

# PROJECT UPDATE



VOLUME 31

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## Shakespeare Fixed!



GRB

On March 13 and 14 of this year (the Ides of March!), eight Project teens did what no other scholar, teacher or writer has been able to do for centuries; they improved **Shakespeare**. The Project's Teen Ensemble had spent a month before the show working on sonnets by the Bard and writing scenes to go with them. This came as quite a relief to those of us previously unable

to put a Shakespearean sonnet in context.

Each Project teen was challenged to write a scene in which a specific sonnet appeared. The new material was designed to illuminate what the teen felt the sonnet meant. Then they were all cast in each other's scenes and the whole extravaganza was performed at **INTAR's** fancy new theater 'round the corner on 53rd Street. Thank you, INTAR!

**Natasha Soto** played a woman who had had enough of her two-timing fiancé in *No Longer Your Servant*. **Jennifer Soccaras** delved into the difficulties of long-distance relationships in *Star Light, Star Bright*. **Zsuzsa Mysak** cast herself as the Reverend Jackie: pastor, advice-giver and New Age author in *To Marry or Not to Marry*. Just in case you didn't know, **Eddie Zambrano** reminded us that *Men Are Dogs, Women Are Dogs, Too*. **Annette Myrie** examined the trials and tribulations of falling in love with a close friend in *Sum it Up*. **Ray Harold** showed us just how bad things have to get before they start looking up in *The Good Day*. **Ray Ocasio** portrayed a man who makes the ultimate sacrifice in *The Things You Do For Love*. In **Jed Clarke's** *Jesus' Press Conference* the Son of God returns only to find the media is more concerned with his social calendar than his message of Armageddon. In the end, he is reduced to defending the attractiveness of his girlfriend.

In the tradition of all great Shakespearean productions, the evening ended with a party and some tasty buffalo wings. There is no word but "Thanks" for the work done by our dramaturg/directors: **Chris Ceraso, Camilia Sanes, Ashby Semple, Larry Nathanson, Patricia Dunnock, Mitchell Lemsky, and Jacquelyn Reingold.**

MB

## Figure Study

They say necessity is the mother of invention. Well, we had a theater, a set, a crew and ticketholders, and all we needed was a show. Really, we had no other choice than to take ten kids, throw them in a room and not let them out until they wrote

some plays. Actually, ten kids went through our two-month Playmaking class after which each kid was given a director and two actors. We took the kids and directors up to Tyler Hill, Pennsylvania to visit our friends **Eric Karpeles** and **Mike Sell**. While there, we wrote plays, bowled, and, most importantly, bothered cows in the field. We trudged back to NY and mounted the shows at the **Ensemble Studio Theater**.

The evening, entitled *Go Figure: The Inventive Plays*, was presented at E.S.T. as part of the **Alfred P. Sloan Foundation Science and Technology Project**. It kicked off with **Kathy Tavares's** play *Alien Search*, which offered hope to all those lonely women who are deciding whether or not to get involved with an alien. *The Giraffe and the Tree* by **Alejandra Rodriguez** was a searing look at what happens when a giraffe's pursuit becomes more important than the goal. **Matthew Gonzales's** *Lonely* told the story of a man who inherits his mother's farm and the choice we all have to make when it comes time to follow your dreams of being in the Air Force. Two tigers squared off but finally decided to put their feud aside (with help from the ghost of a dead friend) cause lovin' is better than fightin' in **Tiffany Butler's** *Mean Pack vs. Juronka*.

A pack of vengeful butterflies beat the daylights out of an unsuspecting student who learned that when you tell your friends to go away, they will, in *A Project for School* by **Jonathan Torres**. Have you ever wondered what goes on behind the scenes at a World Series? Well, **Steve Bula** answered that question for us in the aptly titled *World Series*. It turns out that what goes on is jealous pitchers disguise themselves as umpires to trip each other up. Who knew?!? **Nadya Jabour** gave us a window to heaven and the scientists and chronic eye-winkers who antagonize each other there in *Top Secret*. We all know about peer pressure; sometimes you buckle or, if you are the hero of *The New Girl* by **Felicita Jerez**, you get to break up the gang and get the bad girl kicked out of school. **Joshua Brown's** *The Portal* involved wacky dimension-hopping scientists and aliens that disdained knock-knock jokes. Finally, **Allary Seda** examined the trials of family communication that seem to always end with your mom getting reincarnated as a cow in *The Tragedy with the Girl and Her Mom*.

Huge thanks to all the amazing actors and directors who made the show so wonderful. Unfortunately, we couldn't invent enough space to list all their names!

MB

## GO FIGURE



ART BY MIKE SELL

## Take My Money, Please!

STEPHANIE BERGER



Time was you couldn't swing a cat without hitting a comedian. Swing a cat today and you'll be put away by the ASPCA. So, for this year's Project benefit, *Everyone's A Comedian*, held at the Puck Building on Monday, May 3, 1999, we returned to the good old days of comedy. We plumbed the depths of material from the golden days of vaudeville—because stealing other people's gags is far easier than coming up with original jokes.

Over 500 guests were transported, through the magic of theater (or at least through a corny conceit in the script by **Willie Reale, Michael Bernard, Lewis Black and Becky Browder**) to Jumbasa's-by-the-Lake, a once-plush Catskills resort, gone to seed. The resort's impresario, Morton Bezzler, hilariously played by **Oliver Platt**, gripes about the bygone days when Jumbasa's was the keen place. His assistant, Goldie, played by **Lorraine Zambrano**, hits upon the idea of finding a new act to pump up business.

Into Mr. Bezzler's office troops a parade of comic acts: **Vionel Ortiz and Fisher Stevens** played a very "Burns and Allen" pair; **Jayne Rosado** was a Groucho-like doctor to **Roma Maffia's** rather Margaret Dumont-ish patient; **Jaymaree Rosado** threw her Edgar Bergen-y voice into **Lewis Black's** Charlie McCarthy-esque dummy; and **Peter Granados** and **Mary Testa** played an old fashioned song and kazoo team who belted a rousing rendition of "We Carry a Torch for the Borscht Belt" (music by **Henry Krieger**, lyrics by **Mr. Reale**.) All of these acts were interrupted by the silent duo of **Jonathan Torres** (seen on p. 4) and **Adrian Zambrano** (seen in the photo above), a couple of clowns who think a quick game of bingo might save the day. Miss Catskills Bingo 1999 **Gina Torres**, made a special appearance to call the numbers. The guests all played with gusto, never suspecting the whole thing was rigged until everyone shouted "Bingo!" in unison.

All of this hilarity was directed by **Mark Linn-Baker**, on a humorous set designed by **Kevin Roach**, under **Greg MacPherson's** droll lighting, while **Tom Morse's** witty sound design made certain every word was heard. **Crystal Thompson** designed the (intentionally) funny-looking clothes.

The food was New York Deli style, served by the **Washington Street Caterers'** wait staff in Groucho glasses.

The evening ended with a conga line and cha-cha dance lessons in which the guests were invited to shake their "money-makers." Speaking of money-makers, the entire event was the most successful in Project history. Especially helpful in making it that way were **Arthur Dantchik, The Dawkins Family, Laura Valeroso, Joanne Woodward and Paul Newman and Jeffrey Yass.**

As the guests left, they were given gift bags filled by **Gap Inc., BMG Music, Coleman, Kiehl's Since 1851, Noggin, Paris Chocolate, Vassilaros Coffee, Entertainment Weekly, and Watkins Inc.** JS

### Teen Help Wanted

Ray Harold is going to college, so we need a new receptionist! If you are 14 or older, stop by and fill out an application. Kids under 16 will need working papers.

## The Dark Side Of The Project

Our Playmaking shows are extremely popular but the outside world knows little of Replay, the shadowy advanced classes in the arcane craft of kid playwriting. That's because the final mystical event, the Replay Picnic, is an annual cabal of kids and Project volunteers that takes place in a secret location a few minutes north of Poughkeepsie at the home of **Wendy Ettinger and Derek McLane** and their kids, **Cooper, Hudson, and Kathryn.** Oh, no! Gave it away!

Oh, well, now that the cat's out of the bag, we might as well tell you that master scribes **Anissa Albarron, Anju Andre-Bergmann, Justin Aponte, Michael Feliciano, Peter Granados, Jennifer Jimenez, Shevonne Hernandez, Jonathan Roldan, Jaymaree Rosado, Bryan Socarras, Robert Tomas, Jonathan Villanueva, and Adrian Zambrano** all were at the picnic and had their latest plays read by some 40-odd adult vols and pals. The weather was grand, as were the plays and the pot-luck lunch and barbecue that followed them. The day was capped by a rousing match of Beach Ball Volleyball, one of the easiest and finest sports ever devised by adults who work with kids. GB

## Kids Prowl Up And Down Broadway

Thanks to our neighbors, many Project kids have been attending various New York theaters this winter and spring. If there's a hot ticket, we've got the stub.

Highlights included a weekday trip to the **New 42nd Street** to get happy at *Ain't Nothin' But The Blues*, courtesy of **Cora Cahan** and the folks at the **New Victory Theater.** Several more brave and fortunate souls passed up the first morning of the Ninth Avenue Food Festival to catch an 11 a.m. (!!!?) matinee of *You're A Good Man Charlie Brown.* After the show, a guided backstage tour (thanks to Project volunteer

### JOHN SHEEHY'S



### FUNDING UPDATE

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.

Comedy Central .....	\$2,500
Cubic B's .....	1,000
BMG Entertainment .....	5,000
Department of Youth and Community Development .....	15,050
Ensemble Studio Theater .....	5,000
Entertainment Weekly .....	5,000
The Hennessy Foundation .....	5,000
GLADPZ Foundation .....	1,200
Heights Partners .....	1,000
The Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation .....	25,000
The William & Mary Greve Foundation .....	5,000
Lloyd's Bank .....	1,000
Loeb & Loeb .....	1,000
Ann M. Martin Foundation .....	12,500
MCJ Foundation .....	2,500
National Endowment for the Arts .....	24,389
The New World Foundation .....	5,000
Newman's Own .....	10,000
Nickelodeon .....	1,500
Staging & Design, Inc. ....	1,250
Harold & Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust .....	25,000
John A. Vassilaros & Sons, Inc. ....	2,500
The Wiener Foundation .....	5,000
Yorke Construction Corp. ....	2,500



**CAN YOU  
DRAW  
THIS CAN  
OF BEANS?**



Or just color it? Of course you can! Why not join us for our next Prop Party on Sunday, July 25? Call George for details at 333-5252.

**Jenny Peek** and her good friend, stage manager **Allison Sommers**), and autographs and handshakes from the whole cast, everybody had plenty of time to hit the avenue for sausage with peppers and onions. Happiness is free tickets from **Tammee Thompson** and the good folks at **Nina Lannan Associates**.

The Teen Class gave eight thumbs up to *The Weir* and **Manhattan Theater Club's** Family Matinee program, and vaulted to cineaste status with viewings of *Shakespeare In Love*, *A Midsummer Nights Dream* and a special workprint screening of Project vol **Tim Blake Nelson's** next feature, *O*. Thank you, **Rusty Magee**, for hooking us up to see Moonworks' production of *Midsummer* as well.

GR

## HIP HIP TWO RAYS

Here at the 52nd Street Project, we count ourselves lucky to have not one but two **Rays, Ocasio** and **Harold**. Give us a call in the p.m., and one of them will pick up the phone, since they happen to be our after-school receptionists. They're also speaking the speech trippingly in the Teen Class' upcoming production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which isn't surprising, since they've been Project theater gods since they wrote their first plays back in their salad days. These two fine fellows were honored by **Manhattan Community Board #4** at a special luncheon at Chelsea Market on May 16, where they received a pair of citations (plaques, not traffic tickets) from **Hizzoner** and our City Council Member **Christine Quinn**, commending them for their service to their community (that means



Ray Ocasio



Ray Harold

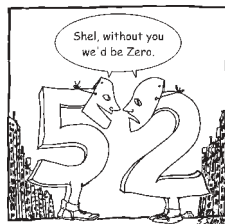
us). The complete text of the plaque follows: "These guys are great." Okay, so it's the condensed version. Hey, it's only a four-page newsletter.

GR

## In Memoriam

**Shel Silverstein** passed away last month. Although Shel was celebrated for his books, his poems, his songs, his drawings, and his plays, we at the Project will always remember him best as the creator of our logo. Goodbye, Shel. **Fivey** and **Twoey** will miss you.

GB



## Why a Paragraph on L. Trey Wilson?

Simply because he was the only person mentioned in our last issue who didn't have his name set in bold-faced type. Nor did he have his trusty "L" before his name. Our apologies to the bold-faced and L-worthy **L. Trey Wilson**.

GB

# SMART PARTICLES

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

Our brave S.P. adults recently unearthed their pre-teen photos for Fivey -- the 2nd annual edition of the Project's literary magazine. The photos were used to spark interviews about the joys and woes of childhood. Below, **Joseph Mohamed's** and **John Bedford Lloyd's** intimate portraits of each other.

**Joe:** My smart partner wouldn't mind being a fish. He told me that the place he feels most peaceful on, under, or near, is the water. In this picture he is canoeing in Wyoming when he was fourteen. He had a little more hair back then or maybe he was wearing a teenage toupee.



LLOYD FAMILY

J.B. Lloyd as a kid

When we first met he brought me chocolate chip cookies and orange juice. After that he brought me pretzels and orange juice. My smart partner would get impatient with me because I was sticking the pretzels to my forehead and I wasn't getting my homework done. He also bugs me about being late. If I am two minutes late he starts to go insane.

When I first met him he looked weird because he was tall and I was about 4 foot ten inches. For the last year and a half we were supposed to play a one-on-one but it hasn't happened yet, but by the end of this year we will go one-on-one. My smart partner is tall, but at 6 foot and five inches he still can't dunk the ball.



AMY RICE/JAYSUNN ROSADO

John and Joe (pre-growth spurt).

**John:** What do you say about a 14-year old who walks the sidewalks of Hell's Kitchen like a prince of all he surveys, weaving through the warm greetings, high fives, and kind words of everybody who passes by? Whose math teacher begins his academic conference with, "I wish this boy were my own son. He is such a sweetheart!" Who has

grown three and a half feet since I met him in the fall of 1997. Who, at the corner restaurant, sweetened his hot cocoa with four chocolate Easter eggs, and then convinced the waitress, me, and even the cook that mayo and ketchup mixed together makes French dressing. Who can jetski with the most extreme of the extremists and play hoop like a legend. Whose been an international secret agent fighting crime on stage and anywhere it may erupt. Who is an ace architect and builder of fabulous dream houses and is surely the architect of his own dreams. Says he: "I wish to do well in everything that I try." And who has been a treasure and a pleasure every single week. What do you say about someone like this? You say "This is the ultimate eighth grade Renaissance kid!"

Be sure to pick up your free copy of Fivey, which will be available at your local 52nd Street Project Clubhouse in mid-July. JF

**FLASH!** As we went to press, Joseph received the award for "greatest improvement in character and citizenship" at his Ochs Academy middle school graduation. Says John, "This is icing on the cake!"

Jonathan Torres demonstrates the restorative powers of Bingo at the annual benefit (see p. 2).



WENDY STUHLBARG

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# Katherine Lumb

- Occupation:** Production Manager for an environmentally focused paper and print company. In layman's terms: gettin' stuff printed and takin' it easy on the planet.
- Hobbies:** Letter-press printing, hand book binding and organizing decadent, hedonistic background slide-making parties with Project volunteers (Editor has no comment).
- Last book read ("that I liked"):** *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville.
- Most Recent Accomplishment:** Hiking in Peru from Cuzco to Macchu Picchu.
- Credo:** Kindness towards others begins with kindness towards oneself (see "Advice to Kids")
- Advice to the Kids:** Trite but true: Be good to yourself!
- Place of birth:** Poughkeepsie, NY
- Favorite Project memory:** "Oh, Jeez, they're all good... All the belly laughs."
- On Flyer Bars:** "Chewalicious—stick-to-your-teeth delectable!"



GRB

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

## Megabits



GRB

Frank & Joel Scrabbling away.

The Project would like to congratulate its pals **Frank Wood** and **Warren Leight** for winning Tony awards. We are very, very proud of them. It can be reported that the day after the big night, Frank Wood was spotted in the Project Lounge playing Scrabble with his Smart Partner **Joel Lind**. An unnamed witness swears he overheard Frank saying "You may have won the game, but I won the Tony."

Two new Project board babies have joined our ranks since we last reported to you. Megabits gives a hearty welcome to **Kathryn March McLane** born on May 10 and to **Thomas Welby Graham** born on June 4. The older Project babies have taken to tucking Filofaxes in their diapers to keep track of all their play-dates.

Congratulations also go to **Evan Handler** and **Liz Timperman** and to **Lili Taylor** and **Gerard Hurley** on their recent engagements. This reporter learned that Gerard, riding a horse named **Clark Gable**, rode into the woods carrying a dozen roses. Upon seeing Lili (who was lured into the woods under false pretenses) Gerard jumped down and on bended knee proposed. Clark Gable then proceeded to eat one of the roses. Both couples hope to get married sometime in the year 2000. Sorry, fillies; Clark's marital status is unknown.

Speaking of dashing leading men, **Mike Sell** and **Eric Karpeles**, the Pennsylvania painters are celebrating 20 years together. They met in their early teens. Félicitations from all your Project Pals.