

PROJECT UPDATE

VOLUME 10 JUNE 1992

*The Who, What, Where, but never Why,
of The 52nd Street Project*



THIS LAND IS WHOSE LAND?

Littlehawk + Little Kids = Big Fun

In March The 52nd Street Project presented ten plays written by Project kids aged 8 - 14 under the collective title/question "This Land Is Whose Land?" The plays, performed at the Ensemble Studio Theatre as part of their 20th anniversary season, focussed on what it means to be an American and on claiming this land as our own. Ken Littlehawk, an actor and member of the Mic Mac Native American Nation, was featured in all ten plays, playing various roles and his flute. Frankly, we felt that performing ten different parts made the Battle at Wounded Knee look like tennis elbow, and the Project would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank Ken for all of his devotion and for sharing his brilliance and spirit with all of us.



"Whose Land" author Joell Soto mugs while "Whose Land" Dramaturg/Director Peter Francis James checks his spelling. That's "P-O-T-A-T-O-E."

The "Whose Land" authors were Keith and Aisha Anderson, Alex Bess, Erse Britto, Raymond Harold, Darthula Harvey, Elisa Mohamed, Omar Rose, and Claudia Vasquez. This class spent eight weeks learning how to write a play from our groovy Playmaking Director Daniel Judah Sklar, as well as hanging out with Ken and at the Museum of the American Indian, learning about the various issues and ideas regarding Native American culture. After eight weeks the class went away with ten dramaturg/directors, and Ken, to the homes of Frances McDormand and Barbara Ettinger, where their final plays were written based on the theme, and to the Hoe Bowl where we all bowled approximately our ages.. The resulting work was produced two weeks later with a splendid cast of twenty, and Ken. You can get a glimpse of how enlightening an evening it was by checking out the related quiz on page 2. We also had a splendid mural in the lobby thanks to Nashormeh Lindo. *PU* would also like to mention that the backstage and design crew was Cracker Jack (no relation to Mic Mac).

WHO'S NEXT

The One-on-Ones are back y'all. This summer's theme is mistaken identity and we will be presenting two sets of ten plays under the collective title "Who's Who?" Expect the unexpected: wacky shenanigans, double takes and devilish disguises. The first set, the Poughkeepsie plays, will be written at Vassar College as part of New York Stage and Film's residency there. The group, at press time, includes Jon Robin Baitz, Lewis Black, Leon Addison Brown, Susan Bruce, Carl Capotorto, Demitri Corbin, Peter Hedges, Roma Maffia, Donald Margulies, and Karen Trott, Jeff Williams and composer Fred Carl. These writers and actors will spend a week with a child they have been paired with and write a play specifically for that kid to in perform in with that adult. The Poughkeepsie Plays will be presented at the Ensemble Studio Theater phor phive performances phrom July 9th - 12th. Call 212 969-0661 for reservations. Or (and), come see the Block Island plays in August (the 27th - 30th). Those scheduled to appear include Charles Fuller, Alexandra Gersten, Cas Hyman, Peter Francis James, Cindy Lou Johnson, James McDaniel, Cassandra Medley, Michaela Murphy, Larry Nathanson, Pamala Tyson, and who knows?



TRIPLE THREAT PART 3 (TT III) GROSSES \$84 MIL

...NOT! Nevertheless, the five plays written and performed by last year's Replay class was a phenomenal success. On April Fool's Day, over 30 kids joined forces as actors, directors, designers and backstage crew to perform plays written by Yolanda Maldonado, Lori Quinones, Joanne Ramirez, Victor Rojas and Shirley Rumierk. Triple Threat III (no relation to Lethal Weapon 3) is the third and final set of plays written by the '91 Replay class. The response to Triple Threat has been tremendous - we love it - but we are more than aware of the fact that Triple Threat would be no more than a glint in our eye if it weren't for the fearless and faithful leadership of Michaela Murphy and Larry Nathanson, Triple Threat's totally awesome artistic directors.

Inside: *Scoop du jour* -- *PU's Exclusive Story*
on the Project's trip to the south of France

THIS LINE IS WHOSE LINE?

While it's true that our last production, "This Land Is Whose Land?" was a sensational set of plays, the Project learned a valuable lesson: never make a theme a question. Here's a pop quiz to see how many of you remember these singular moments:

① When Christopher Columbus (Paul McCrane) buys Potlatch's (Karen Kandel) land, he sings:

*THIS LAND IS MY LAND, THIS LAND IS MY LAND
FROM CALIFORNIA, TO THE NEW YORK ISLANDS
THIS LAND IS MADE FOR ME AND ME*

② When Chief Tirawa (Ken Littlehawk) confronts Q.C. and Slick Rick (Fran McDormand & Jerry McGill)

I guard this sacred land. Because this land is no one's land.

③ "Man" (played by Ken Littlehawk) finds Angelica (J. Smith Cameron) and Marylou (Erika Alexander) lost in the woods and explains:

This land belongs to everyone, not just blacks, not just whites, not just Indians, but everyone, everyone was born in this land, so that makes it your land.

④ After a daisy and a starving artist help cause world peace, a cure for AIDS, the end of hunger, pollution, and sing "OPP", Ken, played by himself, asks the audience:

You ask me whose land it is in this play. You be the judge of that.

⑤ Pilgrim John Smith (Larry Nathanson) coming home to his wife, Pocahontas (Carol Clarke):

Good dog, Buford, get that disgusting rodent and gobble him up; Honey, what's for dinner?

⑥ Red, a Native American (Peter Jay Fernandez), tells John, an import, (Gus Rogerson) as he runs home:

John, tell your parents that we came in peace and harmony. This land is everyone's land.

⑦ George (Ken), a Native American flautist, tells futuristic cheerleader Joy (June Ballinger):

This is not your land, it's the spirit, Mother Nature's land. And we are all a part of nature.

a. "People Can Change" by Erse Britto b. "Betrayed" by Omar Rose c. "God's Gift" by Alex Bess d. "This Land Is The Great Spirit" by Elisa Mohamed e. "The Last Girls" by Iasha Anderson f. [give away] "Potlatch" by Raymond Harold g. "Mixed Feelings" by Joell Soto

Answers on Page 3



More spazzy smiles from TLWL? authors Darthula Harvey, Claudia Vasquez & Erse Britto. Photos by the lovely and talented Washormeh Lindo.

FIDDLE DEE BITS

★ The first annual 52nd Street Project potluck picnic took place on May 2nd at the home of Project prez Wendy Ettinger and Derek McLane. The picnic was held in order to celebrate and perform eleven new plays written by the Replay class. Nearly 75 actors, directors and pals joined us for a fabulously fun reading of the kids' plays, and then gourmet grilling ala Jim McDaniel and Kevin O'Rourke.

✿ For those who have been keeping afloat of the Project goldfish ongoing saga: Six, our fish of (coincidentally) six months now, is fine and well. So, to all you *PU* nay-sayers, put that in your pan and fry it!

★ The 52nd Street Project has moved into the realm of the visual arts. The 42nd Street Redevelopment Corp. has invited The 52nd Street Project (this gets kinda confusing) to take part in a mural project as part of the revitalization of 42nd Street between Broadway and Eighth. A group of nine aspiring artistes aged 8 to 14 have been attending drawing and planning classes with a visual artist, and at the end of the month they will begin painting a large panel outside the Times Square Theatre on 42nd Street. They'll be there on Wednesday and Thursday afternoons if you want to stop by and admire their artistry. Anyone interested in helping out with this project should call the office — we need a volunteer to help out.

Overheard outside the Victory Theatre, Danny Noonan discussing the technique of the pointilists and Victor Rojas comparing Donatello to da Vinci (he may have been referring to the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles rather than the Renaissance painters, but we're proud regardless).

✿ Speaking of artists, anyone passing through the Columbus Circle station should check out Project writer/actor/Picasso Fernando Ramirez' picture as part of the permanent exhibition "Hello Columbus!" Other Project kids' pictures are being displayed in subway cars so all you straphangers should keep your eyes peeled.

★ We want you to teach Creative Dramatics at the P.A.L. If you are an energetic, patient person with some spare time and you know some theater games and you have a penchant for children, please call the office (212 764-1379).

✿ Flyer Bar Lovers - dial 800 CANDY BAR to get Flyer Bars delivered to your very own home. This is a good solution to all those who lose the Flyer Bar raffle at the beginning of the show, or for those who are out of town during Project performances. They also make a great gift idea (Willie's hint).

★ Check out Project teens Shirley Rumierk and Paula Myrie and her sisters in the Scholastic publication, "Voices," as photographed by Project paparazzo Stephanie Berger.

✿ There are many of you out there who believe that Willie, Carol, and Jenny are such well-disciplined super-power administrators that the entire organization rests solely on their hard work and devotion. Au contraire, *PU* readers, au contraire. The Project has had a number of interns recently who mind the store while Carol plays softball, Willie goes golfing, and Jenny goes to Crunch and jumps around. So big, warm, juicy thanks to Pam, Leslie, Lori, Gwyneth and Jerod — you rock our world.

Côte d'Azur or Bust

Well, it's a *fait accompli*, passport photos are snappin', we're going to France.

There was a moment, however, when it appeared we were going to be stuck in our respective maisons. There was a piece of funding, a big piece, that we were counting on that fell through within seven weeks of take off.

I was figuring in my head how to break it to the kids when Carol stood up like Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone With The Wind* after she dug up the turnip (or was it a potatoe?) and exclaimed, "As God is my witness we're going to France." Then she made a dress out of the Levelor blinds, no — wait, she went to the telephone and dialed like a woman possessed, a woman on fire, a woman who clearly needs a vacation.

Good As Gould

Carol called the Florence Gould Foundation, and explained the predicament. The Foundation had already promised five thousand and told us that if we got another five they would match it. Then, frantic calls to the board including Ben Barenholtz who set us up with Jane Muddyman and the chateau in the first place.

Cannes Man

Ben was leaving for the Cannes Film Festival saying "I'll see what I can do out there." Ben made a pilgrimage to the chateau, the Muddyman chateau (I like to think of it as the Project chateau) with Jane Muddyman and Johnny Planco who is a *grande fromage* at the William Morris Agency. Ben, Jane and Johnny together made a visit to the chapel on the grounds of the Project chateau. After a few moments with their maker of choice they left, cleansed, or prepared to be. Walking up the hill and looking back out on the chateau in all its splendor. Ben remarked, "We just have to bring the kids here and all we need is five thousand dollars." Jane, picking up her cue, said "What a waste of an opportunity." Ben then turned his eyes on Johnny, who picked up his cue, and the tab.

So thanks to the Florence Gould folks, Johnny Planco, Jayne Keyes and William Morris, Ben, Jane, Joel Coen, Jeannine Edmunds. We've got the *l'argent* to get there and back. *Au revoir.* -WR

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Fundraising News

Thank you and *merci* to the following foundations for their support of The 52nd Street Project's programs:

Consolidated Edison	\$1,000
Liz Claiborne	\$2,000
Department of Cultural Affairs	\$2,000
Department of Youth Services	\$20,000
Florence Gould Foundation	\$10,000
Anne M. Martin Foundation	\$5,000
The William Morris Agency	\$5,000
Fan Fox & Leslie R. Samuels Foundation	\$5,000
Lila Acheson Wallace Funds	\$15,000
Wasserstein Perella	\$1,000

Replication Information Good Vibrations

Replication is a multi-syllabic word that sounds like it should be in a sci-fi movie. But here at the Project it means much more than that. The Replication project is, as many of your *PU* readers know, an effort to allow other organizations around the country develop programs similar to those of The 52nd Street Project. The top story is that the first organization to successfully replicate, The Cyborg...er, Virginia Avenue Project in Santa Monica, CA, as led by Leigh Curran, Sharon Madden and our old pal Marsue, completed their first production, "Strangers In Paradise" (what, no punctuation?). Leigh has built a little project office in a hut in her back yard in Venice. It should be noted here that Gary Kaufman, Virginia Avenue Project lawyer, was the master carpenter on the office construction. Pat Murphy 52nd Street Project lawyer has no carpentry skills whatsoever. She does however have a copy of the Carpenter's "Close to You" on eight track. Further, on the day that Pat was born the angels got together and decided to create a dream come true. Speaking of Angels, if you happen to be migrating to the city of them, you can contact Leigh at 310 398-3546, and pinch her cheek for us.

In other Replication news, other projects are taking place in Buffalo, NY and Roanoke, VA. What does all of this mean? It means that children all over the country will soon be acting and singing to their hearts' content, and more significantly, the *PU* staff has reason to believe this will lead to nationwide syndication of the *Project Update*.

When Jane explained to the kids, "We're going to be out of the country, the people live quite simply," Alex Bess queried, "What? You mean like they don't have money? We're going to have to trade gloves for cheese?"

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Night On The Town

Night on the Town never ceases to entertain us. The 52nd Street Project's kids and adults recently saw the following: A Nets vs Bullets game. The Nets won and even cooler, our pal Joanne Lambeck sang a stunning rendition of the National Anthem (we suppose we'll next see Joanne at the Metropolitan Opera). Also thanks to the great guy & doll Jerry Zaks and Lori Steinberg for inviting twenty of us to see "Guys & Dolls" on Broadway. We all loved it a bushel and a peck. Also our pal Joshua Lehrer deserves his name up in lasers for giving us a gaggle of seats to see "Metro" at the Minskoff where we saw Freedom sing...and dance. Thanks to one guy named Henry we saw "Five Guys Named Moe," with seven kids named José, Alex, LaTanya, Shirley, Karen, Paula and Deneka. Also warm thanks to Michael Ritchie who provided us with a wonderful time at a Knicks game (during which Darthula screamed down seven levels in order to call the cotton candy vendor), and for tickets to see a "Streetcar Named Desire." We always depend upon (and cherish) the kindness of stage managers.