

An award-winning journalist and broadcaster, Mara Tapp has long demonstrated expertise in and love of the arts and culture – particularly the literary arts – and journalism, and is experienced in blending the two. In her nearly 30 years as a practicing journalist, Tapp has done a number of projects for radio, television and print.

Most recently she had done major articles on and Q&As with Stuart Dybek, Kerry James Marshall, Robert Falls, Frank Galati, Aleksandar Hemon, Moises Kaufman, Charles Newell, Alex Polikoff and Wu Hung for *Chicago* magazine, the *Chicago Reader*, the *Chicago Tribune*, *Catalyst*, *Bookforum* and *Playbill*. *Talking Books with Mara Tapp* aired on WFMT in May 2004 and, in the spring of 2003, *Cover to Cover with Mara Tapp* aired on a Chicago-based PBS station. Tapp's public author interviews are extensive. She interviewed Joan Didion for the 2005 Chicago Humanities Festival. Other notable public interviews include her conversation with Kurt Vonnegut when he won the 2001 Chicago Public Library Foundation's Carl Sandburg Literary Award and Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel, whose book *Night* was the spring 2002 selection for the city-wide "One Book, One Chicago" reading initiative.

Tapp spent two years as host and executive producer of *Conversations from Wingspread*, which aired on Wisconsin public radio stations and on some 50 public access television around the country. As part of her programming there, she instituted a writers series that included Jane Hamilton, the late Studs Terkel, the late Grace Paley, Susan Faludi and former Senator Paul Simon. Among her six miniseries was one on "The Future of the Book."

From 1990 to 1997 Tapp hosted *The Mara Tapp Show* – an eclectic mix of public affairs, author interviews, and coverage of arts, culture, education, medicine and legal affairs – on WBEZ, Chicago's National Public Radio affiliate. While there, Tapp helped create "Live at the Library" – a series of interviews with authors and important contributors to our culture – with the Chicago Public Library. Guests included Isabel Allende, Art Buchwald, Jamaica Kincaid, Robert Pinsky, Calvin Trillin and Edwidge Danticat.

In the past few years, Tapp has added teaching to her professional activities. Since early 2004 she has worked as a substitute teacher in the Chicago Public Schools at two magnet elementary schools. She has worked for extended periods with gifted students and children with special needs. Tapp created and runs Cool Classics!, a book-based teaching program that creates a

universe of arts and culture around a classic text and teaches deep-thinking and higher-learning skills to Chicago public elementary school children. Tapp also teaches in the graduate program for New Arts Journalism at the School of the Art Institute and has taught "Reviewing the Arts" to upper-level undergraduates at Columbia College Chicago. Both courses expose students to and teach them how to think and write critically about a wide range of arts and culture.

Over the years Tapp has filed for NPR and written for such publications as the *Chicago Tribune*, *Chicago Sun-Times*, *New Art Examiner*, *Stagebill*, *Student Lawyer*, and *Mother Jones*. She served as features editor of *Sullivan's Review*, managing editor of *Merrill's Illinois Legal Times* and was the first press secretary to the City of Chicago's Law Department during the term of the late Mayor Harold Washington. While in graduate school, Tapp served as poetry co-editor for the *Chicago Review* and instituted a speakers series bringing poets from around the country to read in Chicago. She has an A.M. in English Language and Literature from the University of Chicago and an M.S.J. from the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University.