



## Biography

Mark Spencer was born and raised in Gary, Indiana. He is a proud alumni of Emerson School for the Visual & Performing Arts' very first graduating class and the very first college graduate in his family. After earning a bachelors degree, Mark started his professional career as an educator and drum major for the arts.

In 1998, Mark began the transformation of the high school drama club into the West Side Theatre Guild. He envisioned a regional theatre to showcase students and community members, national and international performing artists, and present thought leaders to the community at affordable or no costs. To achieve this goal, Mark turned research, relationships and resources into results. He built a brand and created a series of memorable experiences, soliciting and garnering the support and partnerships of local corporations and foundations eager to support his proven positive work and the sustainability of the arts in Gary.

For decades, Mark has served dual roles in the classroom and as the director of the Theatre Guild where he has managed the production of a diverse and extensive collection of plays, concerts, albums and television specials, featuring international artists such as Maya Angelou, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre, Boyz II Men, Brian McKnight, Shirley Caesar, Ramsey Lewis, Chaka Khan, Spike Lee, Herbie Hancock, Ray Charles, Nikki Giovanni, Cicely Tyson, Dr. Cornel West, Dr. Michael Eric Dyson, Coretta Scott King, Marvin Sapp, Ed Asner and Kirk Franklin.

He is most proud of the distinction of grooming many students and community members for careers onstage, onscreen, and in the music business. Under his tutelage, alumni have gone on to work with Grammy-winning artists like the Jacksons, Frankie Beverly & Maze, Mary J. Blige, and Anthony Hamilton, as well as performing on Broadway, in the NBC production of The Wiz, and with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

After earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in Theater from Indiana University, Mark went on to earn a Bachelor of Science degree in Education from Calumet College of St. Joseph, a Master of Education degree from Indiana Wesleyan University and holds an Honorary Doctorate degree bestowed upon him from GMOR Theological Institute.

Mark is the recipient of several awards and accolades including The Times of Northwest Indiana's

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“Professionals to Watch,” The Katie Hall Educational Foundation’s “Merit of Distinction Award” and Gary Frontiers Club’s “Drum Major Award.”

Mark is credited as the founder of West Side Theatre Guild. He is the Director of Fine Arts for Gary Community School Corporation and was recently elected to the Gary Common Council as councilman-at-large.

He is an artist and musician who lives, works and worships in Gary and surrounding communities.

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