

PROJECT UPDATE



Inside: "Other Goose"
Contest Winners

VOLUME 30

MARCH, 1999

Meet The New Boss

This issue of Project Update kicks off with a hearty "Hello" to **Gus Rogerson**, the new Artistic Director of The 52nd Street Project.

Born in Boston, Massachusetts on November 14, 1961, Gus joins an ever-growing contingent of Project Bay Staters. The combined nasal twang of Gus, **Michael Bernard**, and **John Sheehy** imitating their relatives creates a sonic frequency that drives other staff members to rake their fingernails on the classroom blackboard to drown out the sound.

The new A.D. spent his youth on the grounds of Groton, an idyllic boarding school in the suburbs of Boston. Yes, Gus was a "cool" kid. As the son of two teachers, Gus enjoyed all the privileges of being a "Fac Brat." (We wonder if using your own keys kinda takes the fun out of breaking into the gym.)

Gus avoided theater during his high school years (he thought it was for sissies) and concentrated on soccer, ice hockey, and lacrosse. It was while he was a student at Dartmouth (when he realized that he *was* a sissy) that he began appearing in school plays. Gus confessed to P.U. that he eventually majored in drama because he was "too lazy to do anything else."

After graduation, Gus made a nine-month foray to New York but fled back to the safety of Massachusetts to work with Shakespeare and Company, a theater group in the Berkshires. Gus became a company member and stayed on for three years, playing such roles as Touchstone in *As You Like It*, Cassio in *Othello*, and Flute in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

In 1987, Gus finally made the big move to New York (his first apartment was in Hell's Kitchen). His big acting break came in 1990 with *Six Degrees of Separation* at Lincoln Center Theater. Gus played Woody, an angry rich kid. "I wore all my old clothes from prep school," he told P.U. The show was a milestone in other ways. During the run, he fell in love with fellow cast member **Robin Morse**, the woman he would marry in 1998 (she's a nifty Proj Vol herself). *Six Degrees* also introduced Gus to **Jenny Gersten**, whose dad is the boss at Lincoln Center. It wasn't long before Gus became a Project stage-door johnny.

Gus's first gig as a volunteer actor with us was in young **Erse Britto's** *People Can Change*. "I was terrified the whole time. I admired the Project and wanted to do well. It was also the first time I sang on stage." Despite his initial trauma, Gus went on to play such illustrious Project roles as a grumpy farmer, a dim-witted corpse, a talking hockey stick, and a sociopathic woodpecker. "I wore all my old farmer, corpse, hockey stick, and woodpecker outfits from prep school," he told P.U. again.

We probably ought to mention that Gus has worked at some other theaters during the 90's. Among his roles: a white supremacist terrorist in **David Henry Hwang's** *Face Value* ("I was actually booed"), a concentration camp inmate in **Tim Blake Nelson's** *The Grey Zone*, and **Matt Dillon's** love interest in the feature film *In and Out*. He also began directing plays, most notably the American premiere of **David Harrower's** *Knives In Hens* at HB Playwright's Foundation.

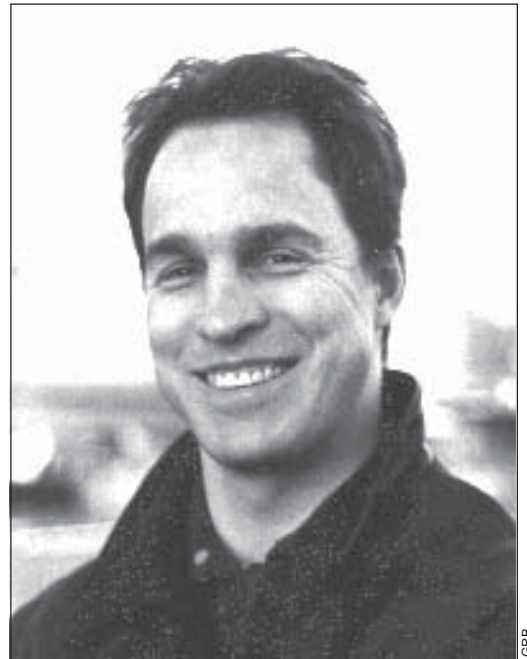
Gus and Project kid **Luis Anthony Maldonado** were one of the 10 original Smart Partner pairs that were chosen to be in the pilot program. Three years later, they're still together.

Gus is taking some time to settle into his new position. For a while, he says, his main agenda is to "stay the course" that his sole predecessor established over 18 years "and enhance and refine the newer education and teen programs." Bold creative strokes are on the way, however. "Eventually, we'll have live animals onstage during all Project shows. Especially the big cats."

GB



Gus as the Woodpecker

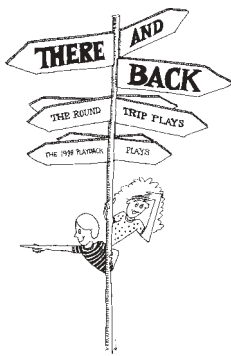


GRB

FLASH! Augustus Gersten Reale, 7 lbs., 5 oz. was born on Feb. 13 to Willie Reale and Jenny Gersten. See Megabits (p. 6) for details.

We Made It (Play) Back In One Piece

ART BY KAREN GUSDORF



Of all our programs, **Playback** is the one that brings every talent to the fore. First, seven of our older kids go away for a Columbus Day weekend writer's retreat at the home of **Peter and Helen Randolph** in Buzzard's Bay, Mass. A week later, their adult partners turn in an "answer play." Then, the kids and adults rehearse and perform both sets of plays. When the grueling process is done, all involved are certified

as genuine Renaissance men, women, boys, and girls. *There and Back: The Round-Trip Plays*, a splendid example of the Playback form, was presented at the **Ensemble Studio Theatre** on the weekend of Nov. 7th and 8th.

First up was **Ahmed Attia**, 14, who set his play *The Great Mess-Up* on the little-known planet Brinky and played Mumbo, a disgruntled alien who steals an artifact called "The Great CD" to ensure the misery of his fellow Brinkians (or is it "Brinkoids?"). **Keith Reddin** played his shrink and wrote the zany follow-up, *The Great Fix-up*. **George Babiak** was typecast as a silver-clad entity known as The Great Master.

In *Pee-wee's Imaginary Revenge*, **Judy Agosto**, 14, and **Alison Tatlock** were a pair of friends bedeviled by an invisible playmate, who happened to be none other than fallen kid's show host **Peewee Herman** (the chameleonic voice of **Jeremy Seymour**). **Susan Kim** scripted *P.I.R. II*, which brought Judy, Alison, and the annoying Peewee into a combative adulthood.

Joseph Mohamed's *The Case of The Mad Scientist* was a classic spy yarn that pitted 14-year old Joseph against evil scientist **Dion Graham**. This show and **Danny Johnson's** action-packed sequel, *The Baker*, made our foam-core prop artists feel like agent Q (the technical wizard who supplies James Bond with all his weaponry. Duh!).

Sahara Walsh, 14, wrote *Vice-Versa*, in which she and **Julie Dretzin** played an actress and an artist whose fortunes are reversed. Willie Reale's *From Here to Eternity...and Back* fast-forwarded the pair to their hospital deathbeds 50 years

or so later. They died, but with an upbeat and clever ditty on their lips.

Jewel's Case featured **Luis Maldonado**, 13, as the best amateur singing detective that ever was and **Melissa Murray** as his beautiful client. **John Sheehy** followed up with *The Button Case*, which gave cameo hog George Babiak another chance to steal some stage time as Melissa's pretentious dad. The stunning **Faux McCorr** played the mom with sophisticated restraint.



WAITING

Ben's Bovine Blues: The Lonely Cow

Mary Vamvoukakis, 13, brought the evening a sorely needed dash of teen heartbreak with *Best Friends*, in which **Matt Saldivar** portrayed a breathtakingly oblivious boy adored by a love-sick Roseanna (Mary). Intern **Eva Minemar** was the "other woman." **Adriana Trigiani** completed the saga and the tiresomely ubiquitous George B. was the dramaturg and director.

The Playback program reached its pinnacle with 15-year old **Ben Barthelemy's** surrealistic family drama *The Lonely Cow*. **Jose Soto** was a man who refused to stand up, **Camilia Sanes** his aggrieved wife, and as for Ben, well, he was the cow...a cow that could play an electric guitar. A *real* one. "Better 'n Beckett," said one audience member. "Eerier 'n Ionesco," said the same guy. **Alexandra Gersten** delivered an equally spooky answer play, and **Stephen Haff** made sure it all came together beautifully.

The *There and Back* company thanks **Christopher Randolph**, who cooked all the wonderful meals, **Kim Sherman**, our talented composer, and our special guest dramaturg **Kate Coleman**, who is at this moment developing a Project replication in London, England! More news about that at a later date. *GB*

"Accidental Plays" A Smash Hit



ART BY LUCAS FLEISCHER

Oooops! That's what we all said. Not because somebody messed up but because that was the theme of the Fall Playmaking series *The Accidental Plays* which were performed in December at The Ensemble Studio Theatre. While some mistakes were made, it was no mistake that the show was such a hit.

In *Friendship* by **Robert Tomas** we saw **Angel David** and **Michael Potts** get along despite very differing tastes in movies. **Annie O'Sullivan** was the Lon Chaney of the Project as she mastered dual roles and tortured the sensitive and misunderstood Trey Wilson in *Who's Sorry Now?* by **Destiny Rivera**.

Mina Murray's Problem by **Anju Andre-Bergman** detailed the painful experience **Ceci Arana** had getting along with her mother, stridently portrayed by the beautiful **Emily Wachtel**, and convincing her grandfather, **Tom Carrozza**, that he was not REALLY Dracula. Many rats, **Jason Sklar**, and **Kaleda Davis** were the key players in the story of a beleaguered and lonely kidnapper in the aptly titled *The Kidnapper* by **Joanna Santana**.

Jaymaree Rosado taught us all the important lesson that *You Get a Lot When You Play Lotto* which featured **Jeanne Simpson** and **Keira Naughton** as long-lost sisters and **Judy Kuhn** as the mother who serenaded their bittersweet reunion. **Bryan Soccaras** illuminated an all-too-common familial situation in *Brother Against Sister* where **Alex Draper** and **Lori Tan Chinn** fought it out, made up and fought some more.

If it Wasn't for Coffee... is a sentence that could end so many ways, but as told by **Shevonne Hernandez** it ended in true love for **Zabryna Guevara** and **L.B. Williams**.



WANG

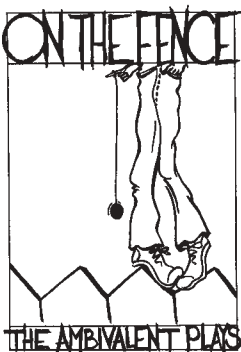
Judy Kuhn and Jeanne Simpson

vanden Heuvel, Ed Vassallo, and Tim Nelson.

A big thank-you to the folks who hosted us during the kid-writer's retreat in Connecticut: **Stephen, Cathy, and Juliet Graham, Sam and Lynn Waterston, the Fontanas, and Wendy vanden Heuvel.** And still more thanks to our chef **Charlotte Armstrong** and **Rusty Magee**, our great composer.

As if all this weren't enough, we're getting ready to present *Go Figure: The Inventive Plays*, a whole new rack of plays written by kids coming up March 26th, 27th, and 28th. Check the flyer in this newsletter for more details. MB

Don't Fence Me In...On Second Thought, a Nice Fence Might Make The Place Cozier



ART BY ESTHER GELLER

I suppose if you are neither here nor there about reading this right now it would mean that you are in the perfect frame of mind to discuss our recent 2-on-2 show. *On the Fence - The Ambivalent Plays* was performed in January at the **Interart Annex** right across the hall from our vaunted Clubhouse (we have it vaunted three times a week).

If you didn't feel like going out the night you had reservations then you missed **Jaysunn Rosado** and **Kevin Hartwick** as the Bad Job Placement Officer and the Boy with the Candy Beard, both new series on *The Kids Network*, written by the very twisted **Tim Meadows** and directed by **Eris Migliorini**. I believe that will be the only time in theater history two people sing the joys of having armpit hair and a beard made of sugar.

Lovely **Leslie Lyles** penned an intriguing opus on identity entitled *Azy and Bzy*, which featured **Edith Berkonti** and **Natalie Musteata** as separated twins who maintain a mysterious connection. This piece was directed by **Denise Burse** and featured the shameless **John Sheehy** as Helen Wiseapple, a social worker who was clearly raised in the Boston area.

Gloria Trejo played a therapist AND a mime who cures **Alex Cooper** of being an angry clown in the taut psychological thriller *Not Just Clowning Around*, written by **Mo Rocca** and directed by **Ashby Semple**.

Intermission followed and many in the audience enjoyed a tasty root beer float scooped up by "**Sting**" **Ray Ocasio**

Finally, we are still trying to figure out just what is on **Adrian Zambrano's** mind, but we do know *We Love This Pie* as do the many woodland creatures that were nobly played by **Paul Butler, Peter Jacobson, Gus Rogerson**, and George Babiak. A big shout-out to all the wonderful dramaturg/directors who guided our young writers through the play writing process: **Karen Kandel, Lizzie Gottlieb, Mitchell Lemsky, Wendy**

and "**Manta**" **Ray Harold** along with help from **Jenny Gersten, Julie Feldman, and Evan Bernard** Thanks to **Boylan's Bottling Company** for the root beer and **D'Agostinos** for the ice cream.

For the second act, **Neena Beber** penned the thoughtful and funny *Which and/or A Tale of Two Souls* which was directed by **Kate Ryan** and starred the dynamic duo of **Isha Rodriguez** and **Lorraine Lopez** as two artists in search of their own identity.

Lorraine Zambrano and **Michael Castro** were two teenagers who would take any step to get better grades in *A Little Help*, written by **Keith Glover** and directed by **Stephen Haff**. This play also featured cameos by the raucous stage crew of **Zsuzsa Mysak, Alex Metzler, Tessa Connor, and Thomas Santoni**.

Finally, **Peter Ventura** as an explorer and **Carl Moon** as the last remaining Yeti taught us that when life hands you "Yeti sweat" you gotta make "Yeti sweat pops" in *Ice Station Zelda* by **Michael Bernard** and directed by **Joe White**.

The shows were as good as they were because we were able to spend a weekend at the upstate N.Y. homes of **Maria Tucci, Terry Fitzpatrick** and **Stephen Perpeluk**, and **Wendy Ettinger** and **Derek McLane**. The excellent music of **Patrick Barnes** and the wonderful food prepared by **Karin Schall** and **Mary Pat Walsh** helped, too. MB

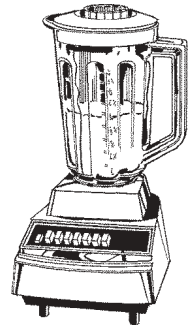
Hello, I ~~Really~~ Reale Must Be Going

It was very real, quite final and extremely special. It was, in other words, the **Reale Finale Speciale**, a *fiesta molta bella*, as friends and families of the Project gathered at Lincoln Center to say a fond fare-thee-well to our beloved Founder, **Willie Reale** and a fine how-do-you-do to the new guy, **Gus Rogerson**.

The centerpiece of the evening was a series of songs, speeches and testimonials hosted by the outwardly vicious and inwardly soft-hearted **Lew Black**, who masterfully presided over the singing of some old chestnuts and the saying of some new speeches, including some real nice short ones by the kids (and former kids) in honor of the guest of honor. When the revelers weren't laughing and crying and clapping they were eating hot dogs and cupcakes and hanging with their favorite people. Plans are already underway for our next farewell party, **The Big Fuss for Gus**, to be held sometime in the next millennium.

Extra speciale thanks for making the finale a reality go to **Neil Mazzella, Ron Kastner, André Bishop, Bernard Gersten, Iris A. Brown, and Francis Ford Coppola.** GR

CAN YOU DRAW THIS BLENDER?



If so, then why not join us for our next Prop Party on Saturday, Mar. 20? Call George for details at 333-5252.



Carol gets her goodbye smooch.

STEPHANIE BERGER

SMART PARTICLES

The "Smart Partner" Report
Brought to you by Boylan's beverages

In this issue we profile two dynamic duos: 7th grader **Yazzy Troche** and her dedicated partner **Jilian Gersten** and 10th grader **Ray Ocasio** and buddy **Stephen Haff**.

A curious sight seen last week through the Clubhouse conference room glass: Yazzy and Jilian with their arms undulating in the air. Two ballerinas sharing their love of dance? No, just a pair of serious biology students demonstrating the movement of "flagellates."

Yazzy asks, "Do you know, King Philip Came Over For Grape Soda?" This is not a clever request for an extra Boylan's but a demonstration of Jilian's mnemonic device for describing the seven taxonomic categories for classifying life (Anyone remember?



Smart Goddesses Jil and Yaz

Answers below*) In addition to their research in biology, Jilian and Yazzy have read several versions of Greek myths and write to each other weekly in a dialogue journal. There's plenty of girl talk and popcorn breaks and Yakity Yaz loves a good conversation. Today it's about her goal of keeping her mouth closed in class so she can stay on the honor roll!

What have these two learned about each other? About Yazzy: "She's really smart and makes very insightful comments." About Jilian: "I first thought she was shy, but I learned she's got a mouth on her too, but not in a bad way."



They call them "thinking caps." Ray and Steve studying in the storeroom.

Ray Ocasio and Stephen Haff first met three years ago when they teamed up for a Two-on-Two. "Since then, it's been a lifetime," says Haff. These two are proud of their Smart Partner innovations. They've created new words ("Schnoks!" for homework frustration) and invented an entirely new discipline — "Mathate" (rhymes with Karate) which combines mathematics with the ancient forms of meditation and martial arts.

Passersby can hear their soft chanting of "Mathate, Mathate, Mathate" as they focus their energies to solve equations.

Their love of language provides endless territory to explore. "Ray turns everything he reads into poetry, from street signs to cereal boxes. He's an inventive, funny and passionate writer." Steve and Ray have so much to learn together that they often hold a second meeting where they exchange Shakespeare readings for Spanish lessons. Ray's present word dilemma: "I used to call Stephen "Turkey Man," since he'd always be munching turkey at meetings. But lately he's been eating a lot of broccoli. Maybe "The Green Haff?" JF

*Kingdom, phylum, class, order, family, genus, species

Goodbye, Mr. Knightly

The Project mourns the passing of **Mr. Knightly**, the Project family dog and the best friend of the Pennsylvania Painters, **Mike and Eric**.

Nary a dog did roam so sprightly
None so proudly and politely.
Nor did black e'er shine so brightly,
As did with our dear Mr. Knightly

Now we mourn, we do so rightly.
We speak this farewell softly, tightly:
Nighty night dear Mr. Knightly.
Nighty night, dear Mr. Knightly.

—WR *Canis Fidelis*



So You Think You're Funny?

Stop us if you have heard this one before but ... Why did The 52nd Street Project supporter cross Houston Street? To get to **The Puck Building** where this year's benefit, **Everyone's A Comedian**, will be held on **Monday, May 3, 1999**.

Last year's benefit was such a routin' tootin' good time that we are going back to the spacious and inviting Puck Building. Only this time, instead of cowpokes and campfires, we are going to present a vaudeville of jokers and joy-buzzers. The laugh-riot starts with cocktails and dinner, capped off with a show revisiting the comedy of yesteryear, back when humor used to be funny, inspired by classic routines, newly imagined by the likes of **Willie Reale** (who just won't stay away), **Lewis Black** and the hilarious Project staff and directed by **Mark-Linn Baker**. The honorary co-chairmen of the evening will be **Stanley Tucci** and **Oliver Platt** – Stan and Ollie, get it? A side-splitting invitation will be headed your way this April. JS



JOHN SHEEHY'S



The following foundations, corporations, and government agencies 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.

FUNDING UPDATE

Blythmour Corporation	\$1,000
The Dammann Fund	\$5,000
Dramatists Guild	\$2,000
Dramatists Play Service	\$1,500
Jean & Luis Dreyfus Foundation	\$10,000
Educational Foundation of America	\$50,000
Gap, Inc.	\$15,000
Gilder Foundation	\$10,000
JKW Foundation	\$20,000
James A. Macdonald Foundation	\$700
Morgan Stanley Dean Witter Foundation	\$7,500
Newman's Own	\$5,000
Sherman Foundation	\$10,000
Surdna Foundation	\$35,000
Wiener Family Fund	\$15,000



"Other Goose's" Really Out-There Rhymes

Hello again. It's me, **Other Goose**. You may remember me as the host of this year's fundraising contest. And I have to say – I blame myself. Here I invited you all to go ahead and have your way with these classic, time-honored rhymes. And you did. Boy, did you ever! I haven't seen things this twisted since that crooked man walked a crooked mile. Of course in that instance, nobody raised over \$45,000 for the Project. (Mostly they just pointed and stared and said, "Wow, is that guy crooked or what?")

The contest judges were looking for humor, originality, and where appropriate, a healthy disregard for the rules of rhyming. While all entries showed some of these qualities the following are the runners-up in each category that came closest to putting it all together. They will each receive a Flyer bar gift box.

Little Jack Horner's \$25 Corner

Little Jack Horner
Sat in the Corner
Eating his Christmas Pie
When Chanukah came
He looked up in shame
And said, "What a bad Jew am I!"

— MacEllis Glass

Mary Lamb's \$50 Fleecing

Mary had a little lamb
Whose fleece was white as snow
And everywhere that Mary went –
Hey, wait a minute.
Why's the lamb always got to be white?
White this, white that, white, white, white.
Well we're not gonna take it anymore.
So Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?

— Robert Shaffron & John Steber

Old Mother Hubbard's \$100 Throw-Us-A-Bone

Old Mother Hubbard
Went to the cupboard
To get her poor dog a bone
In the meantime,
Her rich dog of a husband
Was off gallivanting
With some blonde French poodle
In the Caribbean.

— Jeff Stafford

Jack Sprat's "Other Amount"

Jack Sprat could eat no fat
His wife could eat no lean
He sat on his yoga mat
She, in her tureen

— Elizabeth and Alexander Bernstein

And the overall winners this year are that fabled pair of gastronomically-challenged rhyme-distorters **Becky Browder** and **Ted Neustadt** (shown at right). They will receive a gift certificate to **Books of Wonder** as well as ten tickets to whichever events they choose at **The New Victory**.



The Grand Prize-Winner

Old Mother Hubbard
Went to the cupboard
To get her poor dog a bone
But when she got there
She realized that neither of the Hubbards cooked
So she picked up the cell phone
And ordered the poochie
Crispy prawns with snow peas.

-- Becky Browder and Ted Neustadt

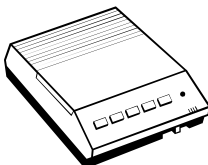
The following Project Pals get honorable mentions for their entries: **Kate Chaston** (prolific), **Steve Sabba** (prodigious) and **Susan McGinnis** (profane).

More Items From The Project's Wish List

If any of the following items are just taking up space in your house, you might consider donating them to the Project. Please, make sure they're fully functional (if "all it needs is a little repair," well, we must advise you to consider it broken).



Portable Tape Recorders
(so kids can rehearse songs)



Answering machines
(so kids can get messages at home)



One more decent VCR
(so we can dub tapes)



A Paper Cutter
(so we can cut paper)

Luis Anthony Maldonado as Moby Mike, Singing Detective



WAINO

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Crystal Thompson

Occupation: Costume Designer **Hobbies:** Shopping and sewing
Last book read: *Time and Again* by Jack Finney. "It's the best book. You should totally read it."
Most Recent Accomplishment: Costume design for TV movie entitled *World War Three* on the Discovery Channel. Watch for it in May.
Credo: "It's better to look good than to feel good." (Note: The hat in the picture weighs more than Crystal does.)
Advice to the Kids: "Enjoy your interests now because you won't have time later on."
Place of birth: Scottsdale, AZ
Favorite Project memory: "The play about the guy who was trying to collect all the cats in town." (Tim Meadows' *Dr. Jones and Mr. Henry*, with Andre Parks and Danny Noonan, done way back in the 1994 Two-on-Twos)
On Flyer Bars: "I've never tried one. I'll bet they're good."
Don't wait for a Project show to get a Flyer Bar! We always run out, anyway. Call 1-800-CANDYBAR.



Megabits

We're thrilled to have this scoop! Founder **Willie Reale** and ex-staffer Jenny Gersten gave birth to **Augustus Gersten Reale** on Feb. 13, 1999. Well, actually Jenny did all the work, but we're certain Willie smoked all the cigars. That's right folks, the new baby will be known as **Gus**. Apparently ALL of Willie's successors must have the same name. Anyway, baby Gus was born at 11:52 P.M! Fifty-Two, get it?



The fecundity of the Project does not stop there. Board member **Lisa Benavides** and Proj volunteer **Tim Nelson** announced the birth of **Henry Max Nelson** on Dec. 2. **Sophia MacVittie** has already been seen snooping around the cribs checking out the future dating possibilities.

More babies! Proj volunteer **Judy Goldman** & her husband **Michael Pillinger** announced the birth of **Kaley Gloria Pillinger** on Sept. 16th, 1998. **Katharine Peach Bishop-Manning** was born on April 14, 1998. Her parents, Project faithfuls **André Bishop** and **Peter Manning** are sure she will be a force to be reckoned with dating-wise. Watch out for these two, Sophia!



Lots of bended knees lately... Instant Set designer **Kevin Roach** and **Kate McCamy**, who have been together for quite a while, announced their forthcoming nuptials, as did Project shutterbug **Stephanie Berger** and **Paul King**. After a 10-year courtship, Stage Manager **Robin Gillette** and **Tim Mennel** surprised everyone they knew by sneaking out and tying the knot on Dec. 23, 1998.

Birthing and coupling aside, Megabits congratulates Goddess of Sound **Vanessa Valdes** on passing her acupuncture national board exams. Speaking of needling, **Michael Bernard** and Proj Vol **Adam Felber** (a.k.a. The Irwin Smalls Trio) will again host a weekly comedy show at Surf Reality, 172 Allen Street, every Friday night at 10 pm. CO & JS

