

# PROJECT UPDATE



VOLUME 28 JULY, 1998

## GOING NOWHERE FAST

As of January 1, 1999, after 17½ years at the Project, the founder and Artistic Director is stepping down. Some say it's because he can't get around on the fastball in wiffleball games. Some say that after rhyming "succulent" and "truculent" at the *Wild West Benefit* he is convinced that he's used all the available rhymes in the space-time continuum and must now find a new form. Some say he only ever did it so he could find himself a wife and now that's done. But the real reason is that he's tired of writing thank-you notes. He walks down the street in a paranoid state wondering if the strangers passing by have in some way helped the 52nd Street Project and he has neglected to express his gratitude. He feels irrepressible anxiety for his inability to pay his mounting debts of gratitude and it's compounded by the guilt he naturally feels for being a lucky stiff in his personal life.

Where is he going? Well, nowhere really. He has no job or prospects but he does have certain aspirations in the sure-fire theater business. If you need to get a hold of him after the end of the year, he'll likely be found at the Clubhouse giving unsolicited advice to his yet-to-be-named successor and straightening the pictures on the wall that he's in. WR

## KIDS, READ THIS:

Dear "The Kids,"

Well, if you read the first article you know that I'm giving up my job at the Project. It makes me sad to think that I will be seeing less of you than usual and I hope you feel the same way. Not that I want to see you sad, it's just that over the course of time you have meant a great deal to me and if I meant something to you then you ought to feel sad too. That's the way it works.

When we talk to other adults about the Project, we say that we try to affect you guys in a way that will shape you into people who will make positive choices and lead happier lives. Well, that cuts both ways. Over the last 17½ years I have been shaped by you and as a result I have led a happier life. I'm not saying that my life has been perfect or that I'm walking around 24-7 with a big dopey grin on my face. But I can say unequivocally (look it up) that each of you has a brick or two in the building that is me. I am far happier



than I would have been had I never met you, had I never stumbled into your lives with an idea, a recipe for how we all might find a common purpose, create a common memory and most importantly, get laughs.

Now please realize that I will be around the clubhouse plenty, that I'll still write songs and direct stuff, and that the reason I'm leaving has mainly to do with the fact that I need to give myself some new challenges in my career. And also please realize that I expect you to listen to the new person, whoever he or she is, and make him or her feel welcome. And also please realize that I can still give minutes. And also please realize that I am crazy about you all and therefore will never really leave.

Your old friend, Willie

## SALLY SALLYS FORTH, SHEEHY BECOMES THIRD

Still reeling from that last one? Well, there's more. As some of you know, Sally Bock, our Director of Development who replaced the thought-to-be-irreplaceable Jenny Gersten (who remains loyal to the artistic director) with such aplomb has up and left us. Her reason: love. Yes, it seems that when Your Boyfriend The Doctor lives 3000 miles away you get to missin' the huggin' and the kissin' (there's a Country song in there). Let it be known that in both her years as our principal fundraiser she raised the budget with a little cushion, made a lot of brownies and got everybody to fall in love with her enough so that hers were not the only tears a-drippin' at her farewell.

The other good news (in addition to Sally gettin' some huggin' and kissin'), is that John Sheehy is the irreplaceable Sally's replacement (see p. 3). He becomes the third Director of Development and Marketing in the history of the Project universe. The jury is still out on John but he's a real wisenheimer, which is a good sign. Bye, Sal. WR



## A NEW DEVELOPMENT (DIRECTOR)



Our new fundraiser at work

Hello. I'm John Sheehy. I just want to introduce myself and say how thrilled I am to be joining the staff of the Project. I come here from Lincoln Center Theater, the old stomping grounds of Executive Director Carol Ochs (we still don't know why she stomps so much).

I have been in New York, and at Lincoln Center (which is located near the subway), for almost four years. I have been in Development for eight, previously working at the Long Wharf Theater in New Haven, CT (which is located next to a meat-packing plant). The Project is by far the best-smelling place I've worked at to date. JS

## THOSE WERE THE DAYS, MY FRIEND...



Remember *The Good Old Days*? March 20th - 22nd at the Signature Theatre Company. That's when nine graduates of the Playmaking class showed off playwriting skills honed in a strenuous two months of class that ended with a playwriting retreat to the home of Stephen, Cathy, and Juliet Graham where we wrote, wrote, ate cake and wrote a little more. All of the plays were based on the Nostalgia theme. While

some may argue that our playwrights haven't seen enough spins of the firmament to experience nostalgia, we here at the Project say "Au contraire!" We also say "more cake please" but that's irrelevant.

Those of you lucky enough to see the final production were treated to Julie Dretzin's rendition of "Groovy Flowers" in *Mom and I* which also starred Robert Jimenez and was penned by Heavyn-Leigh American. Marlene Moran taught us that *Nobody's Better or Worse* in a play featuring the talents of Karen Kandel and Lenore Pemberton. Jason and Randy Sklar forced the audience to do a double-take in the tortured story of two competitive brothers in *The Man Who Killed a Baby* by Justin Aponte. Few of us will forget Dino Dog and Bobo Kitty's game of Hot Potato in *The Birthday Party* by Peter Granados which starred Peter Jay Fernandez and Kimberly Kelly Wilson. Jennifer Jimenez showed us all what it means to feel *Regret!* in the heart-wrenching drama, starring Martha Plimpton and Michael Potts, of a girl who leaves home without having said goodbye to her dad. In *The Golden Days* by Jonathan Villanueva, Tom Schall and Buzz Bovshow were the heads of rival gangs in Depression-era Chicago. Cecilia Arana and Alison Eikerenkoetter showed us that *The Way I Dress* is not important when judging one's character, written by Anissa Albarron. Michael Feliciano gave us a tale of kennels, basketball and friendship in *The Monkey and the Pitbull* starring Alison Tatlock and Michael Rogers. Finally, *A Play of Two Souls* by Johnathan Roldan gave us a glimpse of the afterlife thanks to the heavenly tal-

ents of Ken Cheeseman and Adrienne Shelly. By the end of the run we were all feeling nostalgic... for cake!

But we mustn't forget our dramaturgs and directors: Denise Burse, Peter Jay Fernandez, Stephen Haff, Darrell Larson, Kay Matschullat, Robin Morse, Larry Nathanson, and Wendy vanden Heuvel all did a great job. MB

## RE: THE REPLAY PICNIC

Who among us does not love a picnic? All right, everyone aside from that guy keep reading. Once again the Project took the graduates from the last two Playmaking classes and introduced them to some advanced playwriting techniques, like spelling. The kids and some hearty volunteers all headed up to the home of Wendy Ettinger and Derek, Cooper, and Hudson McLane for our annual picnic of staged readings and barbecue. The Playwrights were Lorraine Calderon, Chanel Christiansen, Joel Lind, Zaida Natera, Isaac Trujillo, Yazy Troche, Steven Vasquez, Mona Lisa Barthelemy, Mayleen Cancél, Vionel Ortiz, Isha Rodriguez, Jaya Rosado, Jayme Rosado, Samantha Soto, and Anton Spivack. After the plays were read we headed off to the barbie where Willie practiced a possible new career - grill chef. We ate, did NOT wait 20 minutes, and then jumped into the pool for a rollicking game of Keep Away. Many thanks to our hosts and all the great volunteers who made this a really fun day. MB



Clockwise from top left: Mayleen, Samantha, Vionel, Jaya, and Isha.

## WEST FEST BLESSED BY BEST



WENDY STUHLBERG

Regular readers of PU know that this was the season of many benefits at the Project. Well, our final and favorite one of the year (just 'cause we did it all by ourselves) took place at the Puck Building on Lafayette St. on May 4. It was known as *The Wild, Wild West (of 10th Avenue) Bar-Bee-Cue Benefit* and, as you might imagine, it involved cowboys, six-guns and a fair amount of rootin' and a little bit of tootin'.

First off, a sumptuous, all-American barbecue was served up by Washington Street Caterers as little plastic cowboys and wagons roamed the red-and-white checked prairies of the tables. Then, our 550 guests (a new Project record) were treated to a horse opera specially scripted by Willie, Michael Bernard, and Lew Black. Judy Kuhn was the songbird of the saloon and Maria Tucci was an Italian mama with a penchant for naming her children Luigi. Roma Maffia and Lili Taylor were the villainous "Janes gang." Victor Garber was a sheriff with a 50-gallon hat and precious little to fill it with, and Robert Sean Leonard was his city-slicker deputy. The multiple Luigis were portrayed by Project kids Mayleen Cancél, Aisha Jabour, Christina Ramirez, Jaysunn Rosado,

and Peter Ventura. Predictably enough, Noel Polanco saved the day as "Herschel." Lew Black was mercifully killed off during the first five minutes of the show.

WENDY STUHLBERG



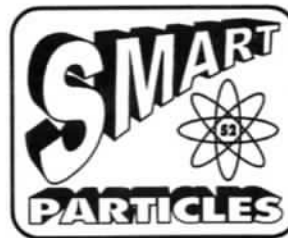
Maria Tucci with a few of the Luigis.

having required over 250 sq. ft. of that miraculous material.

A major highlight of the evening was the square dancing that followed the performance. This reporter was amazed by the ferocity with which many staid individuals swung their partners. (That cowpoke doing the Virginia Reel at breakneck speed on page 3 is none other than Mike Sell).

Willie thinks next year's benefit should revolve around a "pirate" theme. Hmm. Perhaps it is time for our doddering figurehead to move on. GB

Henry Krieger composed, Mark Linn-Baker directed, Greg MacPherson did the lights, and Tom Morse and company made certain everyone was audible. The show also holds the new record for foamcore construction,



Brought to you by  
Boylan's beverages!

Just when we thought we'd have to force-feed our kids some history lessons, along came the generous producers of 1776 and *The Diary of Anne Frank* with some free tickets to those fine shows. (Thanks Elizabeth Williams, Dodgers' Productions, the 1776 company, Amy Nederlander, David Stone, Jeff Klein, and

Jenny Wiener). As an extra treat, Smart Partner™ John Bedford Lloyd got kids invited backstage at 1776 to see the Founding Fathers without their wigs (or their Whigs).

In a follow-up to *Anne Frank*, museum educator and SP Jilian Gersten gave kids a VIP tour of *The Museum of Jewish Heritage, A Living Monument to the Holocaust*. All in all, twenty SP duos had a Night On the Town™ and an opportunity to clear up confusion about some important historical matters. Now we just need a Broadway show about times-tables and fractions.

Despite all the fun and Boylan's soda, rumor has it that with end-of-the-year report cards looming ahead, some Smart Kids have given a new name to their tutoring sessions. Jaya Rosado, newly teamed up with Willie Reale, was heard telling Mayleen Cancél that she had to report for...*Lock Down!* SP Katherine Brophy and Noel Polanco understood this concept only too well when they got up to leave the Clubhouse a few weeks ago and found they had tripped off the alarm system! Julie and George, thrown by their quiet scholarship, had assumed the Project was empty and shut the place down for the night! Maybe it's a good thing summer break's coming up...

On the creative side, here are two journal entries that Luis Anthony Maldonado wrote on a particularly hot and languid afternoon with his Smart Partner Gus Rogerson.

PART I: I was thinking what to write for a story. I thought of a brick wall and started to write about it. It was big and red, with black bricks and yellow bricks. The brick wall had a word on it. The word was "think" in big letters. As I wrote and while I was writing, Gus just went to sleep on the desk. When Gus got up, he read my story and laughed.

PART II: One day I went to the 52nd St. Project and I brought some ice cream for Julie, George, Gus and myself. Gus said, "I don't eat sugar," so we left his ice cream in the fridge. Gus and I talked and started to spell words like "ostentatious" and "rougher." Gus had to go to the B.R. (BATHROOM), so I got an apple and waited. We came back to the room that we were working in and it was writing time so I wrote. When I finished writing Gus said, "Can I read it or will you read it to me?" I said, "I'll read it to you." When I read it to Gus I said, "One day I went to the 52nd St. Project and I..." etc. JF



Smart Partners Robin Morse and Hakim Latimore (by Hakim)

## IN MEMORIAM



The Project mourns the passing of our close friend Laurie Beechman, the beautiful Broadway star and wife of our close friend Neil Mazzella. Laurie battled cancer for nine years with a strength and a dignity to humble any hero. Our sources tell us that the oft-mentioned and critically acclaimed choir of angels has signed to do background vocals for this new angel. She plays 8 shows a week full-out and never misses. It's a tough ticket, but not to worry. The Project family has guaranteed access to house seats in the afterlife. WR



The following foundations and corporations recently made generous grants to the Project. We are grateful to them for their support as well as to the many individuals who help sustain the Project's programs year-round.

AMC .....	\$ 2,000
Bertelsmann's World of Expression Fdn. ....	5,000
Brillstein-Grey .....	5,500
Creative Artists Agency .....	5,000
Crown Equipment .....	1,000
Con Edison .....	1,000
GLAD Foundation .....	1,000
Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation .....	30,000
In Style .....	5,000
Loeb & Loeb .....	1,000
William Morris Agency .....	1,750
The New York Times Foundation .....	7,500
Polygram .....	3,325
Sauce Entertainment .....	2,500
John A. Vassilaros & Sons .....	2,500
Westbank Café .....	1,000
Wind Dancer .....	5,000
Yorke Construction .....	2,500



GHB



Justin Aponte  
grapples with  
gravity on a  
regular basis.

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PROJECT  
P.U.  
UPDATE



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KARIN SCHALL

**Occupation:** Manager of Special Events and Corporate Relations at Lincoln Center Theater and official holder of Carol's hand during our annual benefit.

**Hobbies:** Cooking, running (NYC marathon woman), and watching TV — oops, reading.

**Most Recent Accomplishment:** Originated the role of Faith in Mona Lisa Barthelemy's *My Best Friend* at the Replay picnic. "That's the only acting I do all year except for corporate events."

**Credo:** "It's a party, stupid."

**Last Book Read:** *Appetite For Life* (Julia Child's Biography)

**Advice to the Kids:** "It's easier to be nice to people than to be mean to people."

**On Flyer Bars:** "Go for the nuts."



Don't wait for a Project show to get a Flyer Bar! We always run out, anyway. Call 1-800-CANDYBAR.

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**Knot notes:** Robin Morse and Gus Rogerson demonstrated the reason they were selected to be Smart Partners by tying the knot on the second of May. Presiding over the ceremony was the Project's own Larry (Snake Eyes McQuade) Nathanson. Highlighting the reception was a little ditty sung by William Brown, Hakim Latimore, Luis Anthony Maldonado and Thomas Santoni with Paul McCrane on guitar. Project pals Max Mayer and Catherine Corpeny were eternally united atop the World Trade Center. To get things off on the right Karmic footing they directed the guests to support the homeless in lieu of gifts. Their gesture generated enough good will to light both towers. Judy Goldman and Michael Pillinger also picked up their knot-tying merit badge by tying a tight one themselves.

**Board Silly:** Wendy vanden Heuvel has joined the Board of Directors. Wendy, a longtime Project volunteer, has joined the elite in the smoky back room at the Clubhouse. Also added to the roster is longtime kid and frequent volunteer Jose Soto, Jr. Jose is the first to serve in the newly designated and highly prestigious "Alumni Seat" on the board.

**Baby boomlet:** Board babies just keep a comin'. The latest, Joseph Wolf Chanoff (aka "Wolfie") arrived on May 17th. One PU reporter predicts that he will bunk with Wolfie at future MacArthur Fellow reunions.

**Help wanted?** They're not going to France until next year, so our teen group is spending the summer sampling cheeses and memorizing verb conjugations. This leaves them with a little spare time to pick up some spending money with which to acquire Provencale fabrics. Need some help at your business? Call the Clubhouse. WR