backgrounds, they were magically united during the festival due to the incredible power of story." – Geraldine Buckley, storyteller

"The talent was incredible! The storytellers and musicians I saw were engaged with the audience and I loved the pieces they shared, pieces of personal information, like a connection to an instrument, an artist, or another storyteller. I'm so grateful for the opportunity to have shared another festival. Thank you!" --community member

"Overall, I'd give it an A+. Well done." --teacher

Spotlight on Our 2021 Tellers

Sheila Arnold has been performing since she was 8 years old. A graduate of UNC-Charlotte with a B.A. in African-American & African History, she has been a professional master storyteller since 2003, presenting storytelling programs, historic character presentations, and professional development programs for schools, churches, libraries, professional organizations, museums, and storytelling festivals in 41 states. She has been repeatedly featured at the National Storytelling Festival, and this year marks her second time at the Georgia Mountain Storytelling Festival. We're thrilled to have her back!



Sheila manages History's Alive!, a company that mentors and provides opportunities and guidance to performers. She has been selected as a Mt. Vernon Research Fellow, an artist-in-residence at Hewn oak Artist Colony, and as a McDowell Fellow—a testament to the power and influence of her work. At her core, Ms. Sheila, as she is commonly called, is a Professional Imaginator with a passion, vision and ministry of healing hearts, unifying communities and reminding people to share their stories. For more information, see mssheila.org.

Bil Lepp is an award-winning storyteller, author, and recording artist. He's the host of the History Channel's *Man Vs History* series, the occasional host of NPR's internationally syndicated *Mountain Stage*, and a contributing columnist to the *West Virginia Gazette-Mail*. Bil's humorous, family friendly tall-tales and stories have earned the appreciation of listeners of all ages and from all walks of life. Though Lepp is a five-time champion of the WV Liars' Contest, his stories often contain morsels of truth which present universal themes in clever and witty ways. Audiences all across the country, from grade schools to corporate execs to the Comedy Central's Hudson stage, have been delighted by Bil's mirthful tales and delightful insights into everyday life. We're so pleased to be welcoming him to our festival for the third time.



Bil's books and audio collections have won awards including the PEN Steven Kroll Award for Children's Book Writing, Parents' Choice Gold awards, and awards from the National Parenting Publications Assoc., and the Public Library Assoc. He is also the recipient of the Vandalia Award, West Virginia's highest folk honor. To learn more, see leppstorytelling.com.

Sam Payne's fill-the-room stage presence, craftsmanship, and his soaring tenor voice have established him as a favorite with audiences and critics alike. A widely performing storyteller and musician with an award-winning catalog of albums, Sam has brought his stories and songs to halls in Canada, Bulgaria, Tokyo, and from coast to coast in the United States, including performances at the Will Rogers Auditorium in Dallas, Texas, the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the National Storytelling Festival, and the Timpanogos Storytelling Festival. This is Sam's first year at our festival, and we couldn't be happier!



Sam hosts *The Apple Seed*—an award-winning national radio show on the art of storytelling—and serves as the Weber State University Storytelling Fellow. He has authored periodical publications for children with a regular readership of more than a million elementary school students and has written books and stage pieces including *Sanctuary: The Story of Zion* for the centennial of the National Parks Service, *Echoes of Hammers and Spikes* (with Suzanne Christensen) for the sesquicentennial of the completion of the first transcontinental railroad, and *One of a Million Stars*, commemorating the 14-year mission of the Mars rover Opportunity. See sampayne.com for more.

Gayle Ross is an enrolled member of the Cherokee Nation and a direct descendant of John Ross, Principal Chief of the Cherokee during the infamous "Trail of Tears." Her grandmother told stories, and it is from this rich Native American heritage that Gayle's storytelling springs. Gayle has appeared at almost every major storytelling and folk festival in the United States and Canada, as well as theaters and performance arts halls throughout the U.S. and Europe, often appearing with some of today's finest Native American musicians and dancers. Most importantly, she continues to mesmerize children at countless schools and libraries across the country,



and we expect that you'll fully enjoy her debut at the Georgia Mountain Storytelling Festival. Whether she is provoking laughter with a Trickster tale or moving her listeners to tears with a haunting myth, Gayle is truly a master of the age-old craft of storytelling. The prestigious National Council of Traditional Arts has included Gayle in "The Master Storyteller's Tour" and the all-Indian show "From the Plains to the Pueblos." As the author of five critically acclaimed children's books, she has been asked to speak at the American Library Association, the International Reading Association, and the International Board of Books for Young People. She was recently featured in the ground-breaking American Experience series "We Shall Remain" in the "The Trail of Tears" episode. Her stories have been heard on National Public Radio on such programs as "Living on the Earth" and "Mountain Stages." For more information, see [Gayle Ross-World Storytelling Cafe](http://GayleRoss-WorldStorytellingCafe.com).



Kim Weitkamp grew up in Amish Country as the middle child of exhausted parents. Labeled by teachers as high-spirited, uncooperative and too talkative, Kim took those comments and channeled them into a lifetime of high-energy, heartfelt and hilarious artistry. We are better for it. She is an award-winning storyteller, author, singer-songwriter, and humorist. After using applied storytelling in her work with adjudicated and at-risk youth for 12 years, Kim took a turn onto a different avenue of story and song which led her down the path of full time touring for the last 15 years where she gathered an armload of awards. She performs regularly at festivals and theaters around the country, and we're so excited to have her join us this year.

Kim has written a well-received folk operetta and has been a guest editor and contributor for various publications. Her material gets regular airplay on Sirius XM and NPR Affiliate Stations. She has 8 award-winning albums, has produced and/or designed 32 albums for other performers, and has hosted a morning show for a DOVE Award winning radio network. She has been honored with leadership and speaking awards for her coaching/speaking work with internationally known companies like Purina, Leibherr, Grifols, and Edward Jones as well as nationally recognized non-profits like, Feeding America, Habitat for Humanity, and Conflict Resolution Centers. She is ranked as one of the top 20 business coaches in the Columbus, Ohio region by Influence Digest, teaching the power of story to help grow organizations and build teams.

To learn more, see kimweitkamp.com.