

THE CHICAGO JEWISH NEWS

Ask Hedy! *On a regular basis, Hedy Ciocci, B.S.N., Administrator of the Selfhelp Home will answer some of the many questions we have around aging. Hedy specializes in dementia care, has extensive experience working with families and elderly patients, and is a registered nurse. She is a frequent lecturer on issues of aging.*

Maya Friedler, President of the Women's Media Group, Inc., has served as producer and moderator of WBEZ public affairs program, Talk In and Public Report. She is an ensemble member at the Piven Theatre, and has been seen in Eurydice, Collected Stories, Great Expectations, and most recently in What Dreams May Come: American Visions Through Jewish Eyes.



Hedy Ciocci

Q: Theater companies perform for all ages, but many elderly have stopped going to theater. What do you feel they are missing?

A: They're missing a huge portion of life! What theater does is promote growth and it tests your senses. You see better and you hear better. You find out what's happening in the rest of the world, so it enlarges the universe.

Q: How much of a theater experience can be gotten from watching television?

A: Watching television is a sedentary activity. You're not watching the excitement of live performances. They may trip or blow their lines! It's the expectation that the unexpected can happen. Also, so much of theater is bringing people together, the audience, the actors...it's that sense of sharing each other's lives.

Q: What are theaters doing to attract an elderly audience?

A: Many have lowered ticket prices, and they are making sure they have handicap and wheelchair accessibility. Another plus is the growth of local theaters that are close enough to walk to for people who don't drive anymore. This makes it much easier for the elderly to get to a neighborhood theater.

Q: In Chicago, there are more than 120 theater companies. How would you describe the offerings that would be attractive to an elderly audience?

A: I often find the neighborhood theaters that do small plays and tell stories in an exciting fashion than large presentations and musicals. For many of us, going to the theater means going to a big musical. That's only one aspect of theater and not necessarily the most rewarding.



Maya Friedler, President of the Women's Media Group, Inc.

Q: Do you find that tastes change as we age?

A: I think taste changes all the time. You're seeing with different eyes and different morality questions. I remember reading a short story about a mother and a daughter. When I first read it, I identified totally with the daughter. When I read it again, I identified totally with the mother. Another thing that has changed is language. For a lot of elderly people, the whole world of language is different than when they were younger. Sometimes you change with it, and frequently you don't.

Q: What are the advantages you see of going as a group to a theater performance?

A: Whatever experience you take away from the performance is something that you can talk about and think about. You're not only at one with the larger theater audience, but also at one with the rest of your group as they react to what you see and hear. As one's life changes we see so much more from theater because we have seen so much more. Sharing perspectives from our own experience is encouraged by group outings to the theater.