

PROJECT UPDATE

VOLUME 18 FEBRUARY 1995

THE SECRET SUCCESS

IT NEVER STOPS!!! The Project just keeps the Playmaking train a rollin' all year long. Last September gave us the "Shhh (you're reading too loud) The Secret Plays." Eight kids went through the Playmaking class and then trooped up to the home of board member Stephen Graham where we wrote plays, had a very memorable horseback riding session and ate the fabulous meals prepared by Charlotte and Celia. After a weekend of too much fun to be believed, we came back to the city and put together an evening at the ever-welcoming Playwrights Horizons that gave us Melissa Murray and Gina Torres as a tree and a flower who learn a tough lesson in "Best So-Called Friends;" "Tell the Truth" by Laura Khalifa where Cynthia Nixon and Bill Christian learned a lesson about love; Yull Neri Borda's "My Secret Christmas" which featured Leon "Trey" Wilson in the dual role of a mean father and Santa; "Ramon's Love" by Ben Barthelemy which included the incredible lyric "Don't cry little boy don't cry, I want you to be happy, Comb your hair it's nappy" as sung by Mary Testa; Corinda Smith's "The Clubhouse" which taught us that just because someone is homeless does not mean they can't be a help to society (or be a good mechanic). Thomas Santoni's "The Servants" gave us Gus Rogerson as a very unique lonely farmer who befriends a scarecrow chillingly portrayed by Reed Birney; Elizabeth Carson taught us what life is like "Way Down South" for a brother and sister who want to go to school despite their father's wishes; and Frank Hansen's "The Streetfighters" brought the evening home with two enemies coming together to sing to the audience "We love you all" over and over and over.

Well that was then and this is now. A new group of kids has been wending their way through the Playmaking class and will head up to the home of Eric Karpeles and Mike Sell to pen a plethora of new Project plays under the theme "Expect the Unexpected." The show will be performed March 17, 18, & 19 at E.S.T. See the attached flyer, or call 642-5052 for reservations. Be there and expect! MB



Say "Shhh..." The Secret Plays Crew at Stephen's House.

Photo: David Theis

BENAVIDES LURED AWAY BY SIREN SONG OF STAGE IRON WOMAN MIGLIORINI RETURNS

Just when we thought we had Lisa Benavides' Juilliard Actor Training deprogrammed, she weakened and returned to the frightening cult known as Actor's Equity. In a panic, and determined not to hire another stage struck kid with an eight by ten glossy and head full of dreams, we turned to industrial Indiana and the North Manchester Foundry to find former intern Eris Migliorini working as a professional core cleaner. A "core" is what allows negative space to be created within an iron casting, and we understand that Eris kept those cores pretty darn clean. But having peaked in her core cleaning skills and ever anxious for a new challenge, Eris leapt at the chance to take over as Production Manager. "I think my foundry experience will prove invaluable to the Project. I know how to handle big burly men so I ought to be able to keep the kids in line."

Phon-fusion

Callers to the Project office have been recently disoriented. The phone rings, a young, giddy feminine voice answers, "Project!" (pause) "No, it's Eris." Add to the confusion the fact that Lisa often comes into the office to help her protégé learn the ropes. Attention casting directors: if you who miss Lisa's mellifluous tones, she's available for voice overs. And we know for a fact that she renders lepidopterologist roles with great alacrity. WR

GIVE BEAUCOUP, GET A CLUE

THE PROJECT'S FIRST MYSTERY GALA BENEFIT

We know a secret and you'll never get it out of us. Never ever. Not even if you paid us. Okay, well if you pay us, but only a really, really lot of money. Cause if you want to find out the really cool and extremely mysterious secret you have to come to our big Project Gala which is on May 1st at the Copacabana and is kind of expensive but really worth it especially if you consider that it's a write off and it's the only way you'll find out what we're talking about. One thing we will mention though is that Bridget Fonda and Eric Stoltz are the co-chairs of the evening.

News Flash:



The West Bank Cafe has just been named the official restaurant of The 52nd Street Project. In honor of this newsworthy event, check out the Flyer Bar profile of WBC proprietor Steve Olsen on page 4.

DOUBLE TWOBLE

Thanks to the DCA/NYSCLA Challenge Grant, the Two-on-Two's are back this Spring, and they're better than ever. No really. The grant (which many of you helped to match in the Fill In The Blanks Contest (see related article)) will help pay for the Project to expand this program so that it will include a weekend away for rehearsals. This program may sound new to some of you PU readers, but in fact, it dates back to 1987, when the program first originated on the stage of Playwrights Horizons, and then it re-surfaced last year as a program for the graduates of the Replay writing class (aged 11 to 15), to give them an opportunity to act again. This year, the six plays, written and directed by professional theater folk, and acted by pairs of Project kids, will be held at the West Bank Downstairs Theatre, and don't hold your breath, but we hope to serve root beer floats at the bar. The shows will premier April 17 and 18, so keep an eye out for a flyer some day soon, and make your reservations early 'cause seating will be limited.

PROJECT BRASS RETURNS TO TUBA

Once again your erstwhile Project pals traveled to the Navajo reservation in the city of Tuba, AZ to mount eight exciting plays with eight exciting playwrights, make new friends, and make fools of ourselves on the radio. Reg E. Cathy, Willie Holtzman, Howard "El Diablo" Korder, Ray Baldwin Louis, Jerry McGill, Angie Phillips, Pamala Tyson, Max Wilk, and stage manager extraordinaire Michael Ritchie along with Willie, Carol, Michael and Michaela trooped on out to the desert to team up with Greyhill High's Mary Frances and Glenmore Begaye. We hit the ground running and met up with the eight students who participated in the playmaking class last September: Christina Tom, Frank Joe, Gretchen Gerber, Jesse Boone, Brian Nez, Monica Gene, Valentina Van Deveer and Bryant Yellowhorse. Everyone looked over their plays, did some rewriting here and there and began a week of rehearsing that culminated in three wild and wonderful performances. Some of the highlights of the evening include: Angie Phillips as the first cat in space in Tony and Snowball; Reg and Pam as two VERY hot to trot horses learning about love in Exciting Day; Jerry and Michael as a sheep and dog equivalent of Jack Kerouac and Neal Cassady; Michaela as an old woman who poisons people in the Project's first one person play, Alice Hates Casserole; Willie as a drunken father who comes to grips with his alcohol abuse; Howard as Mr. Schmizzie, the role he was born to play, and Ray as the teamwork-loving B-Ball-playing senior who leads Greyhills Academy to the state championships. In between rehearsals we found time to see some sights, eat a sheep and leave a plane ticket in the hotel. Michael and Willie had a life-long fantasy realized when they got to do the play-by-play for the Greyhills Knights basketball team on the radio. Pam Tyson summed it up for everyone during a halftime radio interview when she said "Go Knights all night, get down get funky." MB

A PICTURE'S WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS

so we'll only spend a few telling you about Stephanie Berger's stunning portraits of The 52nd Street Project HOME AND AWAY, an exhibit at Chartwell Booksellers. You can go visit your old Project favorites like the Myrie sisters, Victor Rojas, Eli Barbosa, Dawn Jackson, Jerry McGill, Jonsi Smith, Joseph Mohamed and many others at the show (not to mention Barry Singer, the store's proprietor and one of the swell Project pals), which is located in the Park Avenue Plaza at 55 East 52nd Street between Park and Madison Avenues. Stephanie's photographs are also for sale, and Barry will graciously donate a portion of the sales to the Project. You can also buy some books from Chartwell clerk/Project kid, Alex Bess.

THE HITCHING POST

"A Project Bride, A Project Groom, A Project Sunny Honeymoon. A Project Season, A Project Reason for Project Whoopie. The 52nd Street Project reputation as New York's most successful Yenta. Playmaking Pop Daniel Judah Sklar finally took to his knee before Bushwick Play Project Volunteer Yolanda Rodriguez. Project Graphics Mama Iris Brown got the pledge from Project volunteer Joe White, Mark Linn-Baker made a trip to Tiffany's and Adrienne Lobel's finger is a little heavier for it, and Drew McCoy Project donor and incurable romantic announced his intentions for Amy Aquino. There's gonna be a run on priests, parsons and rabbis this year so if you are thinking about tying the knot book early. Speaking of books...

BOOK'EM

The rumors you've heard are true: THE REPLICATION BOOKS HAVE BEEN PUBLISHED. This may not seem so miraculous, but consider that the Project first began culling its collection of plays and musicals for publication in 1990. Today, the results of all this time and valiant, volunteer efforts by countless volunteers, are six stunning volumes of plays from our various programs (Spring Thing (Playmaking), The Butler Did It & The Bedtime Zone (One-on-Ones), Plays For Pairs (Two-on-Twos), and two musicals, Quark Victory and The Dinosaur Musical). In addition, there is a "how to" manual written by Willie, including a section written by Daniel Judah Sklar with Playmaking lessons and class plans, and a set design component written by Kevin Joseph Roach, all of this brilliantly edited by Susan J. Vitucci. The books were designed with a loving hand and unstoppable wit and craft by Iris A. Brown, who deserves a loving hand in return. ↩

The books are being distributed by Dramatists Play Service (a leading theatrical publisher), and they can be purchased by calling their order department at 212/683-8960. We also hope to have the books on sale at specialized book stores. Or you can come by the office to sneak a peek.

In other replication news, the First Street Project, run by Suzanne and Tom Glennon in Macon, GA, produced another Playmaking class for the kids at their after-school center in November. We also got news via their newsletter, "Thought and Things" that the Virginia Avenue Project in Santa Monica, CA is going strong. They just completed a production from their Replay program, and are planning their first Playback, for the most advanced playwrights this fall. If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, we're flabbergasted.

GOVERNMENT OUTCRY

We know all you PU readers are more than experts on what stinks. You probably are also aware of the detrimental impact recent budget cuts have had on arts and social service organizations like the Project. And we probably don't have to tell you that the arts do good things for our society and culture. But we would appreciate it if you could tell all this to your representatives in the city, state and in Washington. Two "hotlines" have been set up to help spread the word. Call 900 370-9000 to send an emergency mailgram in your name to your two senators and your Representative in support of the NEA. To tell George Pataki, your State Assembly Person and Senator that the State Council on the Arts has been cut far too much, call 800 651-1426. Your credit card or phone bill will be charged between \$6 - \$8 per call to cover the costs of the mailgrams. Your voice is invaluable and indispensable. Thanks.

LAUGHING ALL THE WAY TO THE BLANK

As we all know, the holiday season is synonymous with many things, such as _____, _____ and eight tiny _____. We hope that one of those above blanks was filled in with The 52nd Street Project's annual year-end appeal and contest. Then there's the infamous post-holiday tension-syndrome that can only break when the winners are announced in this, the winter edition of the *Project Update*.

This year, the Project received well over 130 entries and donations for its "Fill In The Blanks" contest. We would like to express our deepest thanks to everyone who participated in filling in the blanks and/or sent in their year-end gifts. Also, the contest enabled the Project to match the \$10,000 challenge grant from NYSCA/DCA. And along the way, the Project's prestigious panel of judges had many a _____.

TYPE OF LAUGH

The Grand Prize winner of the Fill In The Blanks Contest received an all expenses paid dinner for two courtesy of The Official Restaurant of The 52nd Street Project, The West Blank Cafe (get it?). See related article.

Runners-up received a sampling of Flyer Chocolate Bars, the Official Candy Bar of The 52nd Street Project. Bold words were previously blank.

GRAND PRIZE WINNER

As the holiday season begins and the tax year comes to a close, I feel an **obnoxious** urge to give oodles of **unsolicited advice** to The 52nd Street Project. As we all know it is better to give than to **look stingy**. Whenever I see the **worship** in the eyes of the children I feel like **giving birth** all over. In fact, on occasion this has caused me to feel **pregnant**. There are few **grown-ups** that **ingratiate** as well as The 52nd Street Project, particularly in light of the fact that they don't have a **health care plan**, or even a permanent **dress code**. The staff is devoted to, and only to, the **free food** and that of course, **titillates** me to my very **spleen**. Therefore I am including a **sorry little** check to The 52nd Street Project so they can continue to **order pizza** for as long as possible.

With affection & admiration,

Amanda Jacobs

RUNNER-UP

As the holiday season begins and the tax year comes to a close, I feel a **bovine** urge to give oodles of **bacon** to The 52nd Street Project. As we all know it is better to give than to **overeat**. Whenever I see the **silliness** in the eyes of the children I feel **porcine** all over. In fact, on occasion this has caused me to feel **hog wild**. There are few **piggies** that **dine** as well as The 52nd Street Project, particularly in light of the fact that they don't have a **sow**, or even a permanent **wild boar**. The staff is devoted to, and only to, the **piglets** and that of course, **plumps** me to my very **pig-tail**. Therefore I am including a **fat** check to The 52nd Street Project so they can continue to **pig out** for as long as possible.

With **lard**,

Ron & Sue Black

RUNNER-UP

As the holiday season begins and the tax year comes to a close, I feel a **hallucinatory** urge to give oodles of **midgets** to The 52nd Street Project. As we all know it is better to give than to **dench**. Whenever I see the **oavy** in the eyes of the children I feel **chatty** all over. In fact, on occasion this has caused me to feel **humane**. There are few **medallions** that **peruse** as well as The 52nd Street Project, particularly in light of the fact that they don't have a **fringe**, or even a permanent **frisbee**. The staff is devoted to, and only to, the **halos** and that of course, **pesters** me to my very **thyroid**. Therefore I am including a **persnickety** check to The 52nd Street Project so they can continue to **submit** for as long as possible.

With **filbert**,

Lili A. Taylor & Michael Imperioli

RUNNER-UP (AND SUCK-UP)

As the holiday season begins and the tax year comes to a close, I feel a **Jennytal** urge to give oodles of **Ochs** to The 52nd Street Project. As we all know it is better to give than to **Gabe**. Whenever I see the **Willies** in the eyes of the children I feel **Marsue** all over. In fact, on occasion this has caused me to feel **Lewish**. There are few **Karpeleses** that **Sell** as well as The 52nd Street Project, particularly in light of the fact that they don't have a **McGill**, or even a permanent **Jerry**. The staff is devoted to, and only to, the **Reales** and that of course, **Brenahds** me to my very **Benavides**. Therefore I am including a check to The 52nd Street Project so they can continue to **Carol** for as long as possible.

With **apologies**,

Eric Karpeles & Mike Sell

Honorable Mention: A runner up for the suck-up award goes to **Steve and Emma Hamilton**, who filled in all their blanks with various permutations of the word "Will."

Other Honorable Mentions go to **Alexandra Gersten & John Coffeeshopolis (né Vassilaros)** for their caffeinated entry, **Micah and Jan Kroeze** for their endearing father and son entry, and the **Bernard Family** for their a-family-that fills-in-blanks-together-probably-shouldn't entry, who all might have won had they not been related to the prestigious panel of judges.

PU also would like to recognize a few of the lazier, busier or grammatically uneducated few who did not want to fill in the blanks but sent in some great excuses (names were omitted to protect the guilty):

My family makes me too crazy and saps all of my creative juices

I've just returned from a ski trip to Switzerland and I'm in a full body cast and it is with great difficulty that I write this lame excuse with my teeth

I drew a blank

The dog ate my entry blank

You may never see this check if I take the time to think up clever fill-ins

I'm a friend of Robert Brustein

Blanks again, everybody.


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We expect you to come and see our
production, "EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED"
The Unpredictable Plays" at the Ensemble
Studio Theatre.
The Flyer Inside.
March 17 - 19. Check out!

The 52nd Street Project, Inc.
220 West 42nd Street
18th Floor
New York, NY 10036



Flyer CANDY BAR PROFILE



Name: Steve Olsen
Age: 41
Place of Birth: Bogota, NJ
Occupation: Restaurateur
and mastermind behind the
West Bank Cafe, Official
Restaurant of The 52nd Street
Project

Claims to Fame: 2 stars from the Times upstairs, 500 plays produced downstairs

Recent Accomplishments: Finished three marathons. Broke four hour barrier

Advice to the kids: Choose something you like, do your best, and never leave the scoop in the ice machine.

Last Book Read: Lincoln by Gore Vidal

Favorite Flyer Flavor: American Caramel -- it's such a bargain. It takes so long to chew it's like getting two bars for the price of one.

What he likes about The 52nd Street Project: Great sets!!!

HERSHMAN GETS HIS WISH: CAROL OCHS DISH

Project Pal Rob Hershman led a one-man campaign to influence the editorial staff of the PU to include more stuff about executive director Carol Ochs. So here goes. When little Carol was 14 she and her family moved to a new home in the Chicago suburbs. The catch was that the house they were building was unfinished when they arrived and Carol spent the first two months of her high school freshman year living in a Ramada Inn. There Carol fell in love with a bell hop who, despite her constant calls to room service during his shift, didn't notice her. This was a traumatic experience for Carol which through intensive therapy she has finally worked out. Carol's beau Bruce helped her through this

FUNDING

Speaking of caring, the following recently made contributions to The 52nd Street Project.

Barbara Bell Cumming Foundation	\$1,000
The Dammann Fund	\$10,000
Dramatists Guild	\$1,500
Rita J. & Stanley H. Kaplan Foundation	\$1,000
James A. Macdonald Foundation	\$600
Morgan Stanley	\$5,000
The Pumpkin Foundation	\$5,000
Ann M. Martin Foundation	\$10,000
In memory of Harlan J. Swift	\$5,300

Their support is now more critical than ever, and we are deeply grateful.