



Bill Harley is a storyteller, songwriter, author and playwright best known for his work with children and families. Considered by fans and peers alike to be one of the best storytellers in the country, his work is a celebration of commonality and humanity, delivered through comic narrative songs and confessional spoken pieces. His stories and songs are vibrant - moving with ease from hilarity to poignancy. Harley began writing and performing in 1975 while still a student at Hamilton College. Over forty years, his work has influenced generations of children, parents, performing artists and educators.

A prolific recording artist, Bill has produced thirty-five award-winning recordings, garnering two Grammy© awards, numerous Parents' Choice awards, and recognition from the American Library Association and The National Parenting Association. *Entertainment Weekly* describes Harley as "the Mark Twain of contemporary kids' music", *Publishers Weekly* says, "Harley's witty ebullient performance will have listeners laughing out loud", and *The Washington Post* describes Harley as "...a champion yarn-spinner and tunesmith with a sense of wonder, whimsy and mischief..."

Bill's trademark wit and wisdom can also be found in his picture books and novels for children and families. His first novel, [The Amazing Flight of Darius Frobisher](#), was chosen by Bank Street School of Education as one of the best children's books of the year and his second novel, [Night of the Spadefoot Toads](#) was awarded the Green Earth Book Award as best environmental book of the year in the children's fiction category. His newest work is a series about the trials and tribulations of fourth grader Charlie Bumpers. The first book in the series, [Charlie Bumpers vs. the Teacher of the Year](#) won the Beverly Cleary Children's Choice Award and is a popular choice in the *One School, One Book* program from Read to Them®. In 2017 it was adapted by the Gamm Theater in Pawtucket, RI as a play for young audiences; the second book, [Charlie Bumpers vs. The Really Nice Gnome](#), also adapted by the Gamm, will premier in the fall of 2018 as part of the RI Festival of Children's Books and Authors.

Over the years, Harley's work has taken on many forms. In 2013 The North Cambridge Family Opera Company (NCFO) commissioned Bill, along with composer Paul Phillips, to write the opera "Weedpatch" for their company based on Bill's story of the Oklahoma migrants at the Arvin Federal Migrant Camp. This is the same camp written about by John Steinbeck in [The Grapes of Wrath](#). NCFO premiered the opera in the spring of 2018 but it was originally developed in collaboration with Oskar Eustis (artistic director of the Public Theater in NY) who Bill met at the Sundance Playwright's Lab in 1990. Eustis is a long time admirer of Bill's work saying, "Harley has an instinctive thing that artists have,

a unique individuality that transcends any particular box or genre he performs in. His work resonates because he is 'simultaneously' a son, a father, a husband, a child and a grown up, and has remained true to all those facets of his life.”

In the 40 years since Bill picked up a guitar and started telling stories, he has toured nationally and internationally appearing at festivals, conferences, schools and theaters, sharing the stage with the likes of Sting, Pete Seeger, and scores of elementary school choirs. For twenty years, he was a regular commentator on NPR’s “All Things Considered”, has delivered keynotes to educators and librarians in Japan and India, and authored a book about the importance of communication between parents and teachers. In recent years he’s been recognized for the depth and breadth of his work, receiving an honorary Doctor of Letters from Hamilton College, induction to the Rhode Island Music Hall of Fame, and Lifetime Achievement awards from the Children’s Music Network and the RI Council for the Humanities “for building community; promoting our common humanity; and encouraging lifelong learning, exploring and growing.” Whatever his forum, Harley’s work is always about story, community and connection.

Bill lives in Seekonk, Massachusetts, with his wife and professional partner Debbie Block with whom he has two grown sons. When he’s not writing, performing or recording you can find him tending to his beehives, kayaking the waters or biking the hills of New England and doing his best to get through the enormous pile of books he’s determined to read.

For more information, please visit [billharley.com](http://billharley.com).