

PROJECT UPDATE



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Lightning Strikes Project! Twice!!

You may have played and laughed in the sun for most of July, but we Project folk, well... that's what we did, too. But wait! We produced a passel of plays at the same time! We accomplished this amazing dual feat by taking ten kids, matching them up with some volunteer adult mentors, and then taking the whole band to **Block Island, R.I.** to rehearse plays that the grown-ups had written. Then we brought the finely honed pieces back to the **Ensemble Studio Theatre** in N.Y.C. for a four-night Off-Off Broadway run. That, in a nutshell, is how our annual One-on-One shows work, but we need more than a nutshell to review this particular extravaganza...

Lightning Strikes Twice: The Highly Unlikely Plays (for that is what the evening was entitled) fittingly began with a play about Early Man. In *New Neighbor*, **Peter Granados**, 11, played a charming caveman named Ned Anderthal who tries to engage a larger, more guttural troglodyte (actor/writer/balladeer **Josh Lewis**) in a civilized conversation. **Laurence Klavan's** *Pet Sounds* had friendly puppy **Zaida Natera**, 12, convincing paranoid cyclist **Chris McCann** that all she wanted to do was chat. In *Let Us Eat Cake*, by **Ashby Semple**, **Jennifer Jimenez**, 12, portrayed a very snotty queen who gets her come-uppance from the local weather wizard (Ashby).

Felicita Jerez, 13, was *Mall Girl*, the super-powered avenger of shoppers everywhere in **Jacquelyn Reingold's** play of the same name. In this play **Keira Naughton** played Pearl, best described as a female version of Alfred the Butler. **Johnathan Roldan** lived out every 12 year-old boy's fantasy of being a debonair jewel thief who terrorizes the Riviera in **George Babiak's** *The Slippery Eel* (okay, so it's a 43 year-old man's fantasy. So what?). George played Johnathan's pea-brained accomplice, Dumbley, while **John Sheehy** turned in another masterful cameo as the simpering, wealthy miser J. Wellington Piccadilly.

Anju Andre-Bergmann, 12, and **Matt Saldivar** were inmates in a sanitarium who plan a crime-fighting career as Crazy Lady and her sidekick Jiggly Man in the aptly titled *Mental Patient*. It was a great play, but Project insiders are a

bit concerned about the psychological state of author **Michael Bernard**. In *Phineas' Waterloo*, by **Susan Kim**, **Steven Vasquez**, 12, frightened his brother (**Joe Quintero**) by pretending to be the ghost of Napoleon. By all accounts, Steve's French accent was impeccable. **Marlene Moran**, 13, was a belligerent alley cat who reluctantly seeks the counsel of Doctor **Robert Sean Leonard** in *It Takes Two*, which happened to be Mr. Leonard's stellar writing debut at the Project.

Having been in the job for six months, our not-so-new artistic director **Gus Rogerson** decided that it was time to bring his darkest imaginings to the stage in *Flora's Story*. **Anissa Albarron**, 13, played a young medieval girl imprisoned for the crime of reading. Her cell-mate: a human ear that fell off a leper and grew to immense proportions.

The giant auricle was played by Gus's wife **Robin Morse**. **Keira Naughton** gets an extra mention for taking over during a couple of performances when the ear lost its voice.

The night ended with good old reliable **Willie Reale's** *Short John Copper*, which is the first Project show to have a two-city premiere (it was also done in the **Williamstown Theater Festival's** Project replication this summer). **Adrian Zambrano**, 10, was a small but crusty pirate captain whose heart and other assorted vital organs are restored by a winsome waitress named Brandy ("she's a fine girl") who was perfectly played by **Patrice Johnson**.

The shows were packed with music (no less than 15 original songs) which was skillfully and swiftly provided by composer **Kirsten Childs** and pianist **Virginia Pike**.

Is that everyone? Nope! **Shirley Rumierk** (our emergency intern) and **Tessa John-Connor** (our Junior Counselor) made many sandwiches and filled in as dinosaurs, royal seamstresses, witless shoppers, cops, and malevolent nurses.

If not for some notable Block Island buddies we'd have had to sleep on the beach and eat the sand which is there (say that last phrase fast and you'll get it). **Christina Biaggi**, **Pat Walsh**, **Virginia Dare**, **Joya Verde**, **Rita and Steve Draper**, **Sarah Barkley**, **Toube** and **Bennet Wohl**, and **Elliott** and **Jennifer Taubman** provided housing for us while **Martha Velie-Gass**, **Pat McQuade**, and our special guest chef **Chip Frye** whipped up some truly fine grub. GB



Lightning Strikes Twice Again!!!!

(Let's see... that makes it four.)

In August, lightning actually did hit twice as the exact same thing happened again! Another group of kids and adults went out of town to create some great new plays. This time we went to **Tyler Hill, Pennsylvania** and stayed at the home of the incredible **Eric Karpeles** and **Michael Sell**. After a crazy week of rehearsing and swimming and inventing the wonderful pool activity known as *Tsunami*, we came back to town to show off the fruits of our labors.

Among the highlights of the evening were: **Joshua Brown**, 11, as agent Neville Slate, a rapping super suave spy



NOËL DAWKINS

Tempestuous Two: Annie T. and Isaac T.

in *Tomorrow Never Quacks*. His evil-nemesis-turned-food server-turned-evil-nemesis Dr. Ernst von Hägen Däz was played by **Adam Felber**. How does a bolt of lightning feel about the damage he causes when hitting people? We found

out the answer to that question in *Chloe and Ziggy Tackle the Big Questions* by **Liz Tuccillo** starring **Isaac Trujillo**, 12, as Ziggy the lightning bolt and **Annie Torsiglieri** as Chloe the cloud.

In *The Incredibly Strange But Incredibly True Case of the Missing Kawinky-Dinkies* by **Neena Beber**, **Alejandra Rodriguez**, 12, and **Camilia Sanes** portrayed a scientist studying coincidences and a woman who never experiences any – who would believe they find out that they are related! What a Kawinky-Dinky! **Mona-Lisa Barthelemy**, 12, was *Nikki Spillane: Hardboiled Gumshoe with a Heart of Gold* by the one and only **Robert Shaffron**. **John Steber** was the aptly named Johnny, who plotted his secret revenge against Nikki. Luckily, she figured out the scam and before you could say “film-noir cliché” the jig was up. Gone from the Project but not forgotten, **Willie Reale** penned the story of two down-on-their-luck brother prospectors known as *The Brothers Mendoza* for **Justin Aponte**, 11, and **Ed Vassallo**.

Lorraine Zambrano, 14, and **Gwendolyn Mulamba** were two *Heavenly Bodies* who find out that there is plenty of pain in the life of a star. We found out all about the inner workings of the CIA's clown division in *The Silence of the Clowns* written by **Jerry McGill** for **Joel Lind**, 12, and also featuring Project teen-counselor **Ben Barthelemy** as a rain-bow-haired supervisor.

Michael Feliciano, 11, as Dr. Cornbuckle, was once again denied his lifelong dream to meet Robert Peary at the North Pole in *Time Storm* by **John Sheehy** and featuring the lovely **Zabryna Guevara** as Dr. Hornswaggle. **Lorraine Calderon**, 13, was a kickboxer and **Eris Migliorini** a great picker-outer who discover that friendship is *The Most Important Thing* by **Cindy Lou Johnson**. Finally, **Robert Tomas** brought it home as a Vegas lovin' leprechaun who is bored of guarding his

Pot o' Gold, written by **Michael Bernard**. By the end of the night audience members felt as if they themselves had been struck by lightning – the evening was that electric!

The cameo award goes to Super Intern **Bree Elrod**, who played a girl scout, a girl from the audience, and Vegas Lady. Bree is now studying theater in Chicago and aspires to one day play a character who actually has a name. The wonderful music in the show was composed by the newly affianced **Kim Sherman** (see Megabits) and played by that ivory-ticklin' fool **Doug Nervik**.

Let's not forget the illustrious host families who put roofs over our heads during our week away: **Dan Brinkerhoff** and **Liz Huntington**; **Sohail Raikhy**; **Bonnie, Ryan, Chelsea** and **Ben Rutledge**; **Sarah, Carl, Sasha, Michael** and **Bill Spoerri, Frank** and **Pat Stoeckle**; **Linda** and **Bill Cobb**; **Linda** and **Bill Halvorsen**; **Fred van Natta** and **Michael Post**; and **Sally** and **Lenny Weiss**. MB

Make Plans to See Playback Now

Elsewhere in this compendium of information you will discover a flyer advertising the upcoming theatrical production **It's Your Move: The Strategic Plays**. This production is the latest output from the Project's Playback program. On Columbus Day weekend, seven eager and excited Project children will travel to the **Randolph family** homestead in Wareham, Massachusetts for an invigorating weekend that will be physically and intellectually stimulating.

At the end of the trip, each child will have produced a theatrical gem to which their adult partner will then write a response. The fruit of their labors will be presented to the general public the weekend of November 5th – 7th. We hope to see you in attendance at this exciting adventure. MB

And We Had Lots of Leftovers!

So here's how it works. You take some fried chicken and cornbread and collard greens from Sylvia's soulfood restaurant, courtesy of our mostest hostess, the great **Jenny Wiener**, add a mess of top-flight Project friends throwing down 25 dollars at the door to eat, drink, and discuss quantum theory with our eight scholars, top it off with some fond farewells to the four freshmen taking their first steps into the great wide world, and you got yourself a 5th Annual 52nd Street Project Scholarship Party on August 10th at the Clubhouse.

The brainiacs are either new students or upperclassmen/women maintaining a 3.0 G.P.A. or better, and they are as follows: Froshes **Jill Barbosa** (Hunter College), **Jed Clarke** (Bard College), **Ray Harold** (SUNY Purchase), **Luis Santoni** (SUNY Alfred) and B.M./W.O.C.'s **Kulondi Frier** (Shaw University), **Dawn Jackson** (Bard College), **Richard Myrie** (St. John's University), and **Lori Quiñones** (Bronx Community College). Many thanks to all those whose generosity is helping these Project alums give it the old college try. GR

CAN YOU DRAW THIS SMELLY OLD SNEAKER?

Or just color it? Of course you can! Why not join us for our next Prop Party on Saturday, Oct. 30? Call George for details at 333-5252.



SMART PARTICLES

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

Let us extend a big welcome to our new 1999-2000 Smart Partner teams: **Matthew Gonzalez & Matthew Sussman, Shevonne Hernandez & Katherine Freedman, Alejandra Rodriguez & Nicole Watson, Jaymaree Rosado & Amy Rice, Tanika Parson & Ashby Semple, Steven Vasquez & Edelen McWilliams,**

Gloria Trejo & Amanda John, and Marcsi Mysak and Valerie Walsh.

This fall Smart Partner **Judy Agosto** begins her 4th year in the program! Below, in excerpts from *Fivey* magazine, Judy and her Smart Adult **Clare Tattersall** share stories about teen life now and then and discover a few things in common.

Clare: Judy likes to give the impression that she is tough but really she is remarkably kind and sensitive. If you need help or advice then Judy is the person to come to. But watch your back! She has also been known to play some mean tricks on people. Once when she was younger, Judy started screaming and crying, she had a huge gash on her leg and there was blood everywhere. Her sister was terrified. Then she noticed something... Judy was laughing. The blood was ketchup!



Clare and Judy.

AMY RICE/JAYSUNN ROSADO

Judy says that one day she will stop playing tricks on people and settle down to a suburban life with a husband and 2.2 kids in New Jersey. Why NJ? Well, apart from the cleaner air, the quieter streets and the sounds of lawnmowers on a Sunday afternoon, Judy wants to escape from the gossip that pervades the city — which is pretty strange considering that her favorite hobbies are sleeping, gossiping and giving advice. So what does Judy make of this teenage life? "Life is fun," she says, "but you've got to entertain yourself a lot."

Judy: When my friend Clare was fourteen, she was working in a flower nursery on the weekend. That job gave her extra money to buy clothes and to go out on Saturday night. She was a party girl for a fourteen year old. But she still is.

One day she wanted to do a trick on her sister but she didn't know what to do to her. The BIG BULLY sister told her, "Run me a hot bath." So Clare decided to run her a cold bath. I know her sister screamed when she got in.

Clare told me she was good in school. But her friends were the type of people who thought if you were smart you weren't cool. So when it was time for tests, she used to get the wrong answers on purpose to be down with the crowd. She wishes that she knew then that it is OK to be yourself.

Pomp and Circumstance Dept.

Let's all give three cheers to our Smart Partner kids who successfully navigated the high school application process

and are attending schools in the NYC area: **Mayleen Cancel:** Professional Performing Arts High School; **Aisha Jabour:** Cathedral School; **Luis Anthony Maldonado:** Legacy School; **Joseph Mohamed:** High School for Environmental Studies; **Ray Ocasio:** Public School Repertory Company; **Vionel Ortiz:** Manhattan Village; **Tanika Parson:** Humanities H.S.; **Noel Polanco:** Talent Unlimited; **Jaya Rosado:** St. Michael's Academy; **Jonathan Villanueva:** Legacy School for Integrated Studies; **Lorraine Zambrano:** Manhattan Village. *JF*

Mid-Summertime Blues



It was the middle of summer, really, what else was there to do but perform Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Nights Dream*? The classic was slightly updated by the slightly up-to-date **Chris Ceraso** and the Project's Teen Ensemble and directed by the very datable **Michael Bernard**. The show was presented as an "open rehearsal" to a packed house at **The Ensemble Studio Theatre**. The cast featured **Ray Harold** and **Jennifer Soccaras** doing double duty as Oberon and Theseus, and Titania and Hippolita. **Natasha Soto** was a VERY determined Hermia, **Ray Ocasio** and **Eddie Zambrano** kicked up some dust as Lysander and Demetrius. **Annette Myrie** was typecast as someone who likes to boss people around as Patty Quince and **Zsuzsa Mysak** was a very wacky and sarcastic Puck. Filling out the cast were some Project adults: **Ceci Arana** was a wonderful Helena and an acting mentor to the kids. **Perry McBain Daniel** served as both stage manager and head of the sock-puppet fairy chorus. Project intern **Jon-Paul Pedernana** was an obstinate Egeus and a nervous Tom Snout. Class leaders **Gus Rogerson**, **Chris Ceraso**, and **Michael** were Flute, Snug, and Nick Bottom.

Many thanks to the volunteers who served as text coaches for all the kids: **Greg Allen, Jessalyn Gilsig, Mitchell Lemsky, Jackie Reingold** and **Ashby Semple**. Thanks also to **Sue Phillips** (**Carol Ochs'** mama!) and **Carl** and **Rose Foster** for putting us up during the teen trip to Massachusetts.

Keep an eye out next summer when we will remount the show, perform it in New York and then take it to the south of France and stay at the home of Project friends **Bill** and **Jane Muddyman**. Europe, get ready! *MB*

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.

Chase Manhattan Bank	\$3,000
Dammann Fund	\$5,000
Dept. of Youth and Community Development	\$15,160
Florence Gould Foundation	\$20,000
Morgan Guaranty Trust	\$7,500
National Endowment for the Arts	\$17,000
New York State Council on the Arts	\$15,000

Johathan Roland aboard the Block Island ferry.



GRB

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Noël Dawkins

Occupation: Film and television producer

Why do you do what you do: "Because (Miramax chief) Harvey Weinstein won't call me back."

Hobbies: "Skiing, yoga, my nephew Miller (seen with Noël at right), and taking the long way home."

Last book read: *For The Relief of Unbearable Urges* by Nathan Englander.

Most Recent Accomplishment: "Recovering from shoulder surgery."

Credo: "Call people back." **Advice to the Kids:** "Dream... and call people back."

Place of birth: West Point, NY

Favorite Project memory: "The 1999 Tyler Hill One-on-Ones." (The most recent show that she stage-managed for us.)

Favorite thing about the Project: "The universal truth of the 'hands-up' philosophy."

Ed. Note: If any crowd of adults and/or kids becomes unruly, instant quiet can be achieved by shouting "Hands up!" As if by magic, the hands rise and the mouths close.

On Flyer Bars: "I love them so much that I'm a frequent Flyer."

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



M e g a b i t s

Engagements: Board member **Ruth Cohen** and Proj. volunteer **Josh Astrachan**, and staff member **John Sheehy** and Proj. Composer **Kim Sherman**. We are proud that these folks are keeping our "meet your soul-mate at the Project" myth alive. Neither of these couples actually met here, but given their Project connections, would eventually have done so.

Congratulations go to **Sally Bock & Mark Wurfel** for finally tying the knot in some impossible to get to but unbelievably beautiful spot in Washington State this July. Project sound designer **Dan Carlson**, who barely made the wedding because of harrowing travel connections, rehearsed the wedding song extensively on the Orcas island ferry during a fire drill.

Felicitations also go to staff member **George Roman Babiak** and Goddess of Sound **Vanessa Valdes**, who stunned western Canada in September by riding a tandem bicycle in full wedding regalia on a 20 minute trip from the church to their reception. Founder **Willie Reale** snidely asked "Did they arrive smelling like goats?" Replied George: "Yes, but very fragrant and physically fit goats." (See photo at right).

The wedding bells have been deafening around here lately. Board member/volunteer/ex-kid **Jose Soto** married his long-time sweetheart **Michelle Lopez** on Aug. 17th.

A big welcome to Board baby **Edward Maxwell Friedman** born on June 24th to **Louis and Patrice Friedman**. Sister **Elise** asked, "Is this a trial-period type thing or is he really staying?"

Another welcome goes to **Walker James White** born on August 12th to Project volunteers **Joe White & Iris Brown**. Walker was in such a hurry to check out his new digs that he barely gave his mom time to get to the hospital.

