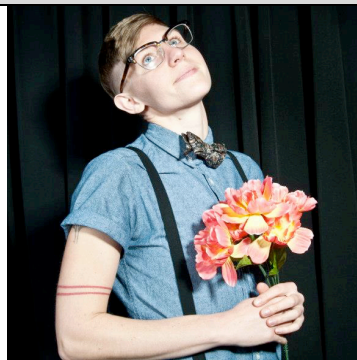


Dia Davina — Spoken Word Artist (Creativity, Self-Expression, Poetry)

KNOW

About the Artist



Dia Davina never thought they'd call themselves an artist, but always felt that their voice was their most powerful tool. When Dia found spoken word poetry in December 2012 it changed their life, offering them a long-awaited platform for sharing their experiences and sparking important dialogue. Driven by a belief that poetry offers a powerful medium for cultivating creative, engaged communities and feeling inspired by the impact of personal stories, Dia's poetry encourages youth to embrace their voice and their story as a powerful tool for changing the world. Since Dia started writing and performing poetry three years ago, they have competed in numerous competitions, winning fourth place in the Canadian Individual Poetry Slam Championship and has toured across Canada as a spoken word artist, teaching and performing in schools and communities.

About the Performance

This one-person show is approximately 50-60 minutes in length (depending on levels of audience engagement), and is adaptable to any audience size. The performance includes pieces of my poetry as well as humorous and engaging stories about how I found spoken word poetry, how I use it to explore and express my identity and where I draw inspiration from. Throughout the performance, I will use parts of my personal story to encourage students to think about how art can be used to explore identity and to open dialogue and give voice to important social issues. Some of the issues covered are: queer identity, trans* identity and discussions of gender politics, as well as humorous poems about friendship, family, childcare and what it means to be a professional artist.

About the Art Form

Spoken word poetry has its roots in a rich history of oral storytelling traditions and has evolved in fascinating ways. Slam poetry, the competitive cousin of spoken word poetry, was invented in the late 1980s by a construction worker who loved poetry but often found poetry performances to be dull, so he created a competitive framework that would engage and excite audiences. Poetry doesn't need to involve rigid form, specific themes or subject matter, or even any poetic devices and spoken word poetry, in particular, doesn't need to sound a specific way. I have no formal training in poetry, so the tools I work with come from my own stories and thoughts and the way I choose to share them. I have become a professional poet and artist simply by getting up on stages and saying things that are important to me- that is what spoken word poetry is all about. Engaging poetry is about finding one's voice, and embracing it as a way of changing the world and I encourage students to think of their own story, and their own voice, as a valuable artistic medium.

WONDER

Links to Curriculum

- Social Studies: exploring how art can be used as social resistance to challenge norms and discuss social justice issues
- Language Arts: artistic forms of communication and story-telling; critically engage with poetry and literature

Pre-Performance Discussion Questions

- What is the definition of an artist? What about a poet?
- Think of a poem or a poet that has impacted you. What about it was engaging and why?
- What do you know about spoken word poetry? Compare and contrast it to poetry written for the page.
- What parts of your personal story do you want to share with the world?

Post-Performance Activities

- Writing exercise: Choose the most important part of your personal story, your identity or a social justice issue close to you. 1. Choose one metaphor to describe your chosen topic. 2. Do a 10 minute freewrite using your metaphor as a writing prompt (expand the metaphor, use imagery and description) 3. Tweet! Use your freewrite to write a "twitter poem" (use only 140 characters- no pressure!).
- Let go of everything you thought about poetry and write a spoken word piece about your chosen topic. Remember: it doesn't need to use any specific form, structure or poetic devices. Say it aloud (to your class, a classmate or just by whispering it to yourself). How did it change when you said it aloud? How did your story come alive?

Post-Performance Discussion Questions

- What aspects of spoken word poetry are valuable- as art form? As a mode of self-expression? As resistance?
- What is the poet's role as an artist? What is your role as an audience member?
- How can your voice change the world?

LEARN