

# PROJECT UPDATE

VOLUME 12 FEBRUARY 1993

## **Westward Ho!**

Carol Ochs, Max Wilk and I went to Tuba City, Arizona to meet with some kids and adults at Greyhills High School which is an experimental school on a Navajo reservation. I know Max from the O'Neill Center and Carol met him when she was at Yale. In case you weren't aware Carol is really smart and used to get A's in school without really studying. Max's daughter Francis Begay is a teacher there and Max figured it would be a good idea to hook up the school and the Project. Max also figured it would give him a little quality time with the grand kids. Carol, in case you weren't aware, collects Native American jewelry but is pleading coincidence. After a couple a days of talking we hammered out a scheme to do a Playmaking event. Pending funding, we'll be back there in September.

Carol and I took a ride with Glenmore Begay (Francie's husband), out to his ancestral lands where he was tending his horses and cattle. He essentially gave us a tour of his grandfather's way of life and spoke of continuing to work the land in Navajo tradition. One got the distinct impression that these traditions were ordained by some higher power. The land, however, is mired in what is called the "Bennett Freeze" which I don't fully understand but have the feeling is another example of just how unaware our government is of a higher power.

**Next stop, L.A.**

Playmaking hit Virginia Avenue and when the lights came up it looked just like 52nd Street. Copycat Leigh Curran, having participated in Daniel's Playmaking workshop, produced an evening of kid's plays that looked just like ours. Seen at the show were New York Project deserters Bruce MacVittie, Christopher Randolph and Pamala Tyson. Even the deeeeeelicious Flyer Bars tasted the same after accruing the Frequent Flyer miles.

**HOLA Geebee**

Geebee, aka downtown Garrett Brown, is working his own Playmaking project in LA at the Heart of Los Angeles, which is a remarkable Saturday program for kids. Carol and I visited the Playmaking class which looked just like our Playmaking class, except they have a home and we're homeless (see related article). WR

## **TITO FIRED!**

**And, oh yeah, the Project is homeless.**

Tito Faris, longtime Project friend and Maintenance Dude at the PAL's Duncan Center got pink slipped after eight years of service amid vague accusations of negligence and other preposterous notions. Tito's reaction to this situation, "They never stop to amaze me." This just two months after the Project got the boot. Yes, for those of you who haven't heard, the eleven year relationship between the Project and the PAL was terminated at the request of the new Center Director at Duncan on 52nd Street. If you're interested in the details call the office and we'll send you a statement. We have temporary asylum at The Ensemble Studio Theatre and are searching for a permanent home. Thank heaven and Stephen Graham we still have our business office on 42nd Street (see related article). WR

## **We've Changed Our Address!**

(okay, it's not very exciting, but please correct your records)

220 West 42nd Street, 18th Floor  
New York, NY 10036  
(212) 764-1379  
Fax: (212) 391-9875

## **O V E R H E A R D**

On the 15th tee of an LA golf course:

Drew McCoy: *Remind me to write you a check before you leave town.*

Willie: *You don't have to do that.*

Drew: *Listen, if I can stand all night at a crap table in Vegas, I can give you a hundred bucks.*

Nadej, the two-week new intern to Willie Reale:

*Do you do the PR here?*

18 year-old Project kid Arlen Collier, when asked about his future with the Project:

*Who me? I'm retired.*



## PROGRAM UPDATE

### Triple Threat<sup>2</sup> - Part One...The Canon Continues

Last November 11th approximately a million kids got together at E.S.T. to perform Triple Threat<sup>2</sup>, the continuing adventures of the Project's advanced playwrighting program. This time around we were feeling slightly masochistic, so we decided to do six, count 'em, six big plays. Here's the coverage, in case you missed 'em:

*Peace and Love* by Andre Parks, directed by Fernando Ramirez and mentored by Polly Adams. This heartwarming drama detailed the trials and tribulations of Superdooper and his mother, both masterfully portrayed by Eric Santoni and Dawn Jackson. Those who saw the play will not soon forget Wendell Borrero's unnervingly accurate portrayal of "Crazy Man." His cries of "Hold me back! Hold me back!" will ring in this reporter's ears for many an eye to come.

*Olaniyi's Play*, written by Olaniyi Beckles (hence the title) directed by and starring the inimitable Victor Rojas and mentored by June Ballinger, had many highlights including the skating scene and Eddie "Mad Dog" Zambrano dropping to his knees while belting out a ferocious blues song.

*Friendship is a Beautiful Thing*, by Rachel James, was directed by Tina Vamvoukakis and mentored by Susie Willerman. I have seen many an actor in my time, but never one who could portray a building with the credibility of Danny Noonan. Friendship featured the song "Instead of Alive," which became an instant classic thanks to the astounding arrangement and vocals by Gemma Cooper-Novack, with assistance from Yolanda Maldonado, Eli Barbosa and Wendell Borrero.

Gemma also made an appearance in this production as the playwright of *Friends*, which was directed by Jill Barbosa and mentored by Bert Goldstein. *Friends* featured the "odd-couple" match-up of the nearly six-foot Olaniyi Beckles as Burke Jackreynolds the robber, and the nearly four-foot Annette Myrie as Lurain the bird who learned that in order to be friends you have to be willing to extend yourself beyond the limits of your perceptions of who you are and of what you are capable; a lesson is in there for all of us.

Peyton Place came to the Project in the form of *Fights Will Never Do* written by Jill Barbosa, under the direction of Lori Quinones and mentored by Brenda Thomas. *Fights* was a searing look at the turbulent life of a teenager, and the frustrations faced in day to day high school life. Joanne Ramirez, Nytia Hanley, Rachel James, and Eli Barbosa as the boyfriend illuminated a teenager's struggle and ability to re-evaluate her anger after a long talk with her conscience.

Finally, *What About Them?* by Annette Myrie, directed by Alex Bess and mentored by Kent Alexander bewildered many with its depiction of life amongst the clouds, brought to life by Claudia Vasquez, Raymond Harold, Darthula Harvey, Evelyn Maldonado and Luis Santoni.

### Wait There's More!

Can't believe these Triple Threat tales? Come see for yourself...on March 11th we will feature the latest installment of Triple Threat: three (pew!) fabulous new plays written, directed and performed by Project kids on the sixth floor of EST at 5:30 and 7:00 PM (call the office for reservations). I don't want to give too much away, but rehearsals are underway and I think we are in store for a new chapter in theatrical history.

MB

## Playback

We adapted the Playback program this year to make it more cohesive and the results were splendid. Five plays were presented under the title "First Things Second," on November 14th and 15th at the Ensemble Studio Theatre. The conundrum title was so-named because the second acts, written by the adults, took place earlier in time than the first acts, written by the kids. The evening included a whole range of subjects, including Fran-Marie Fargardo and Susan Vitucci's "A Woman's Place," about the first woman President, "Room To Breathe" by Dawn Jackson and Jim Ryan (who were joined in production by Ned Eisenberg as Dad under Elizabeth Margid's direction) about a daughter, a father and a ghost named "Mom." Ronnie Noonan and Candido Tirado came up with a hilarious horror play called "Love Thy Neighbor" which also featured Stephanie Berry as Luna, the crazy moon woman. "I Thought I Was Your Number One," written by Richard Myrie and Fricoswell Hyman featured Jim McDaniel as a car radio thief and Richie as his apprentice. Another brilliant comic duo was Shirley Rumierk and Bill Wise, who wrote a take-off on a '30's mystery called "The Real McCoy." It featured Shirley in three roles(!) and was directed by Judy Dennis. Don Berman stopped eating pizza long enough to put in a great comic performance.

## Playmaking

### On The Job Well Done Fish Out of Water Just In The Oven

Daniel Judah Sklar's last hurrah with The 52nd Street Project was the Playmaking class which presented the "On The Job" plays in December. For those of you who haven't heard, Daniel turned fifty and decided to go to France, leaving us with the very capable and spirited Michael Bernard, along with a few extra copies of his book, "Playmaking." The "On The Job" plays were terrific fun and a tribute to Daniel's work with the Project. When he returns (if ever) he will begin teaching Playmaking workshops across the country where replication programs are being created.

The "On The Job" kids were Amy Barbosa, Erica Borrero, Jed Clark, Angela Golden, Joseph Jackson, Desmond Robertson, Jennifer Soccaros, Natasha Soto, and Jeffrey Zambrano. After eight weeks of classes, the "Job" kids were matched up with 9 dramaturg/directors and it was off to Pennsylvania to the homes of Mike Sell and Eric Karpeles, Gary Nebiol and Martha Sader for a weekend of writing and no TV. On Saturday we watched apples get pressed into cider and we went bowling. Natasha Soto bowled an impressive 11. On Sunday the plays were finished and we read them out loud and laughed and then went home. That's when the On The Job production team went on the job. Production Manager Jerry McGill got together an impeccable crew, 19 actors went into rehearsal with nine directors, composers David Baron and David Gennaro wrote three songs, and within three weeks "On The Job" was presented at the New York Theatre Workshop's beautiful new space on East 4th Street on December 12th and 13th. (Project trivia: for the first time in twelve years the Project cancelled a performance on December 11th due to the Nor'Easter that "shut down New York," although rumor has it that Project pals Gus Rogerson and Traci Johnson showed up in spite of the elements).

The upcoming Playmaking class has nine children who are writing nine plays based on the theme, "Fish Out of Water." This class includes four kids from Rheedlen Place, a social service agency on West 51st Street, and we are happy to have them involved. Performances will be held at the Ensemble Studio Theatre on March 26th, 27th and 28th.

Hey -- Did you catch the flyer for Fish Out Of Water attached to your P.U.? Call for details or reservations (764-1379).



## Benefits R Us

Many of you have probably noticed the recent proliferation of mail from The 52nd Street Project. February was, in fact, benefit month. On Monday, February 8th Project pal Cindy Lou Johnson and Mark Jacobs premiered their movie, *TRUSTING BEATRICE*, at the Quad Cinema. Over three hundred people attended the movie and the party afterwards at The Coffee Shop. Then, on Wednesday, February 17th, we held yet another movie screening for John Turturro's new movie, *MAC*, produced by Nancy Tenenbaum with a party afterwards at Webster Hall. *PU* gives both movies ★ ★ ★ ★'s for the \$4,000 they each raised for the Project, and because they're good flicks.

The Project is also pleased to announce our spring gala/radio concert extravaganza, titled "Small Things Considered." It will be held at The Supper Club on Monday, May 10th. Angela Bassett and Larry Fishburne have already agreed to join us as honorary co-chairs, and we have a host of other artists and friends participating in this evening which will include a swell dinner, dancing to the big band sounds of Vince Giordano's Nighthawks, and a live taping of a radio concert of Project plays and songs performed by a slew of Project pals. For more information, call Jenny at 764-1379, and by all means, **SAVE THE DATE**, we would be delighted if you came.

## Funding News:

Enormous thank yous to the following organizations for their support of the Project's programs:

Anne Martin Foundation	\$5000
The B.E.T.A. Fund	\$3000
Citibank	\$2500
Friar's Foundation	\$1000
The Hennessy Foundation	\$5000
Joyce Mertz Gilmore Fdn	\$5000
Morgan Guaranty	\$5000
Morgan Stanley	\$5000
Noh Hands Productions	\$1000
St. James Episcopal	\$1000

## Night On The Town

The 52nd Street Project has been painting the town red during the fall theater season. Project kids and volunteers caught the following acts:

- The Big Apple Circus
- Beautiful Mosaic
- Empty Boxes
- Scapin

Thanks to everyone for their kind donation of tickets.

## PU Party Poop

On February twelfth of the year nineteen hundred and ninety three the New Dramatists workshop came alive with the pulse, the beat, yeah the heart of The 52nd Street Project. In order to combat the depression of our recent transient-type homeless lifestyle we threw a party for all members of the Project, and they turned out in force! Due to the precarious closeness to Valentines day, this became a theme party and the room was decorated in a valentine mode *par excellence* by the celebrated design team of Project intern **Janice Deitner**, and **Evan and Michael Bernard**. After an exhausting three hour marathon of streamers, tape, and balloons the beauty of the room was eloquently summed up by Janice who described it by saying; "Yeah, it looks okay." ♥ **Jenny Gersten** had to beat back many adult demands for the very new and popular membership cards which were strictly for the kids. **Amy Barbosa** was so enamored of her card she left it at the party. ♥ Teacher's Pet Award went to **Joell Soto**, who gave roses to **Carol Ochs** and Jenny for Valentines day. Joell was later heard to confide to **Jed Clark**, "Yeah, I hate Valentines day too, but I don't broadcast it." ♥ Too-Cool Award went to **Omar Rose** and **Jeffrey Zambrano** who spent most of the party perched high atop the bleachers watching the party from above. ♥ **Joanne Ramirez** and **Shirly Rumierk** were involved in an intense semantics seminar as they explained the subtle differences between the words "wicked," "fat," and "dope." ♥ **Don Berman** was the recipient of the El-Piggomatic Award because he hoovered up more slices of pizza than anyone else. Mr. Berman objected to the award, claiming that Evan Bernard snarfed nine slices. When reached for comment Evan replied, "Nine is a gross misrepresentation of the facts. It was more like twelve to fifteen, besides my brother said they were free." ♥ When asked why she continuously pushed people around the room **Mary Vamvoukakis** replied, "Because I can." ♥ The party really took off during the highly controversial freeze dance contest. The results of both rounds were highly contested by **Wendell Borrero** who was under the impression that even though he was dancing outside in another room away from the eye of the judges he was still in the contest. Also creating a stir over the results was **Roma Maffia**, who later in the evening physically accosted the judge screaming "I was robbed! I was pushed by **Dion Graham!**" Although there were six winners in the two rounds the all time winner was **Victor Rojas** who gave his prize over to a crushed contestant eliminated in the early rounds. ♥ Many believe that the conga-line led by Production Manager **Jerry McGill** will be remembered as the highlight of the social season. As the group conga'd around the room to the awesome tunes supplied by the extraordinary DJ talents of **Alex Bess**, a cry rose up that, to many summed up the glory of the evening "No more snowball fights!" MB

### CATCH A FISH ON THE AIR!

A playwright from "Fish Out of Water" will be featured with his/her cast on the WNYC (93.9 FM) program, "New York Kids." Tune in Sunday, March 21st between 6:00 - 8:00 PM.



## RAISIN ☆ SAUCE

Sauce has learned from an insider at Columbia Pictures that while in LA, Reale and Ochs put the finishing touches on a multi-million dollar deal with an unnamed Columbia exec to produce the film, "One Man's Dream, Many Children's Nightmare: The Willie Reale Story."

Although just a rumor, celebrities are treating it as fact and appealing to Columbia in staggering numbers to be cast in the dramatic biopic. One insider noted, "It's really become the major talk of the town. I haven't seen a surge toward a picture like this since 'Grease 2.'"

And just who has been cast?

"Well, the role of Reale was by far the most difficult. He's a very complex personality. We tested people like Alec Baldwin, Mel Gibson, Kevin Kline, but none of them seemed quite right. We finally settled on Linda Hunt of 'The Year of Living Dangerously.'"

And what about the role of perky director of marketing and development, Jenny Gersten? "Not easy! Gersten is a woman of humor and kindness and yet is notorious for sending interns out in torrential rain and fierce blizzards just to get her a pack of gum."

So who did they finally settle on? Drew Barrymore, fresh off of her successful portrayal of Amy Fisher in the ABC-TV film.

By far the decision that will raise the most discussion is the controversial casting of Whoopi Goldberg as executive director, Carol Ochs. Ochs is known for being shrewd, astute, brilliant with numbers and for the most part, white and Jewish. When asked how she could possibly portray this woman Goldberg responded with some vitriol, "Hey, none of that matters. What does matter is that she is a strong woman. A woman of character and integrity. Besides, I've already got the hair thing down and that's half the battle."

Throughout all this, two major parts remain uncast. That of associate artistic director Michael Bernard and production manager, Jerry McGill. "Bernard serves as a bit of a problem" said our source. "He's hard to put a finger on. If only Elvis was alive..."

The jury is still out on McGill though it is speculated that Denzel Washington and Wesley Snipes are vying for the part. "McGill will take an actor of great sex appeal and charm. No depth, just sensuality. We're thinking of going with Gary Coleman."

Sauce will keep you up to date as these developments unravel.

JMcG

## Wish List

In case you haven't noticed, this issue of *PU* is noticeably lacking photographs. That's because all the photos got wet in a water pipe deluge at the office. So, as a space filler, we all sat around the computer and thought about what the Project needed. If you or anyone you know might be a good candidate for any of the following items, please call the office.

Fancy Schmancy Xerox Machine

52nd Street Project Baseball Caps

A New Home

Snack Foods

A Macintosh Computer

Boogie Boards

Free Tickets to Theater

Free Groceries

Paper/Office Supplies

The Use of a Vacation Home in Flagstaff, AZ

### MILEAGE MILEAGE MILEAGE:

The Project has learned from its aviation sources that all of you jet-setters can donate your excess mileage to us. Now that replication is taking off, we are eagerly looking for mileage so that staff members can fly around the country to assist and advise our new offshoots. In particular, we will probably be transporting a rather large group to the Navajo reservation in Arizona in the Fall - any donated tickets would be **greatly appreciated**.

## Tattoo You

Speaking of material goods, do all those of you who have migrated to Los Angeles miss the east coast and The 52nd Street Project? We have the ideal solution. Why not purchase a 52nd Street Project removable tattoo which you can wear on the beach or Sunset Boulevard, and show others where your allegiance lies. It costs only a dollar, plus .29¢ postage and handling, and it's the coolest thing going.

# Waiting For The Dope

## The PU Scoop on The One-Page Play Contest

This past December, The 52nd Street Project mailed its annual Christmas appeal with an item called "Waiting For The Dough," a one-page play contest. The fundraiser was a financial and artistic coup, which raised over \$9,000 for the Project's programs. Thanks to everyone for their participation and support of the Project. We are forever grateful for your sense of humor and generosity.

### And The Winners Are...

The abominable snowman category goes to Becky Browder and Ted Neustadt for the following entry



At rise: Two abominable snowmen, SKIPPY and PETE, are ice fishing. There is a big pile of fish at their sizable feet.

SKIPPY: We sure did catch a lot of fish. Let's send 25 dams to The 52nd Street Project.

Pause.

(PETE nods.)

Pause.

CURTAIN

Scene: Off St. George's Bank — quite a distance from Gloucester, MA.

FIRST I'm sorry to be so late, darling. I was making a ten-fin  
WHALE: contribution to The 52nd Street Project.

SECOND Sounds fishy to me, Louis. Where in the high seas did you  
WHALE: find any loose-change to spout out?

FIRST: Not far from the Bank, as a matter of fact. I came upon  
this rich spoiled brat who claimed he fell off his father's yacht after drinking too many ice cream sodas.

SECOND: Are you pulling my dorsal?

FIRST: So, I said "Freddie, - that's the kid's name- crawl aboard  
my humpback and I'll take you back to Spencer Tracy."

SECOND: And, I suppose that little rescue effort earned you fifty  
bucks from the kid?

FIRST: Nope, Spence gave me 50 for coming up with a few whale  
tears while he sang "Don't Cry Little Fishy" to the lad. The poor thing couldn't stop throwing-up all those ice cream sodas.

SECOND: Sounds like you and Spence make quite a team.

FIRST: I guess so. You know what he said to me?

SECOND: What?

FIRST: Louis, I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

The whales category goes to Nicholas Benton for his play, "The Little Fishes"



The prize for the best play in the free-style category goes to Fred McKinnon for his play, "Waiting For The Doe" which was the first entry we received and it arrived on two little yellow post-it notes attached to a check for \$7. ➡

Scene: A country road. A tree. Willie, standing, scratches his head. Enter Fred.

WILLIE: What are you waiting for?

FRED: Who?

WILLIE: You?

FRED: Who are you?

WILLIE: Willie.

FRED: What are you waiting for?

WILLIE: The dough.

FRED: Oh.

WILLIE: What are you waiting for?

FRED: Santa and his reindeer. They come this way every year. My favorite is Prancer. You must be Vixen.

WILLIE: Huh?

FRED: The doe.

WILLIE: The others are bucks?

FRED: Yeah, seven bucks.

(Snow begins to fall.)

CURTAIN

David Peterkin is the Grand Prize winner.

All the winners will receive a Flyer Chocolate Bar and David Peterkin will have his play done at our upcoming benefit in May. It's not printed here so that the suspense will drive you to buy a ticket. Pretty sneaky, huh?

In addition, there are a few honorable mentions we'd like to honor with mentions.

- Play with the Most Contributors: Georgette and Samona Squire for their play which included a list of 52 donors!
- The Impertinent Category to Wende Dasteel and Max Wilk for their Haikus.
- The Promises-Won't-Get-You-A-Candy-Bar Category goes to all those of you who continually insisted you were writing a play but never did. You know who you are, and so do we. (Carol's mom Sue should take lessons from Michael's mom Myrna, whose play resolved her bout with procrastination).
- The Most Affectionate Category goes to Project playwright Gemma Cooper-Novack.
- The Overachiever Category goes to Sheila Kehoe, who included a song and costume design with her play.
- The Can't-Follow-Instructions Category goes to the following lawless individuals who sent in plays over a page in length: Drew Barr, Mary Ann Code, Kermit Frazier, David Margulies, Susie Willerman and Jessica Soto.
- Also thanks to: Jane Anderson, Wendy Abrams, Michael Arkin, Mr. & Mrs. H.G. Bissinger, Terrence Berngiloare, Caroline Ellis, Andrea Johnson, Lee Kalcheim, Thomas Nahrwald, John Paris (to whom, if he had won, we would have sent a Snickers bar), Alysia Reiner, Donald Rothschild, and Michael Sell for their artistry.

The prize for the best politician play goes to Kermit Frazier, who was the only one in his category. We'd print it (it's very funny), but it's two-pages long. Even though the play is double in length, Kermit will receive only one candy bar.