

[Hamilton Dramaturgy's TheatreNow!](http://theatrenow.wordpress.com) is a podcast series featuring some of the most exciting women artists working in the theater today. Anne Hamilton is the producer and host. You may listen to the podcasts and read the transcripts at <http://theatrenow.wordpress.com>



[Hamilton Dramaturgy's TheatreNow!](#)

Interview with Fran Tarr, Playwright, Filmmaker, and Educator
(Season Two, Episode Four, September, 2011)

Anne Hamilton: Welcome to Hamilton Dramaturgy's **TheatreNow!** This is a podcast series featuring some of the most exciting women artists working in the theatre today. I'm your host, Anne Hamilton. Today we are speaking with Fran Tarr. Fran is a writer, independent documentary filmmaker, and the Founder and Director of BREAKING WALLS. She was Education Director for the Women's Project and Productions, and currently serves as the Education Coordinator at the Atlantic Theatre Company. Since 2006, she has volunteered leading play-making workshops in Israel, Liberia, and Palestine. She is based in New York City. Welcome, Fran.

Fran Tarr: Hello.

AH: Well, Fran, I'm very excited about your film, which is now completed. Can you tell us about it?

FT: Certainly. The title is [BROOKLYN BRIDGES- TO BETHLEHEM AND BACK](#) and it tells the story of three inner-city Brooklyn students who travel to Bethlehem to write and share life experiences with the teenagers in the Aida refugee camp near Bethlehem.

In the process of writing, they discover the things they all share in common, as well as the unique differences that each of the group and the individuals have. Once they finished the writing, they created a collage play script, and then the Brooklyn kids packed their bags, came back to

Brooklyn, and a week later, the Bethlehem kids arrived. We spent a week rehearsing and having meetings here in New York at the State Department and with various other change advocacy organizations and individuals. And then we performed our play at the Atlantic Theatre Company Stage 2 for a live audience.

AH: What was the name of the play?

FT: BRIDGES NOT WALLS.

AH: And can you tell us what that play looked like and what the content was?

FT: I can indeed. Collage plays are constructed from poems, interviews, music, dance, monologue, anything that the young artists - in our case the kids in Brooklyn and Bethlehem - have created as a group. And then we select certain pieces and construct them into a performance piece. This particular piece, BRIDGES NOT WALLS, used several different writing themes. Here's an example of three or four of the topics that were covered in the production: "I want my words to...", "I want my life to...", and "How dare you say that to me?" And one of the most extraordinary triggers that was used in the writing was a quote that is as follows: "Some people put up walls, not to keep others out, but to see who *cares* enough to break them down."

And in the case of the Brooklyn and the Bethlehem kids, walls are particularly significant. Clearly, [there is] the wall of separation in Bethlehem, but even in Brooklyn, [there are] the walls that the young men and women feel from the police, and from racism. So we thought that those were particularly interesting. Several of the young men and women in the cast are very talented musicians, and they created music. And so it was very much a musical/movement/language-based performance.

We had another situation that developed while we were writing and sharing life experiences in Bethlehem, and that is, that two of our young men had problems getting their visas to the US from the US consulate. So, in the end, they couldn't come. And so then we added another dimension to our performance, which included the words and faces of the two young men who couldn't come. So when it would have been their turn to perform live, we switched to them on the screen. So it was a multimedia extravaganza.

AH: How imaginative. It sounds wonderful.

FT: Thank you.

AH: And how was it received?

FT: People really, really enjoyed themselves. They really did. And they respected the young men

and women for being so honest and so brave to talk about their lives. But I think the thing that the audience and the young men and women involved discovered from the entire experience - and especially the performance - is just the amazing resilience that they are able to voice through their writing and their performing. And that, despite the challenges that they endure day to day, they are hopeful. They are proud. They're wanting and eager to help others write and share these same kinds of experiences. They're not defeated by the world around them. They are inspired by it. And that really came through in the writing and it really impressed the audience.

AH: Did you have some kind of audition process to include the individuals in the group?

FT: That is a question that I get asked all the time because the nine men and women are so amazing. Everyone wants to know how I found them. I literally went into a high school in Manhattan, Independence High School, and just pitched the idea - Who feels their voice goes unheard? Who would like to be given the opportunity to discover their voice and a platform on which to use it? And I did the same thing in the Aida refugee camp and then I just took the kids that raised their hands, and ended up with nine really, really terrific young men and women.

AH: So they self-selected.

FT: Yes, they did. And they talk about the fact that part of what empowered them is the fact that when a positive situation is placed in front of them, they have the courage to step into it, not back away.

AH: That's life, isn't it? [Laughter] That's a good way to live a successful life. I've just learned a lesson. [Laughter] What made you decide to travel abroad?

FT: That's a very good question. Unfortunately, the answer's going to be kind of long, so bear with me. In 2005, I had an extraordinary idea. I still believe it is an extraordinary idea. And that is to create a series of one-hour docudramas, so that there would be live action filming, and then it would be interspersed with interviews from the young men and women who have actually lived these experiences. And the experiences would be focused in seven countries where kids come of age in conflict: Palestine, Liberia, Columbia, Detroit, Iraq. So that was my plan. And I really didn't know how one connected with those individuals.

So, I called their consulates at the UN. And of the countries that I contacted, six bent over backwards. They just couldn't help me enough to locate recent immigrant communities. But I was having a more difficult time making a connection with the Palestinian mission to the UN. And while all this is happening, I just got this very random email that said, "Palestinian Kids Dance." So I opened it, and they were going to perform in June of 2005 at the Barrow Street Theatre. So I went over, I watched the performance which was lovely, a lot of Dabka dancing

and all of that. And I kept looking at the kids and thinking, "Wow! They look so much like the kids in Brooklyn".

So, when it was over, the founder and the director of the Al-Rowwad Cultural and Theatre Training Center in the Aida refugee camp spoke to us, and he said, "We're always looking for volunteers". And I said to myself, "That's how you get to know these kids. You go there as a volunteer for three weeks or a month or whatever". And I actually had a skill to offer them, which was the writing, performing workshop that I was doing. So, I wrote him a letter and golly if he didn't call me and say, "Will you come?" So I went, and it was the experience that I had expected it to be. These kids were really, really cool. They were honest, open writers.

So, when the workshop ended, Dr. AbdelFattah said to the kids, "I want you to tell Fran what you thought of it". Never before have I instantaneously been given feedback like that. And they all really liked it and when we reached one of the young women named Islam, and she said, "Before you came, I always felt like a failure in writing". And I couldn't believe it, because I thought she was brilliant. And as she said that, out of the corner of my eye, I could see all the other young men and women at the table shaking their heads in agreement. They said that their teachers are just like, "Don't be creative". So, I was totally humbled by the whole experience, and they invited me to come back saying that it was the best collaboration they'd ever had. So that was great.

And I got back [to New York] and I was teaching one of my writing workshops for the Women's Project, and the classroom teacher said to me, "Well, what did you do over mid-winter break?" And I told her about how wonderful the whole experience was. And she looked at me and she said, "You have a documentary there". And I'd never thought about making the documentary. And I owe her a huge debt of gratitude because without that one sentence, I never would be where I am today.

So, I went ahead gung-ho, and when I got ready to make my first documentary, just as I was getting ready to go to Bethlehem to film, Nancy Abraham at HBO called and said she wanted to see it when it was done, so then I just went gung-ho forward to make that documentary. And then the logical step was then to make the new one where the kids actually worked together and got to know each other, which is a truly remarkable film, truly remarkable film.

In fact, in my first film, which is called, BETHLEHEM TO BROOKLYN: BREAKING THE SURFACE, I did exactly the same writing workshop, and had the kids write their own collage play and perform it. The kids in Bethlehem did theirs, and then I came home and I found the Brooklyn kids, and they did it. And then we spliced it together, going back and forth. And interestingly enough, the first time I showed the film in the New York public schools, a young man raised his hand and just said, "I love it. But I have a question. Why didn't they write and perform together?" And I was like, "Wow, really? That's a great idea". So that was why we

ended up taking everybody to Bethlehem and then bringing the Bethlehem kids here, so that they could actually experience it together.

And I think that, not only is it a remarkable film - BROOKLYN BRIDGES- TO BETHLEHEM AND BACK - but it has inspired these nine young men and women as well as myself to go on to the next step, which is to introduce the writing and performing workshops that we're doing internationally. And that's *breaking walls*. Our first scheduled workshop is in Berlin in the summer of 2012. And the cast members from the film will now take my role as facilitator, and they'll be deciding on the themes, deciding on the writing trigger, getting the kids to write, giving them positive feedback, making suggestions, selecting the best for the collage play, directing it. They're going to take all that over. And then also become part of selecting the next location for our summer of 2013 workshop.

AH: How about China? The Great Wall.

FT: I'd love to go to China. I'd love to go to China. Just throw out those ideas, send us some cash, and we're there. [Laughter]

AH: I love that the teens are teaching one another. That's magnificent.

FT: Yes, they really are. The thing that was most fascinating to all of the kids was that we were sitting in the Aida refugee camp in the Al-Rowwad Center writing, and then I would give out the writing trigger and then we would all share, and they would say, "We're so much alike. We all have these same feelings of, 'I don't want to be misrepresented, I don't want to be disrespected, I have this hope and dream'". And it was just amazing.

AH: What are their hopes and dreams?

FT: Their hopes and dreams, that's an excellent question. They all want to get a good education. They all want to take care of their families and make their families' lives better. Ryan from Bed-Stuy really wants to get his family out of Bed-Stuy, into a really safe suburban life. They all want to be seen as valuable members of their communities and a leader in their communities. Mohammed from Bethlehem talks extensively about how he wants to feel as every human feels, you know, just free and open to live his life any way he wants. And the Brooklyn kids feel the same way. They feel very restricted in their lives.

I've known those young men and women. I've worked in at-risk areas my entire teaching career. And yet, it took me all of those years and schools and programs to reach a point where I could be sitting with Ryan in Bethlehem late at night, one evening, and he turned to me and he said, "Do you have any idea what it feels like to be black?" And I, of course, don't, and he started to tell me and the kids chimed in. There's been a real education for me, a real depth of feeling of these

young men and women about the things that we don't necessarily want to look at. First of all, there are the political issues of racism and apartheid, but there are deeper issues of stereotyping and making quick judgments based on a quick assessment of how a kid looks or sounds, and I think [sharing their viewpoint on these issues is] the most beautiful part of the writing and the performing that these young men and women are doing. And also in the film, you see just how completely, completely engaging and disarming these young men and women are. I think that they are really great diplomats and ambassadors for their countries, their communities, and their cultures.

AH: How old are they?

FT: They are now, sixteen through twenty-one. They were fifteen through twenty when we were doing the film.

AH: Is there any chance that the students from abroad can come over here and study?

FT: That would be an extraordinary situation. That would be great, that would be great. Clearly, it would be something that I would love to help facilitate. There are cultural issues. A lot of the families do not want their daughters to travel alone to a foreign country, especially as freshmen in college. That would be one obstacle. It is difficult for the young men to get visas. As I mentioned, Mohammed and Mahmoud, could not join us in the summer of 2010, but since then, Mohammed has gotten his visa. I think that for the Arabic students, they are more comfortable going to Egypt, Lebanon, and those areas, or staying close to home. Staying close to home is really important, and they can work and be at home. I think there're some financial considerations there as well.

AH: How about educational opportunities for the students who live in Bed-Stuy?

FT: Clearly they all want to get good educations. Fabie is going to Plattsburg State University and she's doing beautifully, beautifully. She's on the Dean's list. She's working hard to get a 4.0 this semester. I mean, she is a highly motivated young woman and student. Ryan, he's hoping to go back to school in spring semester of 2012 to study sound engineering.

AH: Well it sounds like quite a bunch of responsible young adults to me.

FT: Yes, they are, they are. They're great. You can tell. I feel very fortunate to know them. I feel blessed that they raised their hands to be a part of my film. I feel blessed that they were willing and able to do such great writing, and just really be troopers far, far, far from home, no matter what you threw at them. They were like "Okay, yeah, we'll do it. We'll taste it. We'll do this, we'll do that". And they were willing to put together this extraordinary performance. I mean it was really, really professional. There's a clip on my website. It really looks professional. They did a beautiful job and they're not trained actors.

AH: What is your website?

FT: www.bbdocumentary.com.

AH: Very good. I hope our listeners get to visit the site and take a look at it.

FT: Me, too.

AH: Well Fran, I had an idea which is that perhaps you could do an online teaching workshop that would link into several countries at once, and see what you came up with in one day. [It would be interesting to] see what the students wrote. I think teleconferencing could be a very good way of spreading your program more.

FT: Well, that's interesting to hear you say that and a lovely way to get the Bethlehem and Brooklyn kids involved at the same time. Also, Ryan, Shan and Fabie, the Brooklyn cast from Brooklyn Bridges, have been selected to represent the United States as the United Nations International Year of the Youth "Take the Leadership" Conference in Jerusalem in November. And so, it's an extraordinary opportunity for them of course, but they're also going to be connecting with kids from twenty different countries. So, that would be nice. We could build on that connection right away by having these teleconferencing-type workshops and see what happens.

When the Bethlehem students were here, we went up to the Bronx and did a writing workshop. We showed our first film and did a writing workshop and it was amazing. What the kids wrote like in fifteen minutes, [was a great accomplishment], so I can't imagine if we were to do something for an hour, what we can actually come up with.

AH: Right. It sounds very exciting, very beautiful.

FT: Thank you.

AH: So, Fran, I just have to ask you, what drives you to do this kind of work?

FT: Well, I think I have two answers or perhaps it's a two-part answer. Number one, I always loved school, and it was very clear to me that a big part of why I love school is that my teachers always looked [at me] and found something in me that I didn't know existed. Or, if I exhibited some sort of special trait, they really nurtured it. They really nurtured it from the time that I was very, very young until the time I left high school. So, I think that because that's how *I* was treated as a student and it made me feel so special and so unique, and [it] really nurtured the artistic part of me, that I have always been really open to doing that for others no matter where I find them.

The second part would be that the first job that I ever had as an educator was teaching elementary school art on the south side of Chicago, and that really opened my eyes to the world. I've always been really open and really curious about the world. But there was something about stepping into that environment and meeting 900 kids a week, and guiding them through the series of art experiences, and taking them on field trips and everything. I realized how truly, truly

brilliant and bright and articulate and funny and passionate these children were. And yet so many assumptions were placed on them that were inaccurate, and that has always been a driving force behind what I do. One of the kids summed it up the best: "If you don't talk to us, you assume the worst". And so, my teaching, my own writing, the documentaries, the BREAKING WALLS writing performance/social activism program that we're initiating - they're all for the same reason. [The kids are saying,] "Get to know us. Before you make any kind of decision about who I am, get to know me. See who I am on the inside."

AH: That's both a very wise and a very intelligent statement to make for ones so young.

FT: Yes, yes. I think that when people see the film - and at some point, hopefully, we'll be able to get the writing published - they will see how truly, truly bright and inspiring these young men and women are. They truly are. And how universal what they're saying is. It's not just representative of this or representative of that. It's so universal. The lovely Sofia Ramadan, from Bethlehem, summed it up at the performance in August of 2010, when someone asked how big did the kids want to see the bridge that they were creating grow, and she said, "We want everyone, no matter your race or your culture or your community and your religion, to join us on this bridge."

AH: That's beautiful.

FT: Yeah.

AH: I can't help but think of the Brooklyn Bridge. Did they take a walk on the Brooklyn Bridge when they were there?

FT: No, they didn't. We should have done that. Next time, when they come for the film festival, we'll take them to the Brooklyn Bridge and have them walk across.

AH: Yes, it sounds wonderful. So, I want to talk for a moment about *Speak, Reach, Peace Out*. Can you tell us about that?

FT: Yes, I'd love to tell you about that. *Speak, Reach, Peace Out* is our online teen literary, visual art, photography and music magazine. You can go to the website www.srpoutmag.com, or go to the [BB documentary](#) site and find it on there as well. You can submit your writing to us and it will be published. So we've got that going on too. We're really hoping to get a big impact from that because it really is a wonderful opportunity for young men and women to get their work published and to have it read internationally.

AH: Who are your editors?

FT: My editor is an amazing young artist and literacy educator named Rebecca Masback, and she is the project manager and editor for that. She has done a brilliant job.

AH: How did that come into being?

FT: [Laughter.] Well, you know how these things go. When you start these processes, you meet people and when I talk to people they're so funny. They're like, "Are you listening?" Especially if we're on the phone, they're like, "Are you there?" And I'll say, "Yes, I'm listening and I'm taking notes". And someone said to me, "You know, you really have a unique opportunity to draw in more and more kids to be a part of what you're doing by having an online outlet for them and resource for them as well". It has a little book nook. Right now we're accepting quite a bit of poetry, and so you can go to the book nook and it tells you how to order books on how to write poetry. So, we're trying to make it sort of an interesting resource as well as a platform for kids to get their voice out there.

AH: That's marvelous.

FT: Thank you.

AH: Fran, let's talk about your own writing. I've been privileged to read and dramaturg some of your plays and screenplays. Can you tell us about the story that grew out of your meeting with Salomea Kape?

FT: Oh, of course I can. I think that one of the things that I hope that this interview has highlighted or underscored is the theme that runs through my life: How important it is to connect to people that you wouldn't normally connect with. How life is really about what you make it, and what an important role we really can play in an individual's life. So, when I had the privilege of meeting Salomea Kape, I was just blown away by her story. Not only her story about surviving and coming of age in the Lodz ghetto during World War II, but the fact that she really didn't want it to be like, "This is Sally's story. This is who *I* am. This is what *I* did". She really wanted it to be about *all* the children who had gone through that same experience. And with her guidance and support and love, I was able to create what I believe to be a truly, truly brilliant and under-recognized story.

When you're talking about the rebels in Libya or what is happening here in some hotspots, you see pictures of the wise older people and their beautiful weathered faces. You see the little children nibbling on a little cookie. So, it's about the young and old, or maybe the tough fighter, but there isn't any imagery of the young men and women that are struggling to come of age, who are the high school kids in those environments. Now maybe [we see] some are the child soldiers, but that's really negative. There's still a ton of kids out there that are just trying to be like Mohammad and Ryan and the Brooklyn and the Bethlehem kids, and that is to stay on course. To [not only] take advantage of the positive opportunities that are placed in front of them [but also to] seek those out.

So when I met Sally and I could tell a story of these two young women, and because they're characters that I created, they're composite characters based on real kids in the ghetto, real young people who were twelve when they were sealed inside the ghetto in 1940 and seventeen when the Russians liberated them in 1945. What is it like to become a teenager and experience first love and poetry writing, and fights with your girlfriends, and trouble with your parents when you're trapped inside a Nazi death camp? You know, I mean I think that's an important story to be told, and I'm privileged that Sally let me tell it. And I think it has a lot of relevance today still, even

though people aren't really locked inside of ghettos, but they are locked inside of small worlds that sometimes appear that there is no way out of.

AH: Right. I have this thing which I do periodically. I try to walk through walls that I construct myself, whether I'm afraid of something, or I feel like I've been barred from some experience or some opportunity. I try to perceive the walls and purposely walk through them simply to prove to myself that I can do it. And I think it's a really good practice. It's the practice of walking through walls. I think that's what you're doing for these young adults because you're helping them walk through walls, which metaphysically is not possible, yet metaphysically *is* possible because you're doing it. I think that's a great lesson. So Fran, how do you think that theatre helps build resiliency?

FT: On a multitude of levels. First of all, theatre, especially if you're doing the writing, allows you to reach inside and tap into your own personal void, which is hugely important for everyone. Dr. Martin Luther King told us, "Violence is the cry of the unheard". So we need to have more opportunities for the voices of the underrepresented to be heard. So that's the writing piece.

But from an acting pov or the directing pov, [theatre] allows an individual not only to get their voice heard through the character, but it allows them in many ways to escape the reality of their situations, either because the character is so unusual and so different from the way they live, or because the characters are handling the challenge in a way that the individual wouldn't, or in a way that they wish they themselves would. So the theater experience is on a bigger, broader and more pronounced stage or platform.

So, I think, it offers these young men and women - all young men and women, anyone who participates in theatre, and the audience - the opportunity to get a view of the world that they wouldn't normally take in. That's the beauty of theatre, that fourth wall experience where you are drawn into a world that you wouldn't normally experience, in a very intimate way that a film can't really duplicate.

AH: Fran, I want to talk about your early artistic influences. Where did you grow up and what kind of artistic endeavors did you take part in when you were kid?

FT: Oh, my golly. I was born and raised in Omaha in a really large family – a really large family. And the emphasis in my family was sports. I was just this absolutely happy-as-a-camper tomboy. Any kind of sport you named, I was there; baseball, football, hockey, bicycle riding, tree climbing. We even created a game, my brothers and I. We called it polo, and we rode our bicycles and we used a soccer ball and hockey stick. Yeah. So, that was sort of the environment that I was raised in, and yet I had, from very young age, this sort of interest in using my hands. My father owned a shop in downtown Omaha called "Ted's Pen Shop." And so I had access to all these pens, and these different nibs and all of this, and I started writing.

When I was in kindergarten, I could print sentences, and then my brothers were learning how to write cursive, so then I started learning cursive, and the next thing I knew I found a book on calligraphy, and I was experimenting with all these different writing styles. And then, a girl moved into our parish, our Catholic parish, named Susan Richardson, and I went over to her

house one day and we were drawing. That's what we were doing, we were drawing. And I just started drawing, from that experience. I mean that's what her family did. My family beat each other up with hockey sticks or chased each other, which was just great. It was a very beautiful way to grow up.

So I learned this from Susan and then I started drawing and the next thing I knew, again coming back to the teachers, I was recognized as a school artist and whenever they needed anything in my elementary school, I was called down to the office. [They said,] "We need this and we need that. Will you draw it, will you paint it, will you do this?" And [my reputation] just sort of grew from there until I became sort of this renowned drawer. And it continued during high school, same thing. And then, I was known as visual artist in school and at home. My parents were like, "Oh, look at her".

And then, when I was a freshman in high school, the principal called our home on a Saturday and said to my mother that she believed that I had an extraordinary speaking voice and she wanted me to join the speech team. I had to memorize these speeches and deliver them in competition and I loved it, and I did really well at it. So here was, again, educators spotting me out of a crowd of kids and really opening doors for me. So now I'm a visual artist. I'm a thespian and speech team member in this all-girls catholic high school. Even starting as young as ninth grade, we would have this big assignment coming up, and the teachers handed out the sheet to everyone, and at the end of class they said, "Frances, I need to talk to you". I go over and they'd take the sheet out of my hand and they'd say, "Do whatever you want. Just create whatever you want". I was always just given this free reign to create whatever I wanted as my Latin project, as my language arts projects - not math - but social studies, anything.

I could dream of anything I wanted to do and I just went nuts. I was just allowed to be as creative as I wanted and clearly, because I worked so successfully from the initial time that I was asked to do whatever I wanted, they continued. I graduated from high school just making things up. [It was like,] "Okay Frances. Everybody is going to do this and this, and what's Fran doing?" and stuff like that. [Often I'd say,] "I haven't decided yet." [Chuckle] So clearly that had huge influence on my life and how I perceived the world - I wasn't judged like everyone else. I was treated uniquely and because I followed through, I didn't slack off, it only built my reputation.

So I left high school as a visual artist, a speech team girl, a poet, and editor of the high school yearbook. None of those things would ever have popped into my mind to do, although by the time I left high school, I knew that I wanted to tell stories that could change people's lives. I knew that, whether that it was as newspaper editor [or in another position]. Once I got my job teaching, then I knew that was where I needed to be. That was how you told stories to change people's lives. You are an arts teacher.

AH: Well, it occurs to me that you have quite an old soul, and also another layer that most people don't have, which is that you seem to be able to experience what you're going through and also kind of look at it from above. You're able to look at the situation and figure out how to make connections - how to draw meaning out of whatever you're experiencing or whatever your opportunities are. And I love that about you and I love that you're endlessly inventive. You make the opportunities for other people and you also teach them, by example and by deliberate

instruction, how to do the same for themselves. So I feel like you're replicating your artistic spirit, and I really respect that.

FT: Thank you. Thank you.

AH: I think you also have another layer of maturity in that it doesn't seem to me like you try to control the teens. You let them speak, and I respect that very much, because you're providing an opening in which they can grow instead of providing a slot, which to your teens, frankly, would cause them to feel like they're in another set of walls.

FT: Very perceptive, yes. And also it makes it so much more interesting and fun for me. And again I will quote of the Bethlehem kids, Fida. After we finished our first film, she and Sophia and Rowa made a little two-minute movie saying how much being in the film BETHLEHEM TO BROOKLYN: BREAKING THE SURFACE meant to them and Fida said, "Fran really let us be ourselves and she really listens to us. She really listens to what we're saying. She's not like, 'Oh yeah, just give me the check marks'". I'm not expecting them to say what I want. So, that of course is empowering for me, and it keeps me on my toes to always be open, and really listening to what's being said. And encouraging them to be honest, and providing them a safe environment in which they can be honest.

So when I say safe environment, I don't mean physically safe. I mean emotionally safe. So that you know if you say something, nobody's going to give you any grief or if you share something, it stays where it stays. You're not going to hear it come back to you from somebody that wasn't in our group.

AH: I think that if one adult gives one teen that opportunity [to speak freely], that's imprinted on the teen and it gives him or her confidence to be able to find other people like that. It's patterning that you're providing, which I really appreciate.

FT: Thank you. It is my dream that that is true. It is my dream that that is true. And I hear Ryan say it all the time. He says that, he said he [has loved others] a lot, but through these experiences he just loves more. And his friends tell me that they can't put their finger on it, but he's so different since he came back from Bethlehem.

He's so different. And he's still the cool Ryan, the rapper, sitting on the stoop with his friends, but he's a different young man and he's so responsible. Oh my gosh.

AH: That's wonderful. Well Fran, I have to say it's been marvelous to speak with you today. Thank you.

FT: Thank you so much for the opportunity.

AH: You have been listening to Hamilton Dramaturgy's [TheatreNow!](#) We have been speaking today with Fran Tarr and you may follow her career through www.frantarrpro.com. You may read a transcript of this interview and download this podcast at my blog, which is

theatrenow.wordpress.com. This is Anne Hamilton. Thank you for listening.

TheatreNow!'s Sound Editor is Otto Bost (<http://www.folkdude.com>) and our Program Assistant is Cate Cammarata. Nancy Ford composed our theme. Visit <http://theatrenow.wordpress.com> to subscribe to our blog and be notified when new podcasts are released. Hamilton Dramaturgy is an international script development consultancy located on the east coast of the United States. You may contact Anne Hamilton at hamiltonlit@hotmail.com. © 2011 Hamilton Dramaturgy.

[Hamilton Dramaturgy's TheatreNow! – Season Two](#)

(Episode One) **Kamilah Forbes** – Artistic Director, Hip Hop Theatre Festival

(Episode Two) **Laura Maria Censabella** – Playwright

(Episode Three) **Paule Constable** – Lighting Designer

(Episode Four) **Fran Tarr** – Playwright, Filmmaker and Educator

(Episode Five) **Jennifer Tipton** – Lighting Designer and MacArthur Fellow