

Department of Government & Reiff Center present

Story-based Strategies for Peace-building, Community Development, and Community Healing – Between USA and Rwanda

After graduating from Northwestern, theatre adventurer Gerard Stropnický co-founded Bloomsburg Theatre Ensemble (BTE), where he worked for the next 35 years. He's acted in over a hundred productions, directed 67, and written, co-written or devised a score more. In Appalachia, the Deep South and elsewhere, he writes and directs site-specific productions devised to open community conversation. He co-founded the Network of Ensemble Theaters, and has been a panelist for the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, the Massachusetts Cultural Council, Theatre Communications Group, and the National Endowment for the Arts. He was named USA Lowe Fellow in Theater Arts in 2010.



In communities facing conflict and crisis, or transition, theatre artist Gerard Stropnický assembles enormous casts of non-actors: coal miners, cotton planters, shrimpers, church choirs, bluegrass bands – a vast array of ages, races, and abilities, to make original large-scale musical plays that celebrate, challenge, address intractable issues and pulse with energy. Communities respond with unalloyed joy, deep introspection, and occasionally a path forward. Catharsis becomes available.

The shared process of story establishes a healing climate, and bears a close relationship to effective use of story in conflict resolution, Peace and Reconciliation, and in applications such as Rwanda's post-genocide Gacaca Courts that helped that nation to move on.

Stropnický will speak about all of this, offering a clear-headed look at the need for clarity of intentions, and of the five values essential to the framing of story for change: Agency, Authenticity, Artistry, Accuracy and Audacity.

Wednesday, March 18, 4PM
Gaines Theater, Freeman Center