

PROJECT UPDATE

Volume 34

July, 2000

Follow Your Nose: The Blow-by-Blow



Reg Flowers as a Dalmatian

Follow Your Nose, the second Playmaking show of the season, was auspicious indeed, thanks to the generosity of the **Signature Theater Company** in allowing us to use their swanky **Peter Norton Space** on W. 42nd St. Rarely have budding play-wrights, especially 9 to 12 year-old ones, been granted such posh surroundings in which to premiere their work. The young scribes rose to the quality of their venue by providing their adults with some especially meaty roles to sink their teeth into.

The evening began with *A Vacation in Miami*, **Margarita Gueorgueva's** searing dissection of adult relationships. **Chris Welch** took shameless financial advantage of **Lenore Pemberton**, but that didn't stop the pair from finding love in Paris. **Abigail Lopez** wanted to learn the detecting business from **Vanessa Aspillaga** (playing Agent 1-2-3) in **Britney Castro's** *The Stolen Purse*. Together they foiled young **Johnathan Roldan**, who is making a career for himself playing jewel thieves. **Jeremy Butler's** *Sister and Brother* featured big **John Conlee** as a small boy who inadvertently causes his sister **Grace Eboigbe** to be fired. How to make amends? Buy her a chihuahua, of course.

Samantha Padilla took the night's theme more literally than most in *The Booger Boy and Janie*, a tale of a young man (**Carlo Alban**) who must choose between his girlfriend (**Lisa Benavides**) and the joy of mining his nostrils. *The Truth About Friendship*, by **Kimani Ashley-Lewis**, revealed the dark passions that rule the offstage lives of circus clowns. **Sharon Washington** played a woman driven by operatic ambitions, and **Ted Neustadt** was her partner, a clown obsessed with Lotto.

After the intermission came *Can You Feel The Crossover?* a basketball saga by **Akeem Frazier**. Ace hoopster Ill Crossover (**Michael Dolan**) learned from his injured teammate Papa Tulle (**Joe Quintero**) that even the best of us need to pass the ball occasionally. Next up was **Lizette Natera** with her eerie thriller *The Mystery of the Petersins*,

which featured **Kaitlyn Kenney** and **Deirdre O'Connell** as two roommates sharing a haunted house. Sharp-eyed viewers of **Inside Edition** may have caught our intern **Caroline Sharman** and our newly-wed Development Director **John Sheehy** in a clip from this play. Caroline was featured on the news magazine show as "That Girl" of the 00's (we pronounce that "the ooze").

Kathy Hiler and **Arthur French** played two teens in the throes of adolescent romance in **Ariel Duran's** *Friends or Not*. To top it all off, **David "Cito" Wagner's** *The Brothers That Didn't Get Along* gave **Malcolm Gets** and **Reg Flowers** the opportunity to wear a pair of spectacular spotted Dalmatian costumes designed by **Julie Fischhoff**. The play gave **George Babiak** the opportunity to play a loud, mean bum with a large knife (something he does at lunch every day, anyway).

On hand for cameos and backstage duties throughout the evening were **Amy Johnston**, **Liz Lord**, **Mary Vamvoukakis**, **Osage Ashley-Lewis**, the redoubtable **Maury Schott**, and stage manager *par excellence* **Jenny Peek**. Of course, the largest helping of thanks goes to our tireless dramaturg/directors **John Steber**, **Jenny Wiener**, **Jessica Bauman**, **Joe White**, **Darrell Larson**, **Peter Herdrich**, **Keira Naughton**, **Karen Trott**, **Lizzie Gottlieb** and **Linda White**. We wish Linda the best of luck this summer as she takes over the **Greylock Project**, the Williamstown, Mass. replication of the Project.

The plays would not have been as good if we didn't have the excellent assistance of composer **Rusty Magee**, and frankly, they wouldn't even have existed were it not for the generosity of the **Graham** and **Wiener** families, who put us up in high style during our writing retreat in Connecticut. GB

Soaking Sours No Spirits

Every year we eagerly look forward to the **Replay Picnic**. That's when we take all the kids in our advanced Playmaking classes and a horde of adult actors up to the **McLane/Ettinger** home in upstate New York. It's a day of staged readings on a sun-drenched lawn followed by hours of barbecuing, cavorting, and splashing in the pool. Well, here's the report on the May 21 event: IT RAINED ALL WEEKEND!!! And it was COLD, TOO!!! There was nothing to do but stay in town and hold the readings at the **Women's Interart Annex** across the hall (Thanks, W.I.A!).

On the positive side, the readings were a blast, as

always, and the delicious picnic food was devoured with the same voracious rapidity displayed in the outdoor version. The young playwrights on hand were **Jason Bula, Steve Bula, Tiffany Butler, Jonathan Hagemeyer, Nadya Jabour, Johnathan Ladines, Ivana Lugo, Giovanna Mendez, Oscar Padilla, Adalberto Rodriguez, Alejandra Rodriguez, Marilyn Sanchez, Allary Seda, Kathy Taveras, Frankie Ventura, and Amelia Whitney.** We'd love to list the 40-plus adults who came, but we need to leave some room for the other articles in this issue. Thank you, one and all!
GB

Pirates Shanghai Minnows

Fundraising can be a treacherous business, especially in the shark-infested waters of gala benefits. And wouldn't you know it, this year's party held on Monday May 8, 2000, at the **Puck Building**, was invaded by ruthless cutthroats. In hindsight, you could say we brought it on ourselves by entitling the event **AARGH! The 52nd Street Project's Piratical Gala.**

The ballroom at the Puck building was transformed into a festive tropical island setting by the innovative decorations of **Ronnie Davis** and **Great Performances Catering.** Over 510 guests witnessed the kidnapping of the singing Merry Minnows of Minerva, Minnesota (Project kids **Anju André-Bergmann, Johnathan Roldan, Robert Tomas** and **Frankie Ventura.** The troop was led by **Annie Torsiglieri** and featured the world's tallest Minnow, **Billy Crudup**). Bloodthirsty pirates (**Zaida Natera, Yazzy Troche, Roma Maffia, Jesse L. Martin, Michael Potts,** and their captain **Martha Plimpton**) interrupted the Minnows' quest to circumnavigate the globe in a canoe. The troopers were then pressed into helping the Pirates recover a long-lost treasure on an enchanted island. Just as a mutiny was about to break out, the dulcet tones of a merman were heard (**Lee Wilkof**, in a fishtail as **Ethyl Merman.**) With the aid of the audience, the pirates solved the Mystery of the Singing Riddles. Captain Martha found not only the treasure, but true love with Ethyl, and donated all of the booty to the Project.

This whopper of a fish story, written by **Willie Reale, John Sheehy, Michael Bernard** and **Lewis Black,** was directed by **Jonathan Bernstein,** with a set designed by **Kevin Roach,** lighting design by **Greg MacPherson,** sound design by **Scott Lehrer,** and costumes by **Crystal Thompson.** **Henry Krieger** wrote the musical score and the performance was stage managed by **Hank Meiman. Virginia Pike** and the newly-wed **Kim Sherman** provided the musical direction. Thankee's all 'round, ye swabs!

The evening was capped by limbo dancing, proving that the Project will literally bend over backwards to have a good time. The entire event was the most successful in our history. Especially helpful in making it that way were



WENDY STULBERG

Frankie Ventura and TV's top cop Jesse L. Martin.

Comedy Central, Arthur Dantchik, the Dawkins Family Foundation, Entertainment Weekly, Angelina Fiordellisi & Matt Williams, Gap Inc., Frances & Colin Greer, Laura Valeroso, Jenny Wiener and Jeffrey Yass. As the guests left, they were rewarded with gift bags in the form of backpacks donated by **Coleman, Inc.** which were filled by the **Sesame Workshop, Jim Henson Company Shadow Projects, Kiehl's Since 1851, Noggin, Paris Chocolate, Vassilaros Coffee** and **Watkins Inc.**
JS

Help Us From Your Bathtub

You too can help the Project by munching chocolate while reading the latest bestseller in your bubble bath. How, you ask? By shopping on-line through **Watkins Incorporated** and **Paris Chocolate** (maker of the **Flyer Bar**, the Project's official candy bar). E-commerce is the wave of the future—and thanks to these two organizations, the Project is riding a boogie board of philanthropy on that wave.

Both long-time Project supporters, Paris Chocolate and Watkins Inc. have recently committed to helping the Project financially whenever someone shops electronically with them. Visit the Paris Chocolate web site at www.flyerchocolate.com, click on the button that says "on-line bookstore," and you arrive at **Barnes and Noble** on the web. Anything you then buy triggers a commission to Paris Chocolate, a portion of which will then be donated to the Project. Similarly, Watkins Incorporated has made the Project an associate. Shop with Watkins on-line at www.watkins-inc.com, mention the Project's associate number **315871**, and a commission is paid to the Project.

The beauty part is, there's no cost to you. If you have any questions about these programs, please contact John "Click Here" Sheehy at the Project, (212) 333-5252.
JS

Mickey Leaves The Monkees

Hey, Everybody! You may or may not know this, but I've been spending less time at the Project lately. After seven years of telling playwrights to challenge themselves and take a few risks, I figured it was time I did the same. So, now I am officially a part-time employee of the 52nd Street Project. Basically I'm gonna keep teaching the classes, directing our Teen Ensemble Shakespeare productions, and working on our many other shows. In my new spare time I've been doing some freelance TV writing, which I hope will continue. It's time for a change and I'm happy to be doing it. I'm even happier that I get to keep the most fun parts of my Project job. So, keep an eye out for Megan, be nice to her, and hopefully, I'll see you at the next show.
MB



GFB

The 8th Grade Graduates Hall of Fame

Anissa Albarron, Osage Ashley-Lewis, Lorraine Calderon, Shevonne Hernandez, Jennifer Jimenez, Hakim Latimore, Joel Lind, Marlene Moran, Zaida Natera, Alejandra Rodriguez, Johnathan Roldan, Jaysunn Rosado, Gloria Trejo, and Yazzy Troche.
Three cheers for all the kids and on to High School!

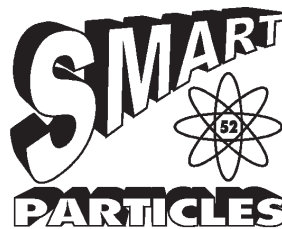
Meet The Volunteer Coordinator

Starting this summer, when the phone rings and it's the Project calling, chances are you'll be talking to our new volunteer coordinator, recent Ivy League graduate and all-around hotshot **Megan Sandberg-Zakian**. She's smarter than the rest of the staff put together, and can touch her toes without getting a backache, too. Ah, youth. We'll let her speak for herself.



I, Megan Sandberg-Zakian, was born and bred in Seattle, Washington, and have spent the last four years at **Brown University** in Providence, R.I. While writing, directing, and performing in various theatrical events, I also managed to get a degree in American Civilizations and Education [that's a fancy double major, folks! Ed.]. When not in the theater, I could usually be found in Providence's public schools with the **Arts/Literacy Project**, a program that brings together performing artists and teachers to create curricula that improves literacy [Kids, you'll be reading six books a day in no time! Ed.]

Although I always fantasized about returning to the Northwest after graduation, I've been ensnared by the opportunity of joining the fantastically creative extended family of the Project. I'm very excited and looking forward to meeting everyone in person! MS-Z



The Smart Partner Profile
brought to you by Boylan's Beverages

Things were off to a good start last year when Smart Partner **Marlene Moran** and volunteer **Beth Gardiner** showed up at the clubhouse TWICE dressed in almost identical outfits. They looked at each other and laughed, then took a deep breath and went to face another thing they had in common:

Math Fea!. Together they committed to fractions, decimals, angles and areas. Soon the "Math Queens" were quizzing each other on times-tables, even during Boylan breaks. This year Marlene reports "Math is easy" and is cruising way ahead of her tutor, which suits Beth just fine.

Since Marlene's family moved to Brooklyn this year, subway rides home together have given them a great chance for "girl talk" and reading. Beth gave Marlene the first **Harry Potter** book and a love for reading was born. Marlene has even phoned Beth at work to ask



her to bring her books. A peak moment: Marlene just graduated from **PS 111** and was honored with an Outstanding Achievement Award. Her teachers also report that she has grown to be a leader amongst her peers. Beth adds: "She's made my life better, too." JF

In Memoriam



The 52nd Street Project mourns the loss of **Darrell Carey**, who died at home here in the neighborhood this past June 9th. Darrell was one-of-a-kind, the first Project parent to become a Project actor, appearing as Chichi in **Mayleen Cancel's** playwriting debut, "Chichi's Big Escape." He was a very good actor and an even better parent, having for the past eight years served as loving guardian to his

nephew, Project kid **Hakim Latimore**. He has left him thriving and in capable hands. We will miss Darrell, and we hope that he gets the V.I.P. treatment up there in Heaven. He sure deserves it. GR

Chips and Pommes Frites To Go

If you are reading this during the first week of July, then at this very moment a hardy band of seven Project teens and six adults are blazing their way through London and the South of France. They're performing our own raucous version of William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. P.U. readers will get full coverage of the event in our next issue. GB



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.

CAP Foundation (Scholarship Endowment)	\$50,000
Comedy Central	\$5,000
Dept. of Youth and Community Development	\$4,000
Dramatists Play Service	\$1,500
Entertainment Weekly	\$5,000
Educational Foundation of America	\$10,000
Gap, Inc.	\$5,000
GLADPZ Foundation	\$1,250
The Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation	\$17,000
Florence Gould Foundation	\$20,000
The William & Mary Greve Foundation	\$5,000
Holland Lodge Foundation	\$4,000
Ann M. Martin Foundation	\$12,500
National Endowment for the Arts	\$6,500
The New World Foundation	\$5,000
Newman's Own	\$2,500
Laura Pels Foundation	\$1,000
Staging & Design, Inc.	\$1,250
The Harold & Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust (Endowment)	\$25,000
Surdna Foundation	\$40,000
Uniwold Group Inc.	\$2,500
John A. Vassilaros & Sons, Inc.	\$2,500
The Wiener Foundation	\$20,000
Yorke Construction Corp.	\$2,500



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The Project has turned out its first Harvard Grad! We always knew Shirley Rumierk was as smart as she was lovely, but now she's got the sheepskin to prove it. Congratulations, Shirl!

PROJECT **P.U.** UPDATE

Editor-in-Chief: George R. Babiak



Fred Nelson

Occupation: Vice-President of Marketing and Promotion for Entertainment Weekly Magazine (and a major force at recent Project benefits).

Why Do You Do What You Do: "I am lucky to have landed my dream job. Where else can a guy get paid for talking all day about movies, music, theater, TV, books, and the Internet?"

Hobbies: "All of the above."

Last Book Read: *The Hours* by Michael Cunningham. "Breathtaking."

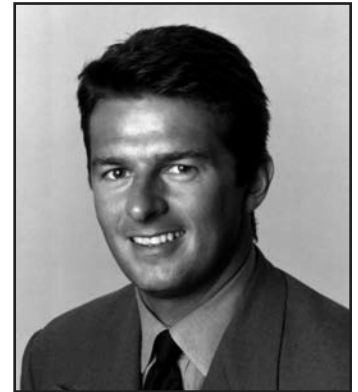
Most Recent Accomplishment: Completed a pop culture Grand Slam: attended the Emmies, Grammy's, Oscars, and the Tony's in one year. "Not bad for a kid from Kansas."

Advice to Kids: "Live your life filled with joy and thunder." –REM

Place of Birth: Overland Park, Kansas

Favorite thing about the Project: "It lets kids be grown-ups and grown-ups be kids. What's not to love?"

On Flyer Bars: "Mmmmm-mmmmm good."



Well, it has been a very busy Spring here at the 52nd Street Project. On June 8, exactly one month after *Aargh! The Benefit*, the Project's very own **John Sheehy** was wedded to Project composer **Kim Sherman** in the stunning **Rockefeller Chapel of Hope and Remembrance** (which is actually an art installation created by Project pal **Eric Karpeles**. Whew, it is a small world isn't it?). John wanted to test his party planning prowess by planning two events at once this year – thankfully, Kim still agreed to marry him.

And speaking of benefits, at 6:30 pm, on her way to *Aargh!*, **Robin Morse**, beloved of Artistic Director **Gus Rogerson**, decided to go into labor. So...as the guests were arriving, Gus was hightailing it all the way up to Washington Heights. The lovely **Lucia May Rogerson** was born at 7:12 am on May 9th. We are very grateful to her for letting us complete all the preparations and rehearsals for the event. Lucy, we owe you one.

We've heard of baby showers; recently we've been showered with babies. In order of appearance: April 5th, **Emma Kathleen Reale** born to **Mina Hammer** and **Tom Reale**; April 18, **Lila Blue Coley** born to **Wendy vanden Heuvel** and **Brad Coley**; May 28, **Jackson Foo Wong** born to **B.D. Wong** and **Richie Jackson**; June 1, **Frank Larson Adams** born to **Linda Larson** and **Kent Adams**; June 11, **Mabel Driscoll Pence** born to **Moirra Driscoll** and **David Pence**.

The PU would like to congratulate **Donald Margulies** for winning a Pulitzer Prize. We are very honored to have him as a Project playwright.

More college news: **Dawn Jackson** received a baccalaureate from Bard and is applying to **Howard University** for graduate school in January. **Diana Rojas** completed a business degree and has been snapped up by advisory board member **Cora Cahan** at **The New 42nd St. Studios**. We're all a bit jealous of her nice new office. **Nyita Hanley** just graduated from Humanities Prep High and got a full scholarship to SUNY New Paltz. She plans to study pre-med. You go, girl!



Lila Coley and Lucia Rogerson at play

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