

PROJECT UPDATE

VOLUME 21 FEBRUARY 1996

TWO FOR THE ROAD

Black Thursday - January 18, 1996 will forever live in Project annals as the day that (unbeknownst to each other) both Jenny Gersten and Eris Migliorini tendered their resignations. Carol Ochs was so visibly shaken that Willie had to take her to lunch and pick up the check.

Gersten leaves in "Mass" exodus

After five years of faithful service as intern, Production Manager, and finally as Director of Marketing and Development, Jenny Gersten has bumped her head on the ceiling climbing the Project ladder. Rather than stage a coup and depose Carol in the position of Grand Fromage she has accepted an appointment as Associate Producer of the Williamstown Theatre Festival. Her partner in art will be none other than Michael Ritchie, Project pal and storied stage manager of the "Dinosaur Musical" way back in '85. Here are some reactions from the kids: Victor Rojas: "I think it sucks but it would extremely suck if Willie left too." Jill Barbosa: "I'm peeved off that she's leaving and that's it." Amy Barbosa: "She made a big difference in the Project when she was working there. She was somebody who was cool with the girls. She was one of us. But we'll probably see her on the news or TV or something." Zsuzsa Mysak: "She's been very helpful, she gets along with every kid and she's respectful." Darthula Harvey: "She was very nice and we're all gonna miss her and when she cooked I liked her food." Mary Vamvoukakis: "I think it's sad and I don't want her to leave and I don't like it. But I think she'll be coming back every day because she loves Willie." Ahmed Attia: "I'm gonna feel sad."

Migliorini takes to the stage

After one delightful year Eris, which is Greek for spunky and underpaid, is off to pound the pavement as an actress. As we all know, this is a sure-fire career move. The demand for Eris' skills is expected to be enormous as there are very few actresses in this town that combine talents for acting, pottery and load-in supervision. All inquiries as to Eris' availability from agents and casting directors should be directed to Eris' replacement, George Babiak (see related article). Ahmed Attia, who played opposite Eris in a love scene in last summer's One-on-Ones offered the same terse, all-purpose response to her departure: "I'm gonna feel sad."

WR

Our New Address: 500 W. 52nd St. 2nd Fl., NYC, NY 10019

New Number: 212-333-5252 (Pencil it in!)

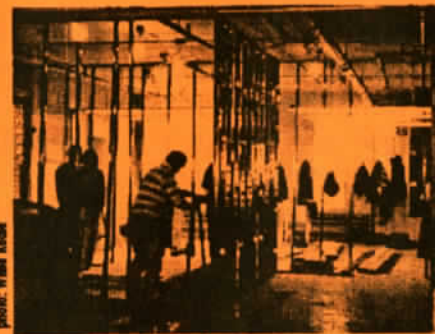
THE FINAL FRONTIER IS HERE

(We got Space!)

You may remember that in the last fifty or so newsletters we've written about moving into our first permanent home. I wouldn't be surprised at all if inquiring *PU* readers were wondering whether there wasn't just a little bit of fibbing going on or perhaps, even worse, delusional behavior as a result of a Flyer Bar overdose. But believe it or not, the "Clubhouse" which has been endlessly pending, is a reality. It is located at 500 West 52nd Street (on the corner of Tenth Avenue,) on the second floor; steps away from Sonny's candy store. By the time this *PU* hits the newsstands, new walls will have been framed and sheetrocked, and new electrics will be in place and the cosmetic work will have started. Willie has been heard to say, "I'd like the curve of the reception desk to match the arc of the floor tiles to create an hospitable inward floor." He continues to find new ways to fulfill his role as Artistic Director.

Mark Keoppen has volunteered to make all the radiator covers with some cool window seats and donated some groovy wood doors as well. Kevin Joseph Roach is designing study carels and desks for the home-

work/lounge area, which Neil Mazzella (see Flyer profile) and Hudson Scenic will be building gratis. Michael and George will have a totally cool office door from the set of *Barton Fink* thanks to Joel Coen. Perhaps the greatest miracle in a series of miracles can be



These Are Our Studs

summed up in one sentence never before written or spoken in the history of the English language: "We love our contractor." Bob Goldberg's ace team from Yorke Construction led by Michael Hewes is working fast and furiously. Bob and Michael have arranged for all the sub-contractors to do the work at a fraction of the cost. They are Joe Mendez (of Jomen, Inc. Electrical), Tony, George, Brian, Derek, Fonzi and Fran in the office. If you happen to be thinking about a renovation, have we got the team for you! We have received many offers of "How can we help?"

more on the renovation and participation opportunities - page 3

PLAYMAKING POST-VIEW AND PREVIEW - NOT PAY-PER-VIEW

"Out of Order", out of paper, out of gas... Oy! What a time we had with the works of sheer genius created from our fall Playmaking class. We had eight brand spankin' new-to-the-Project kids full of flavor and rarin' to go. William Brown wrote about a shark, Sharky, who finally wins the friendship of a tiger, Tiggy, and learns how to successfully hunt humans- woo-hoo!- Frankly, I can't wait to hit the beach. Jon Patrick Walker 'n' Walker Jones teamed up for a dynamite, time traveling, Barney-smashing adventure created by Rufus Read. Tom Carrozza was in full bloom as Treeman in Noel Polanco's play. Natalie Marcoci wrote a top ten blockbuster hit song with "Going To The Toy Store" in her good clown/bad clown tale. We've been singin' it ever since. Hunter Reid Eaton took us across the galaxy to the land of the woob tubes and multiple personalities, where, thank goodness, Trey Wilson helped Jeff Williams get rid of his bad personality. Whew. Pamela Vera wrote a very spooky but happy, touching tale of friends reunited. Her final scene culminated with the promise of a party in a McDonald's Party Room - the perfect ending to any story. Voodoo ran amuck in Hakim Latimore's tale of slave potions and revenge, and Eddie Cooper blew everyone away with his chilling existentialist tale of regret and loneliness.

We are equally excited by the new set of kids gearing up for the next shows. Classes have already begun at Hartley House, and so far things are moving along quite smoothly. These lucky young individuals will get to go to Kent, CT to the home of Cathy and Stephen Graham, where they will write an entirely new set of masterpieces. Catch 'em while they're hot March 22nd, 23rd, and 24th at the HB Playwrights Foundation (see attached flyer or call (212) 642-5052 for reservations). EM

INSTANT REPLAY

Just when you thought it was safe to take a breather, a rest, a pause in between the seemingly endless series of plays presented by the Project LOOK OUT!!! Here comes another round of Replay. Replay is the advanced playwriting program which takes last year's Playmaking participants and puts them through a brutally intensive ten weeks of playwriting and Marzipan. Except without the Marzipan!!!!!! After the class all the writers and a whole lotta Project friends will head upstate for a day of staged readings and barbecue. The picnic is always as much fun as...well...a really good picnic, so keep your ears open for dates and places. MB

TID BITS

This November, after a big Mexican dinner, Nancy Jacobs gave birth to Abraham Peterkin. 🐾 Abe will probably feel right at home when he visits his contemporary Buster Coen in his rustic nursery. ☞ The Brooklyn Bridge doesn't just connect two boroughs: Ellen Dennis married Rudi Pribitzer on October 9 on a "beautiful day" on the Bridge. 🍀 Here's a bit of Project kismet: While volunteer propmaker Jilly Crook was visiting friends in L.A., she coincidentally met a woman who makes the props for the Virginia Avenue Project.

PLAYBACK

Playback is the Project's program for older kids which combines the writing and performing aspects of the Project into one mighty show. A kid is paired with an adult, the kid writes a short play, the adult writes an answer play, and the two of them perform it together. This year the theme was "The Other Shoe Drops: Plays of Consequence." Something happened in the first play, the consequences of which were felt in the second. Carl Capatorto and Jennifer Socarros portayed Anthony, a comedian/lawyer wannabe, and Munchie his wacky sidekick in "Finally Naturally Funny." Eli Barbosa and Jerry McGill made "A Killing in Sports" as a coach and his star QB, who was also in a gang. This was followed up by "Vending" the story of the coach's son. Diana Rojas and Kathy Rossetter showed us the consequence of devoting your life to fame at the expense of your family in "Pointe of no Return/Return to the Pointe." Raymond Harold only wanted to help people and Robert Jimenez showed him how as Superman and Ty Rant the crook in "Comrade's Comrade/Comrade's Comrade's Comrade." Marrissa Chibas was "Stuck on Stupid" but Virginia Vargas rescued her in "The Force of Destiny." Last, but not least, Jed Clarke and Gina Torres gave us a highly unusual look at the world of intergalactic travellers stuck on Earth who can stop time at will, yet become addicted to White Out, in "Time Flies When You're Alive/Stationary Store Cowboy." So, what were the consequences of teaming up adults and kids for an evening of theater? Well, they were good ones. MB

ERIS VERSES GEORGE

Came a young girl from the Midwest
Working with kids was her quest
Adjusting like a smarty
She thought, "Total Party.
The Project is simply the best."

Now her first year has gone by
And off to the stage she must fly.
"I love you all bunches.
Call me up, we'll do lunches!"
Hey, George is a really nice guy.

ODE TO GEORGE

Though we all are devastated by Eris' departure, it's really no big deal as we already found someone to replace her. You may recall the stories in past issues of George Babiak and Vanessa Valdes, our two friends who decided to travel the world on their bicycles. Well, lucky for us they decided to come home after being hit (and injured) by a drunk driver so... George is our new production manager!!!! George stands 5' 11", has sandy blond hair and goes by the nickname George. He grew up here in New York and still lives in the same rent-controlled apartment, which is why he can afford to work here. George has been a volunteer since the early days and one of the Project's favorite people. He's a swell guy and no one is against having him work here. MB

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and, Ladies and Gentlemen, this is how: Hopefully in the first or second week of March we will be having **PAINT WEEK**. We need volunteers to get together and paint, paint, paint. This is sure to be (as a staff member is often heard saying) "a total party." If you are interested, please call George at the office and let us know. We are also looking for really cool lamps for both office and lounge and anything else you think we simply must have.

The space would not be ours were it not for the earnest commitment of Councilmembers Tom Duane and Ronnie Eldridge, and their incredibly patient staff, Andrew Berman, Lisa Gugenheim (the patron saint of red tape), and Adrienne Kivelson each of whom I called every day for four months. And also kudos to the persevering staff at HPD, who arranged it all. Contrary to popular opinion, this City works. It just works slowly. CO

MOLD EVERYTHING

Birch Beer floats, a dino named Dodo and singing Jell-O. Sound like some bizarre word association? More like a textbook evening of Two-on-Two performances. You remember the Two-on-Twos? Where two kids pair up to perform in a play written especially for them by an adult playwright, and a volunteer director guides them through rehearsals to performances.

We took a long weekend in the middle of January with 12 kids and their directors to three friends' homes in Dutchess county: (thanks Wendy and Derek, Maria, and David and Susan). There was snow galore. In between snowball fights, shoveling, and sublime sledding we rehearsed, and one week later performed the plays at the West Bank Downstairs Theatre.

These were the duos: Freddy Matos and Anthony Maldonado were defective toys who find out the value of being unique; Elisa Mohamed and Desmond Robertson played a sculptor and a gardener who discover that being a "Thumbbody" is better than being phony; Cordell Horsford was a Bingo-playing homebody whose evening gets unwieldy when an escaped convict, Joseph Mohamed, hides out in his home; Amy Barbosa and Mary Vamvoukakis were singing Jell-O's (now don't you wish you saw that!); Luis Santoni and Fernando Ramirez played clouds with a conscience, and Alex Metzler accompanied Evelyn Maldonado on the piano (a Project first). All that and free Birch Beer floats provided by Boylan's and D'Agostino. Plus, Steve Olsen and Hank Meiman of the West Bank Cafe were once again very generous with space and food, donating supper to the performers both nights.

A GALA AND A GAME SHOW

The 52nd Street Project is celebrating its 15th anniversary and part of the festivities is the Project's 4th annual gala. Mark your calendars with a big X or O on Monday, May 6th, when we'll present a sit-down dinner and "Celebrity Squares," a half-hour of entertainment in the style of a popular TV game show featuring Project kids and well-known celebrities.



Whatta catch! Evelyn Maldonado and Alex Metzler discover the magic of fish in Eduardo Machado's Fish Stories.

photo: Wendy Stenberg

BLUNDERPANTS and other made-up things

Yes, you always wanted a word for when you put your underwear on backwards, and thanks to Steve Callahan and Christine Dunn, you can now add "blunderpants" to your vocabulary. That's right, Steve and Chrissy were the grand prize winners in The 52nd Street Project's "Make Up A Word Contest," our 1995 annual appeal. They won a dinner for two at the restaurant, Rain, thanks to its owner Steve Scher. Also thanks to the always generous John Paris for his donation of Flyer Bars to the Runners-Up. Speaking of whom, here they are:

Kid Word Winner

From 9 year-old Allison W. Pappas, in Austin, TX

Seeline: To unfortunately see a line that is holding someone in the air while flying such as in "Peter Pan" or something else made up.

Theater Word Winner

From Mary C. White in Callicoon, NY

Dramaturgick: Impressed with one's own ability to make up a theater word.

Philanthropic Word Winner

From Karin and Tom Schall in NYC

Newtopian Society: An ideal world in which the rich get richer and everyone else shuts up and goes away.

Freestyle Word Winner

From Karen Trott and Peter Herdrich in NYC

Subplotz: What happens when you drop your Blimpie.

Honorable Mentions

A la commode: The act of eating ice cream on the toilet (Cecilia Arana)

Cargoyle: A Medieval hood ornament (Mary Ann Code)

Ingratiate: An old lady at supper (Max "old enough to ignore the rules" Wilk)

Nirvagna: The supreme thrill you experience when you drop by a friend's house unexpectedly to quickly return a book you borrowed and they say, "Perfect timing -- I just took a homemade lasagna out of the oven and it's huge -- please say you'll help me eat it!" (Amanda Jacobs)

Parents of Newborns Honorable Mentions

Darkages: When parents of young children go for extended periods of time without sleep (Susan Bruce & Peter Hedges)

Grabitation: The natural force of a baby's hand towards your eyes, nostrils, or hair (Becky Browder & Ted Neustadt)

Nocturnoff: Involuntary birth control practiced by new parents with infants who do not sleep at night (and who apparently do not want siblings) (Judy Tygard & Mitch Weitzner)

And finally, the **Don't Mention It** award to Emma & Steve Hamilton

Kidipulation: A desperate and transparent attempt by a played-out staff of a popular children's theater group to solicit fundraising rhetoric from an unsuspecting public.

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Flyer CANDY BAR PROFILE NEIL A. MAZZELLA



Occupation:
Designated Pillar
of Strength and
President of
Hudson Scenic
Studio, official
builder of all
Project scenery
(for free!).

**Favorite thing
about the
Project:** The
Colorforms set.

"What those kids can do on it is so simple and so good it inspires me."

Most recent accomplishment: "I moved my mother to San Diego after 37 years in the same house. That's actually a miracle not an accomplishment."

Credo: "I'm a party lookin' for a place to happen."

Advice to the kids: "When I was a kid on Staten Island hanging out in front of the candy store somebody asked Jimmy Sullivan, 'You goin' out tonight?' Jimmy said, 'I'm out. You can't go where you are.' So I would say to the kids: Once you find what out there is, stay out there. You might meet Willie Reale out there. The down side is that Lewis Black is out there too."

On the Flyer Bars: "It's a great candy bar. I condone them, I support them, even though my wife has sung in Hershey, Pennsylvania."

FUNDING UPDATE

The following foundations and corporations recently made generous grants to The 52nd Street Project:

Ann M. Martin Foundation (for Playmaking)	\$10,000
The Morgan Stanley Foundation	\$5,000
The Jules and Doris Stein Foundation	\$10,000

We are grateful to these companies for their invaluable support, as well as to the many individual who continue to sustain the Project's programs.

STEM THE DISK-ZASTER

Some of you may have heard that our pals at the Ensemble Studio Theatre on West 52nd Street had a break-in, and those clever crooks managed to steal not only all their computers but also the only disk with a back-up of their mailing list (the non-profit's lifeline). Please fill out this coupon and send it to them at the below address if you would like to be on their mailing list (again) and hear about all the excellent stuff they do over there. Thanks.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone (optional): _____

ENSEMBLE STUDIO THEATRE
549 WEST 52ND STREET
NEW YORK, NY 10019

