

## Michael Brant DeMaria: Long Biography – for Keynote Concerts and Workshops

Dr. Michael Brant DeMaria is a psychologist, author and award-winning composer with over 25 years of experience in helping guide others on their life journeys. He has published and presented numerous papers on the role creativity and spirituality play in the healing process nationally and internationally. He is the author of *Horns and Halos* (1992), *Ever Flowing On* (2001) and the book of poetry, *Moments* (2008). His passion for philosophy and psychology started at a young age having graduated with degrees in both as he turned 20, while also achieving the outstanding student award the same year in the department of philosophy, art and religious studies. He then became the youngest recipient of a Ph.D. in the clinical psychology program at Duquesne University, where he studied in the graduate programs in psychology, philosophy and The Institute of Formative Spirituality.

For the first decade of his professional life he devoted himself to working with abused children and their families. His unique and effective approach to working with well over 2000 cases of child abuse and neglect resulted in him being appointed to the Governor's State Legislative Task Force on child abuse and neglect and testifying as an expert in clinical psychology in over a hundred cases in criminal, civil and family court. He is a diplomat in Expressive Therapy and a Registered Play Therapist - Supervisor. As a University Professor he has been teaching and training graduate students in psychotherapy for the past 20 years. He has also trained post-graduate students in play therapy and expressive arts therapy for many years. He has served as the clinical director of a variety of programs and trained hundreds of professionals and para-professionals from parents to judges in communicating with children and teens in creative and effective ways.

After decades of work with extremely severe cases of child abuse and neglect Michael became profoundly aware of how in less severe forms most all adults in our culture suffer from an essential alienation from our 'vital connection' we had as children that is essential for us to maneuver through the difficult passages of life and connect with others. (See chapter 1 of *Ever Flowing On*) It was this insight into how children's natural spontaneity, imagination and creativity was central to their health, wholeness and well being that led Michael to devote more time to his work in understanding the role creativity played in the healing process for adults. He also saw how these 'vital connections' were destroyed not only by abuse and neglect, but some of our natural cultural expectations of children in an educational setting that often repressed or suppressed a child's natural wonder, curiosity and awe about themselves, each other and the world around them. Michael's own explorations into creativity became more and more central to his work as a life guide and resulted in him limiting his practice to working with helping adults live more creative, meaningful and effective lives. One of his greatest joys now is weaving his love of nature, creativity and spirituality into accessible and effective healing practices - particularly involving journaling, meditation, and the expressive arts. This work

resulted in the founding of ONTOS (1998), the book *Ever Flowing On* (2001) and the CD *The River* (2003).

As a speaker and workshop leader, Michael has presented nationally and internationally. Over the years, his keynote speeches have evolved into popular keynote concerts where he integrates music, storytelling, guided visualizations and poetry in his presentations. He is known for taking his audiences on dynamic, engaging and moving journeys of self-discovery, relaxation and healing that are at once entertaining and informative.

Musically, Michael is a composer and musician who from the age of 7 has been keenly interested in how sound can induce deep states of relaxation, altered states of consciousness and healing. He is an avid student of world music exploring and playing indigenous percussion and aerophones from the Native American Flute and African Djembe to the Australian Didgeridoo. He also plays piano and a wide array of keyboards and synthesizers. He has been the featured musician for renowned poets Robert Bly and David Whyte and has played with Grammy winning and internationally known artists such as Mary Youngblood, Bill Miller, David Darling, Carlos Nakai, as well as Coyote Oldman, Peter Phippen, Jeff Ball and Ash Dargan. He has composed 3 CD's of original music, two in the Healing Sound Project Series - *The River* (2003) and *Ocean* (2009) as well as the award winning soundtrack, *Siyotanka* (2009).

As a playwright, Michael's first full length play, *Café Mezzo* opened to rave reviews in 2007 and was chosen as the best play of the year for the Loblolly Theatre. His second full length play, co-written with Stephen Lott, *Siyotanka* also opened to exceptional reviews and garnered 7 Crystal Awards including Michael receiving a Crystal Award for his original musical score and live performance of the soundtrack. Michael's first collection of poetry, *Moments* was published in 2008 and he is also a regular contributor to the contemporary art gallery, Artel with his original abstract acrylic paintings.