

Additional Narrative from Delaware Humanities Forum Regular Application for Connections

*When Producing Director Anne Marie Cammarato took the reins at Delaware Theatre Company in July 2004, one of her top priorities was to tighten the already close connection between the Education Department and the plays produced on DTC's stage. The vehicle introduced to effect this change was the **Connections** program. Implementing new programs correctly requires large quantities of thought, energy, and time—qualities that are already at a premium within non-profit institutions. It is in large part thanks to the support of the Delaware Humanities Forum that the **Connections** program now stands as an important part of DTC's offerings with the full-hearted backing of our board, staff, and audience.*

To test the efficacy of the **Connections** program, the staff of DTC designed a “trial balloon” to take place during the 2004-05 season: a panel discussion entitled “Wartime Realities” that was held in conjunction with DTC's production of Michael Healey's play *The Drawer Boy*. A DHF Mini-Grant provided both monetary support of and ideological belief in our new program. It is hard to tell for which quality DTC is most grateful.

“Wartime Realities” was a smashing success. A highly qualified moderator – University of Delaware professor and author McKay Jenkins – led a diverse and articulate panel in a lively discussion, shedding new light on the play and on the experiences of local veterans. DHF evaluator Richard A. Davison wrote: “Over all, this was one of the most successful Delaware Humanities Forum programs I have attended.”

The success of “Wartime Realities” provided the ideal springboard to launch a full slate of three **Connections** events for the 2005-06 season. DHF was once again right there with DTC to support this programming, supplying a DHF Regular Grant to make the three forums possible. **Connections** was worked into our marketing and artistic planning as an integrated part of the experience we offer our audience. Planning for the 05-06 forums spanned every department at DTC and included several Board committees and a wide range of Board members.

Once again, the success of **Connections** was above and beyond our wildest expectations. “Arthur Miller: A Retrospective” (held in conjunction with *The Price*) provided an in-depth look into the work of an American master, led by two men who counted Miller as close personal friends. “Awakening to Injustice” (held in conjunction with *The Syringa Tree*) provided moving first-person accounts of the impact of social injustice on youth from three different continents. And “Bluegrass: A Rediscovered American Treasure?” provided a fun and authentic look at the history and traditions of bluegrass music.

DTC anticipated 100-150 audience members for each event. Instead, **Connections** forums averaged 170 audience members, with a total audience of over 500. Audience feedback was outstanding, with patron after patron telling us how important they thought program was and how much they hoped **Connections** would be offered with regularity in the future. Comments from evaluator Richard A. Davison include:

- “expertly choreographed commentary and discussion”
- “intelligent and moving”
- “an obviously enthusiastic Question and Answer segment”
- “grant money well spent”

The **Connections** series, only a gleam in Anne Marie Cammarato's eye two years ago at this time, is firmly ensconced as a DTC institution. The support of DHF during the testing stage of this program was vital and encouraging. The renewed support of DHF during the 05-06 year allowed **Connections** to grow into a valued and integral part of the overall DTC experience. We hope to continue to receive DHF support as **Connections** has become very important to the life of the theatre and to Ms. Cammarato's vision of its future.