

Dear Me...

The Story:

Meet Reggie, a popular high school senior who is wrestling with the disturbing reality that his childhood pal, Charlie, has just committed suicide. Ignoring Reggie's desperate pleas, Charlie had recently *come out-of-the-closet* for all to know—the social impact was disastrous. After Charlie's funeral Reggie seeks the refuge of their childhood hideout in the woods—amidst symbols of their lifelong friendship Reggie writes a letter to Charlie hoping his unspoken thoughts will somehow reach his lost friend. Reggie's letter conjures much more than he plans for as souls from the past magically visit him to aid his journey towards self-discovery, emotional maturity and inner peace.

Performance: 30 Minutes

Workshop: 60-90 Minutes

The Process:

Dear Me is the product of a theater collaboration initiated in Rwanda, January 2013. A group of SUNY Buffalo State students, faculty and alumni traveled to east Africa as part of The Anne Frank Project's global programming. The Buffalo State team collaborated with Rwandan students, artists and teachers to create the foundation for their own, original play. The letter-writing element reflects a current national focus in Rwanda—a commitment to the “next step” of post genocide education where survivors celebrate their lost loved ones through thousands of letters creating a “Book of Life.” This marks a significant moment in Rwanda's emotional, intellectual and national recovery. The American team was deeply touched by this process and decided to devote their spring 2013 semester to developing this powerful idea into a play that they, The Anne Frank Project, would share with local schools. While the genesis is purely Rwandan, the product is a universal story tailored for today's American high school students. Issues of belonging, friendship, self-identity, bullying, bystanders and conflict resolution are explored through the eyes of multiple global cultures. Buffalo State student artists perform the play and also lead the hands-on workshop immediately following each performance. We hope to leave each school having provided tools and vocabulary for positive community building thus reinforcing the central message of *Dear Me*: **You can always connect.**

Dear Me

By THA 470 Ensemble Theatre Class, Fall 2013

Anne Frank Project in partnership with SUNY Buffalo
State's Theater Department

SUNY Buffalo State
Anne Frank Project, 2013

www.annefrankproject.com

Cast of Characters

REGGIE:

ANNE FRANK:

OLD WOMAN:

ENSEMBLE:

TEACHER:

JP:

ACT IScene 1

Lights up on school pool and ENSEMBLE. The pool is represented by a large piece of fabric. Sound of a siren is heard as we have just entered the scene of a young man's suicide, CHARLIE, who drowned himself. ENSEMBLE transitions to funeral scene. REGGIE, CHARLIE's former best friend, enters USR. Tries to leave a memento on CHARLIE's grave, but is unable to do so. He runs off USL.

NOTE TO THE ACTORS: Everything is symbolic and ENSEMBLE should remain abstract. The only prop is a piece of fabric.

Scene 2

ENSEMBLE transitions to the totem pole. The totem pole is a place in the woods that CHARLIE and REGGIE have spent their childhood building. It is a safe place, like a club house, where they shared stories and secrets. REGGIE begins to write his Letter.

REGGIE

Dear Charlie,

I guess I'm writing you a letter because you wrote a lot and said it helped you so I guess I can try. I just came from your funeral but that doesn't seem possible. I just saw you a few days ago, there's no way you can be dead right now. You were my best friend for forever. Since that day in kindergarten when you smacked me for taking your Legos. And then we got stuck in all the same classes so we became best buds. I want to go back to when we watched TV and ate M&Ms and made fun of all the weirdos at school. And when I got my license and we'd drive around and blast music to forget everything. I wish that would work now. With all that we've gone through, you being dead is impossible. I don't know what to do with myself. It just can't be true. I just want to go to school tomorrow and pass by you at your locker. I feel so numb and confused. I feel like I'm living in a movie, watching all this happen to me. Teenagers killing themselves is insane. We live in a crazy time...(repeat until ANNE joins in)

ANNE FRANK

(overlapping REGGIE) We live in a crazy time...

Pen rolls out from behind totem. Enter ANNE FRANK. ANNE is mischievous and plays around before letting REGGIE see her. ENSEMBLE becomes Nazis. Nazis begin goose step behind totem in a line.

(NOTE: This will happen several times throughout the play and ENSEMBLE will always be there to support the storytelling of those who visit REGGIE.)

REGGIE

Woah, who the hell are you?

ANNE FRANK

I am Anne Frank.

REGGIE shows hesitancy and physical resistance.

REGGIE

(Sassy)

You're Anne Frank? That's not true, Anne Frank is dead! I learned about her in school and she died way long ago. Who are you? Is this some sick joke? Is someone messing with me? There is no way I am talking to a dead person right now!

ANNE FRANK

(ANNE knows intimate details of REGGIE's friendship with CHARLIE)

Reggie, sometimes people who have been dead can come back to visit the living because their stories got cut short.

This sparks REGGIE's attention.

REGGIE

So Charlie can come back and visit me? Could he explain why he killed himself? *(To himself)* Wait, how does she know my name!?

ANNE FRANK

I heard that! And, no, Charlie cannot come back; he chose to end his own story. But other people can come, people you can learn great lessons from. You drew me here because of your words. You know, paper is more patient than people.

REGGIE

This is getting weird, Charlie used to say that. "Paper is more patient than people." That's what gave me the idea to write this letter to him.

ANNE FRANK

That's what I did when I was in hiding during the Holocaust. I was so sick of being stuck in that annex all day long and I was so mad that the Jews were being targeted when we had done nothing wrong.

REGGIE

That's how I feel. I did nothing to deserve this and everything is so messed up. I feel so angry at everything.

ANNE FRANK

I reached the point where I hardly cared if I lived or died. The world was going to keep on turning without me and I couldn't do anything to change events.

REGGIE

I don't even care about school or my parents or friends anymore. Everyone and every little thing just pisses me off. I don't deserve this.

ANNE FRANK

That's what I felt. My mother drove me crazy and I was so angry at the Nazis. No one deserves to be singled out like that. No one should have to die.

*ENSEMBLE approaches Anne still in goose step.
ENSEMBLE surrounds ANNE and takes her away.*

ANNE FRANK

(Angry)

Let go of me! People who struggle and suffer pain make much tougher and courageous soldiers than all you bigmouthed freedom fighting heroes put together. Keep writing Reggie! Keep writing...(ANNE repeats)

ANNE leaves.

REGGIE

Hm, paper is more patient than people?

REGGIE returns to writing his letter.
They took her away Charlie! How could those Nazis do that? They took her away like they took you away!