

Local Author Meets Middle Age With Laughter



By: Linda C. Wisniewski

Columnist Mary Fran Bontempo had a readership of 100,000 when the paper she wrote for suddenly folded. "I was forced to reinvent myself," she said. "The old frameworks ceased to exist, and I had to find new ways to get my work out there." She taught herself to create and run a blog and called it "Not Ready for Granny Panties." She recruited local writer Chrysta

Smith and illustrator Pat Achilles to help her add good quality content and has slowly built readership up to 10,000 page views per month. The act of creating and designing the blog was an exercise in reinvention for Bontempo. In the process, she realized she could teach other women what she had learned.

The message of her newly released book, *Not Ready for Granny Panties: The 11 Commandments for Avoiding Granny Panties* is that middle-aged women need to make themselves a priority and incorporate some fun into their lives. Some of the "Commandments" are Thou Shalt Scare Thyself (try something you've been wanting to do but are afraid to try); Thou Shalt Regress (recapture the fun you had as a child); and Thou Shalt Lose Control (surrender to the moment.) The paperback book has plenty of short, enjoyable exercises to get

you started on enjoying what the author calls "life in the Middle Ages."

"Women naturally have multiple roles" in life, she said, "and we move in and out of them." A graduate of LaSalle College, she owned a personnel staffing business with her husband, wrote a newsletter, raised three children, and worked as a substitute teacher, youth minister, and wedding singer. "I have always been emotionally connected to my life and my community," she said, advising women to "find ways to be engaged with life."

She is a motivational speaker who advises women to "be conspicuous," and "let go of some things while embracing others. Life is a constant reinvention," she says.

Not Ready for Granny Panties: The 11 Commandments for Avoiding Granny Panties is available from Barnes and Noble or Amazon in

print or e-book format. Contact the author at maryfranbontempo@yahoo.com or 215-852-3351. And visit her blog at www.notreadyforgrannypanties.com, because you're not ready either, are you?

Linda C. Wisniewski teaches memoir workshops and gives talks on the healing power of writing. Visit her website at www.lindawis.com or contact her at lindawis@comcast.net to schedule a presentation for your group.



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Profile of Maria Alexandria Beech



By:
Anne Hamilton, M.F.A.

Maria Alexandria Beech is a playwright and librettist living in New York. She has written more than 15 full-length plays, several as a member of the Dorothy Strelsin New American Writers Group at Primary Stages Theatre, which co-produced her play LITTLE

MONSTERS at Brandeis Theatre Company. Her full-length musical entitled CLASS, with Karl Michael Johnson, was presented in a reading in May, 2012 at NYU.

AH: Alex, I know that you hold an MFA from Columbia University. Now you have a second, this time from NYU.

MB: It's in musical theatre writing. It is a true honor. One would think that writing a musical and writing a play are similar processes, but, in fact, they're not. They each require their own craft and their own knowledge base.

AH: What is CLASS about?

MB: It's based on a play that I wrote in the writers group at Primary Stages, about a girl struggling with alcoholism who signs up for a summer school class in New Orleans in 1987. And so this girl walks into the situation, and the professor has recently

learned that she doesn't have much longer to live.

It was a real challenge to adapt as a musical, in the sense that it is very much a play as it exists. It was an homage not only to a professor that I had, who was dying of cancer and who had to face students who wanted to use her illness against her, but it was an homage to professors and teachers I had had growing up.

AH: Tell us about your reading at NYU.

MB: One of the things that I learned is that musical theatre is still very much about that well-made musical, that traditional structure of the well-made musical, and the opening number and the closing number. One of my goals is to still honor that tradition, but kind of also do other things and explore more. [I'd like to] not look at the book

or the dialogue just as a bridge between the songs. I think the songs could be little kind of poems that stand alone.

Anne Hamilton has 22 years of experience in the professional theatre in

NYC, across the nation, and internationally. She is available for script consultations and career advising through hamiltonlit@hotmail.com. Season Three of *Hamilton Dramaturgy's TheatreNow!* launched with an interview with Kate Valk, a leading actress with The Wooster Group.

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