

ArtStory

Pursuing quality of life.

Michael K. Roark

“Writer, Director, Actor, Consultant... it all depends on what they're looking for.”

Genre: Theatre



Lion II



Highball



Guys On Ice

Some people can't bear to be booed. Mike Roark loves it. A veteran of nearly 200 stage productions including numerous melodramas which he has written, directed and/or performed in, “Melodrama Mike” likes playing the villain. “When the crowd boos,” he says, “they're actually cheering you.”

As a teenager, Mike was cast as the “dashing hero” in his first ever stage production and immediately fell in love with the theatre. Later as a student at Wichita State University (where he earned his BA in the theatrical arts), Mike found theatre work could also provide extra income. Throughout the '80s and '90s, he worked at the Empire House Melodrama Theatre.

By the time “old fashioned melodrama” reemerged at Wichita's Mosley Street Melodrama, Mike was a veteran. He became a resident writer and director, as well as a frequent performer.

Under the penname “M. K. O'Roark,” (both a tribute to his family name and a throwback to melodrama tradition), Mike has written well over a dozen one-hour melodramas which have been produced professionally throughout North America and around the world. He markets his plays to theatres, schools, clubs, churches and other organizations.

Actor, director, writer; how does Mike approach these various roles?

On acting: “You've got to find things that make sense to yourself, and draw from your own experiences. I think there's a little bit of every actor in every character they do, even the villain. Granted, a little less in melodrama.”

On writing: “My characters actually write the shows, if that makes any sense. I start writing, I get my characters, I write the first setting, and then people start walking in...they take on a life, and I'm essentially taking notes.”

“Melodrama is like pushing a rock up a hill. Once you get it over a certain point, you hang on and hope it doesn't roll over you too many times.”

—Mike Roark



Michael K. Roark

On directing: “I've been directing at Music Theatre for Young People. More and more that's where I've been finding my theatrical satisfaction. The children bring so much energy to the stage. I've now got alumni coming back, saying nice things, and that makes it all worthwhile.”

What does the future hold for Mike Roark?

“At the end of the movie, *Bull Durham*, the kid's going on to the majors and getting all these great things, and Kevin Costner asks, ‘What do I get?’ And the guy looks at him and says, ‘You get to keep coming to the baseball field every day and get paid to do it.’ And whenever I feel things are going bad for me, I just think to myself, ‘I get to come to the theatre every day and get paid to do it.’ I think theatre will always be a part of my life.”



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