

DAVID ZUM BRUNNEN (Richard Glaubman)

David excels at the balance between acting and managing. In addition to his performance skills, David has served as General Manager for Hedgerow Theatre, Philadelphia Area Repertory Theatre, and PlayMakers Repertory Theatre. He has also served as the Executive Director of the North Carolina Theatre Conference and has received two *INDIE* awards for enhancing the cultural life in the Triangle area of North Carolina. A graduate of UNC, His performance credits include: New York: **Winding The Ball** (American Premiere). Canada: Nicholas Nickleby in **Nicholas Nickleby** (Stephenville Festival, Canada), **Charlie Brown** in **You're a Good Man Charlie Brown**; National Tour: **War Bonds: The Songs and Letters of World War II**; **Elliot Engel's The Night Before Christmas Carol**, **The Tender Nights of F. Scott Fitzgerald**, **The Wrights of Passage**. Regional: Kruger in **The Front Page** (under the direction of three-time Tony Award winner and film director, Gene Saks, for PlayMakers Repertory Company), The Author in Deep Dish Theater's acclaimed production of **Via Dolorosa**; Henry Carr in **Travesties** (Piccolo Spoleto Festival); **Comedy of Errors** (Foundation Theatre, NJ), Mercutio in **Romeo and Juliet** (Birmingham Children's Theatre, AL); Hotspur and other roles in **Henry IV, Parts I & II** (Burning Coal Theatre Company); David is a member of Actors' Equity Association and Screen Actors Guild.

SERENA EBHARDT (Director)

Serena is the co-founder of EbzB Productions whose mission is to develop theatrical works that promote integrity, self-discovery and the positive transformation of individuals, artists, audiences, and communities. Serena has appeared in film, television, Off-Broadway, and in regional theatres across the United States and Canada. A graduate of UNC, Her directing credits include: **Blood Done Sign My Name**; **Dar He: The Lynching of Emmett Till**; **Fit To Be Tied**; **Search For Signs of Intelligent Life**; **Chamber Music**; **The Tempest**; **Brown V. Board of Education**; **The Night Before Christmas Carol**; **The Best Christmas Pageant Ever**; **Anne Frank**; **The Long Christmas Dinner**; and **A Christmas Memory** among others. Serena is also a teaching artist who frequently conducts arts-in-education workshops for students and teachers.

Life is So Good is the third collaboration between EbzB Productions and Mike Wiley Productions. Previous collaborations include: **Dar He: The Lynching of Emmett Till** and **Brown V. Board of Education**. This marks the first time that Mike Wiley and David zum Brunnen have shared the stage together. Serena Ebhardt has directed Mike Wiley in several of his productions including Tim Tyson's **Blood Done Sign My Name**. Serena has directed husband, David zum Brunnen in numerous productions including Elliot Engel's **The Night Before Christmas Carol**.

Special Thanks

George Dawson and Family, Richard Glaubman and Family
 Carl & Glenda Ebhardt, Jodi & Jordan Wiley, Carlton zum Brunnen, Jeanne and Richard Stone, Eric Goldman of Sendroff & Baruch Associates NY, Terry Fontaine, Susan Raab, Stephen Barefoot. Norwich Free Academy and Staff,
 Steve Exum, Holly Springs Cultural Center and Staff.



Life Is So Good

By George Dawson and
 Richard Glaubman

**One man's extraordinary journey through the
 20th century and how he learned to read
 at the age of 98.**

Original Stage Adaptation
 By EbzB Productions and Mike Wiley Productions

Featuring
Mike Wiley
David zum Brunnen

Directed by
Serena Ebhardt

Stage Management
Rachel Zielinski
Michael Goolsby

Sound Design
Kevin Leonard

Light Design
Eric Ketchum

www.EbzB.org and www.mikewileyproductions.com

Life Is So Good

By George Dawson and Richard Glaubman

Original stage adaptation
by EbzB Productions and Mike Wiley Productions

This performance includes one intermission.

George Dawson co-wrote his life story in *Life Is So Good* with Richard Glaubman when he was 101. Dawson learned to read at the age of 98 as part of an adult literacy program. Dawson was born in Marshall, Texas in 1898 as the first of five children, a farmer's son, and grandson and great-grandson of African-American slaves. By his own account, Dawson worked with his father from age four to age twelve, at which point his father found him work on the Little's Farm, where he worked until age sixteen. He then returned home after his parents took in the nine children of his recently deceased aunt and uncle. To support the large family, Dawson took a second job at a saw mill. This job kept him out of World War I after his employer convinced him to sign an X on a paper he could not read, which he later surmised must have made some claim that he was ineligible for military service. When he turned 21, his father encouraged him to "see the world," which in his case meant traveling to Memphis, Tennessee where he built levees; to St. Louis, Missouri, and New Orleans, Louisiana, to unload coconuts on the docks; riding the rails to various parts of the United States; farming in Mexico; and traveling to Canada out of a desire to see snow. In 1928, after nine years of travel and work, Dawson decided to return home to Marshall to reunite with his loved ones, settle down and start a family of his own. He arrived to find his family had moved away, leaving no clue as to their new home. (He noted in an article telling his life story, "I wondered why they hadn't let me know. Then again, how would they have found me? Even if they'd known where I was, I wouldn't have been able to read their letter.") There in Marshall, he met and married Elzenia, an attractive woman who could read and write. They moved to Dallas, where Dawson began to work for the city in road repair, and went on to have seven children, from whom he hid his illiteracy while bluffing his way through their homework questions. In 1938, he took a job with Oak Farms Dairy, where he worked until his mandatory retirement at age 65. For 25 years after his retirement, Dawson continued to do some work gardening and doing yard work for neighbors. At age 90, he retired from paid work completely but continued to tend his own garden and to fish. About this time, a young man making door-to-door visits on behalf of a local adult basic education program came by his home and told him about classes for literacy and GED preparation at Lincoln Instructional Center nearby. Dawson overcame his initial reluctance to reveal his illiteracy, telling himself, "All your life you've wanted to read. Maybe this is why you're still around." Dawson applied himself to the task, learning to read and even going on to study for his GED at age 103. Dawson's achievements have inspired many people. He appeared on *Oprah* and told his story in the June, 2001, issue of the inspirational magazine *Guideposts*. Dawson was posthumously honored when the Carroll Independent School District named a middle school after him in Southlake. He died July 5, 2001 in a Dallas hospital.

Richard Glaubman graduated from the University of California at Berkeley. His only formal writing class was the required freshman English 101 that he completed during the last quarter of his senior year. The day after graduation when he went to collect his paper, he found that he had received an 'A' which was not that common an occurrence in his college career. His professor said, "Since you are the only senior, that's a good thing, but you actually have some talent. What are going to do now that you are finished with school?" Having graduated with no plan in mind, Glaubman surprised himself when he responded, "I'm going to be a writer." For three decades the rewards were not forthcoming and he held numerous jobs in restaurants, fished commercially in Alaska, planted trees in British Columbia and worked in the construction industry. He now teaches elementary school. After reading an article about George Dawson, a 98-year-old man just learning to read and write, Glaubman began making regular visits to Mr. Dawson. The resulting collaboration led to the book, ***Life Is So Good***, published by Random House. The New School University awarded Glaubman a doctorate of Human Letters "for outstanding achievement in the service of humankind." ***Life Is So Good*** won the **Christopher Award** for writers whose work "affirms the highest values of the human spirit."

ARTISTS' BIOGRAPHIES

Mike Wiley (George Dawson) Michael hails from Roanoke, Virginia and is a graduate of Catawba College in Salisbury, NC. Formerly of Theatre IV and Shenandoah Shakespeare Express, Wiley has more than ten years of credits in theatre for young audiences, plus film, television and regional theatre. An Upward Bound alumnus and Trio Achiever Award recipient, he is an M.F.A. graduate of the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. While in attendance at UNC, Michael was the recipient of the Graduate Education Advancement Board's Impact Award for Dramatic Art - Inspiring Underprivileged Youth Through Historical Plays. A gifted playwright and actor, Wiley's overriding goal is expanding cultural awareness for audiences of all ages through dynamic portrayals based on pivotal moments in African-American history. In doing so, his work continually unveils a richer picture of the total American experience. Michael is the author of several one-man touring plays including **Dar He: The Lynching of Emmett Till**, **One Noble Journey**, **Blood Done Sign My Name** and **Jackie Robinson: A Game Apart**. He has performed both original works at colleges and universities throughout the country and has appeared in several regional theaters such as Mill Mountain Playhouse, Playmakers Repertory Company and the Shenandoah Shakespeare Express. Michael is an Upward Bound /Talent Search alumnus and has made numerous appearances in high schools and auditoriums with outstanding arts groups such as Richmond, VA Theatre IV -- which is a professional theatre company for young audiences. He was also bestowed the Upward Bound Trio Achiever award for the state of Virginia as well as the Mid-Atlantic Educational Opportunities Programs. Mike is a member of Actors' Equity Association.