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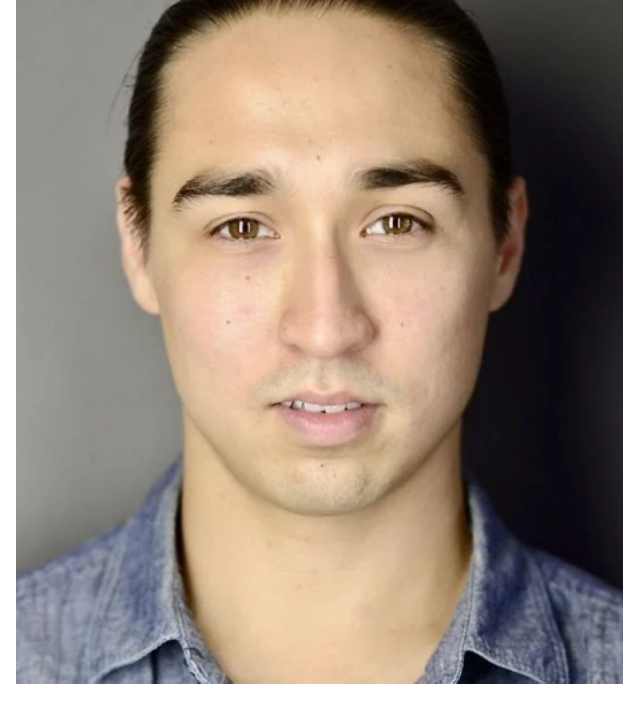
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## WVU alumnus to be first to have play featured in Contemporary American Theater Festival

By Tabitha Johnston tjohnston@shepherdstown chronicle.com Jun 9, 2025



"Did My Grandfather Kill My Grandfather?" will be premiered at the Contemporary American Theater Festival next month. Submitted photo



Wilson

SHEPHERDSTOWN — The first play by a West Virginia native will be premiered at the Contemporary American Theater Festival (CATF) this summer.

That play, "Did My Grandfather Kill My Grandfather?," was written by Cody LeRoy Wilson.

"Being a West Virginia native and being able to come back to West Virginia to do something like this is, honestly, a dream," Wilson said.

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Wilson spent the early years of his childhood growing up on his grandparents' farm in Plum Run, before moving to Fairmont with his mother and older sister. He graduated from Fairmont Senior High School and earned the Promise Scholarship, which he used to attend West Virginia University.

After graduating with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in acting, he made the decision to move to New York City to begin his career. He never anticipated that career would take him back to his home state.

"To be the first West Virginian and West Virginia University playwright to come to CATF is amazing. I hope it will set the groundwork for many others to do the same thing. I'm enthralled to hopefully be an inspiration for other West Virginia artists, because the arts in Appalachia are well and alive and a growing form of communication," Wilson said. "And, as a person who loves my home state more than anything, there couldn't be a better place to premiere my show."

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Day 4: 25 min walk	Day 4: 30 min walk	Day 4: 25 min walk	Day 4: 30 min walk

That show — half of which was previewed at the Pan Asian Repertory Theatre in New York City — was inspired by various aspects of Wilson's heritage. Its set design is reminiscent of the farm he grew up on and features antique photographs from his family's past. Its story was largely taken from his own experience as the son of a Vietnamese woman, adopted at the age of 6 months by a U.S. soldier from an orphanage in the capital of South Vietnam, right before its fall to North Vietnam at the end of the Vietnam War.

"My grandfather did three tours in Vietnam. On his third and final tour, he was stationed in Saigon, next to an orphanage. He had a friend in the Army, who was a pastor, who asked him, 'Hey, would you like to adopt one of these kids?'" Wilson said, mentioning his grandparents had only been able to have one child, due to fertility issues. "My grandfather was a kind spirit to those in the orphanage and, during that time, became attached to my mother. Eventually, he called my grandma back in the states to ask her if she'd like a daughter."

A dream related to this history inspired Wilson to write the one-man play, which he will also be performing at CATF.

"This play highlights the complexities of this war. The reality of the Vietnam War is that, for all I know, my family could have killed each other in it, like happened with the Hatfields and McCoys and the Civil War," Wilson said, mentioning this year marks the 50th anniversary of the war ending. "In war, nobody wins. It's part of my mission statement, as a Vietnamese artist and writer and actor, to retell that story."

Tickets to the play can be purchased at <https://catf.org/> or by contacting the box office at 681-240-2283 or [boxoffice@catf.org](mailto:boxoffice@catf.org) from noon-5 p.m. weekdays.

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