

PROJECT UPDATE

Volume 35

November, 2000

Project Tours Globe! (Theater, that is)

The final step on the great staircase that Project kids ascend is the **Teen Ensemble**, a two-year program that culminates in a full production of a Shakespeare play. Our most recent teen group worked on *Midsummer Night's Dream* for over a year and were rewarded with the most ambitious trip any of our kids have ever taken.

Jed Clarke, Ray Harold, Annette Myrie, Zsuzsa Mysak, Ray Ocasio, Jennifer Socarras, and Eddie Zambrano were the teens while **Michael Bernard** (our director), **Cecilia Arana, George Babiak, Teen Dean Chris Ceraso** (see his profile on p. 4), **Gus Rogerson, Carol Ochs, and stage manager Noël Dawkins** formed the adult contingent.



GRB

Jennifer Socarras and Ray Harold in costume as Titania and Oberon during the World Tour. (That's a wig on Jennifer's head, by the way).



The "World Tour," as we roguishly dubbed it, began with a sellout performance in New York at the **Ensemble Studio Theatre** on June 28. On July 1st, we flew to London, where we were warmly received by **Scene and Heard**, Britannia's answer to the 52nd Street Project (see P.U. #33). **Kate**

Coleman and Sophie Boyack, the founders, escorted us on tours of the Globe Theater, The Tower of London, and the River Thames, and found us a remarkably "E.S.T.-like" space in which to perform called **Theatro Technis**. Our performance was attended by the cream of London society, including actress **Emily Watson**, one of S & H's better-known patrons.

The day after our London show, we jetted across the Channel to the South of France to spend a week at **Chateau de Berne**, a beautiful working vineyard, arts center, and hotel in the little town of Lorgues. Our British hosts, **Bill Muddyman** and his daughter **Jane Heine**, showed us a rousing good time and for our third and final show, provided us with a stunning space surrounded by giant kegs of wine. And, yes, we did have some, thank you. It would have been impolite to refuse.

Big thanks to the **Surdna and Florence Gould Foundations** and costume designer **Katherine Roth!** GB

"Package Deal" Includes Everything

The Project never sleeps! Less than four days after we stumbled off the plane from France, Project staffers were loading bushels of beach towels and sacks of sunscreen into our trusty rental vans so we could take ten younger kids to **Block Island** for the July round of our 15th annual

One-on-Ones. We went up to that idyllic spot to swim, eat, play Wiffle ball, run around like maniacs...oh, yeah, and to rehearse ten plays featuring the kids and their grown-up partners! We then raced back to the city to produce the plays at the good old reliable **Ensemble Studio Theatre** (their 15th go-round, as well. Thanks, E.S.T.!).

Here's how "Package Deal" worked: all ten adult playwrights had to incorporate the same mysterious package into their pieces. **Alex Draper** met the challenge first in *Wendy and Beebo*, which had **Tiffany Butler**, 11, travelling in time and space to visit Alex, who played a cowardly Mayan and Tiffany's crotchety boss. Next up was **Oscar Padilla**, 12, as the hapless assistant of a wretched illusionist (actor/writer **Angel David**) in *Mickey and the Really Bad Magician*.

I-Shadow, by **Lisi Gottlieb** and **James Greenberg**, saw **Anju Andre-Bergmann**, 13, as a renowned ballet dancer whose shadow was "permanently replaced" by **Catherine Mueller**. **Oni Faida Lampley's** *Don't Let Them Know* pitted a daughter (**Samantha Padilla**) against her adoptive mother (**Roma Maffia**, who flew all the way from Los Angeles just to do our show).

The first act concluded with 9-year old **Akeem Frazier's** stirring portrayal of *Doctor Ford McClain, Cowboy M.D.* Author/Director **Josh Lewis** played a fellow doctor who'd lost his nerve (he got it back). Also featured was **MENERGY**, the all-male chorus that won the hearts of Block Island's grizzled old fishermen and their fishwives way back in 1999.

After the intermission, **Michael Bernard's** *Defining Moment* brought us **Johnathan Ladines**, 10, as a loquacious dictionary and **Joe Quintero** as a dim-witted

umbrella. Anticipating the Olympics Down-Under fever, **Jyllian Gunther** set her play *Someone Like You* in the Outback, wrote herself the part of an Aussie carnival barker, and challenged big, swarthy **Gus Rogerson** to play the identical twin of cute little **Kathy Taveras**, 11. Gus proved frighteningly capable.

Speaking of challenges, **Nadya Jabour** was forced to play a mean teacher, a wise old wizard, an evil ogre, and a beautiful princess in *Percival Barrington-Smythe and the Treaty of Zamoria*. **George Babiak**, who wrote and directed the piece, only had to play a beleaguered British schoolboy. **David Schwab** continued our journey around the globe by writing *The Nine-Toed Sultan of Sulimahoo*, which featured director **Evan Handler** as a tyrannical sultan who forces his subjects to wear concrete fezzes and platform shoes. **Robert Tomas**, 11, was the eloquent hero of his oppressed people.

Willie Reale has been working feverishly on *Deadline*, the new NBC series starring Project pals **Oliver Platt** and **Lili Taylor**, but still found time to script our finale, *Closure at the Meadow*. In Willie's most dramatic play ever, **Lizette Natera** was a young girl who meets the spirit of her mother, **Florencia Lozano**.

Our tunesmith for Package Deal I was the imperturbable **Kim D. Sherman**, who churned out one lilting melody after another with great aplomb.

Also on hand were our handy-dandy stage manager **Jenny Peek**, our gentle intern **Liz Bell**, our hard-working chefs **Martha Velie-Gass** and **Pat McQuade**, and our generous hosts **Joya Verde** and **Virginia Dare**, **Elliott** and **Jennifer Taubman**, **Ron** and **Judy Tierney**, **Jane Muskey**, **Sarah Barkley**, **Josie Merck**, and **Jim Stevenson**. Extra-special thanks go to our main-house hosts, **Dr. Christina Biaggi** and **Pat Walsh**. Without them, we'd have been sleeping on the beach. GB

"Package Deal" Opens and Closes Again

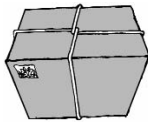
In August, we took our highly versatile (but slightly worn) box and a whole new bunch of kids, adults, and scripts to Tyler Hill, Pennsylvania and spent a week with artists **Mike Sell** and **Eric Karpeles**. While we were gorging ourselves on great food, tubing down the Delaware River, and running around like maniacs (a must on every trip) we found time to rehearse our second set of One-on-Ones, cleverly titled *Package Deal II*.



Ariel Duran and Jeanne Simpson demonstrate how to get a-head.

The big show opened with **John Sheehy's** *Science Fair*, with **Jeremy Butler**, 10 and **Susan McGinniss** as a

WHAT WAS IN THAT BOX, ANYWAY?



Block Island
A time machine
The spirit of a great magician
Ultimate Gas
A young girl's diary
Doctoring tools
Herb Alpert's "Spanish Flea"
A short-wave radio
Ham and cheese sandwiches
Freshly-picked pomegranates
A young girl's future

Tyler Hill
A dead iguana
A party gift
Girl Scout cookies
Adventure gear
Something very surprising
A severed head
An invisibility cape
A warm-up jacket
Ghouling tools
A finger-painting of a Latin lover's soul

pair of students who turn tragedy into success by amusing their surly old professor (surly old **George Babiak**) with a neat paradox of physics that only the playwright fully comprehended. **Matt Saldivar** and **Johnathan Roldan**, 13, deliriously wandered through Mexico in *It Gets Cold in the Desert at Night*, which Matt wrote and directed. In **Liz Tuccillo's** *Hello, World* we finally got to find out what happened to Lola (she was a showgirl) in **Barry Manilow's** old hit "Copacabana." She became a bitter old recluse, but found happiness with the help of Girl Scout-turned-angel **Allary Seda**, 12. **Zabrina Guevara** played Lola and directed the show.

Adrian Zambrano, 11, was Jack Danger, a "truly great adventurer" on his last great quest, a hunt for *The Mysterious Golden Cheetah*. **Dan Berrett** penned the piece and played Adrian's flunky, Larry. **Michael Bernard** cast 11-year old **Adalberto Rodriguez** and himself as dalmatians in his play *Dogs' Life*. (Actually, we decided they

were dalmatians when we found those spotted costumes we used in an earlier show. Funders should note that we never waste a buck!).

Every night at this time, for some reason, the audience thundered out to the lobby to converse and eat candy. When we finally got them back into their seats, they were treated to **Adam Felber's** *Queens*, which featured **Ariel Duran**, 9, and **Jeanne Simpson** as rival rulers. This show included a Project first: a game of soccer with a human head. Next up was **Kimani Ashley-Lewis**, 10, in **Keli Garrett's** *Secret Power*, the saga of a super hero with no powers but a lot of spunk. Ace intern **Caroline Sharman** doubled as a damsel in distress and a disgruntled postal worker (are any postal workers "gruntled?").

Marilyn Sanchez, 11, and **Josh Lewis** gave us a glimpse of the 2002 Winter Olympics in Josh's *Fire and Ice*, the tale of two figure skaters who learn that "life is so much slipperier than ice," as the song went. *The Ghoul Can't Help It*, by **Annie Torsiglieri**, treated us to the sight of Annie and **Ivana Granados**, 10, as a pair of, yes, "Ghoul Scouts."

To bring the summer to a close, the old playmaster, **Willie Reale**, returned to comedy to write *Woo Woo* for **Frankie Ventura**, 10, and **Jose Soto** (soon to be seen on TV's *Law and Order*). Jose and Frankie played a pair of Latin lovers vying for the heart of the same señorita (**Mayleen Cancel**).

The music for most of the many songs (Matt Saldivar and Josh Lewis brought their own guitars) was provided by **Patrick Barnes**, who rivals Kim Sherman in talent and unflappability. **Elissa Errick** was our super-duper stage manager.

Please don't think that all 28 of us crashed at Mike and Eric's pad! We just ate there. A number of Pennsylvania's

good citizens provided sleeping quarters, including the Pursch family, the Heyn folk, Sally and Lenny Weiss, the Cobb clan, the Halvorsen brood, Frank and Pat Stoeckle, Frosty and Debbie Myers, and the Grunn, Russo, and Rutledge households. Thanks, folks! GB

Grads Spread Their (Chicken) Wings

On August 8th we held our annual Scholarship Fund cocktail party. However, as hosted for the second year in a row by Board Member **Jenny Wiener**, "cocktail party" doesn't begin to cover it. A more accurate description might be "a soul-food-driven, hard-rocking tribute to college-bound Project graduates."

Recipients qualified for scholarships in two ways – either by being a new student, or by being a returning student with a 3.0 grade point average or higher. This year's awardees included: **Jed Clarke** (Bard College), **Eddie Cooper** (Ithaca College), **Kulondi Frier** (Shaw University), **Nyita Hanley** (SUNY, New Paltz), **Ray Harold** (SUNY at Purchase), **Richard Myrie** (St. John's University), **Lori Ann Quinones** (Bronx Community College) and **Luis Santoni** (Alfred State). Thank you to all who helped to make the party a huge success. JS

Dot Com-mitted to Helping Kids

Hooked on the internet? Here are three websites that make it possible for all our on-line chums to help the Project without even getting off their duffs.



www.amazon.com

Buy us a book or two from our **Amazon.com WISHLIST** by logging on to this online bookseller. Scroll down the right side of their home page and click on WISHLIST, then type "project52@aol.com" into the email search field. Then click away and help make our library dreams come true!



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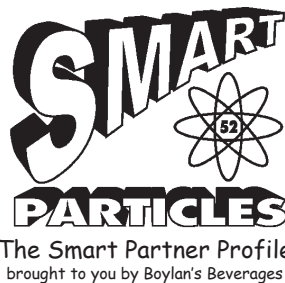
Even if you're buying books for *yourself* you can still help! Drop by the **Paris Chocolates** home page and hit the "online bookstore" button, which will take you to **barnes&noble.com**. Any purchase you make will result in a commission to Paris Chocolates (the Official Candy Bar of The 52nd Street Project). Paris then donates a percentage of their commission to us.



www.watkinsonline.com

If you are looking for beauty products or gourmet foodstuffs, check out **Watkins, Inc.**, a long-time Project supporter. When you register as a new customer be sure to enter us as the associate who referred you. Our associate I.D. number is **315871**. Without adding any cost to you, Watkins will pay a commission to us. Questions? Call **John Sheehy** at the Project. He'll be sitting on his duff, too.

One more web-slinging note: If you want to find out what's coming up on the Project schedule you can always stop by **www.offbroadwayonline.com**. JS & JF



A month before Smart Partners even began, **Lorraine Calderon** and **Sarah Winkler** were meeting at the Clubhouse to tackle a summer reading assignment. These two are serious! Last spring they plowed through *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* and a bunch of New York

Times Metropolitan Diary articles (Lorraine's favorite). They also spent many afternoons with a computer reading program preparing for the standardized test. The effort



Lorraine Calderon

paid off, Lorraine beamingly reports. This year, she scored higher than ever!


The SP work the team is most proud of is Lorraine's article for our literary magazine FIVEY, the next issue of which is dedicated to life in Hell's Kitchen (due out next year). Lorraine surveyed kids and adults to determine which name they preferred for their neighborhood: Clinton, Midtown West, or Hell's Kitchen. Her research made her take a hard look at her own opinion. Sarah was impressed with Lorraine's open-minded and intelligent approach.

This fall, as Lorraine starts out in her new school (**Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis High**), she and Sarah are happily returning for a second year together. Ask them what they most look forward to? It's the talks, walks home, and constant giggling--although strangely, neither can remember what they giggle about.



Sarah Winkler

Let's welcome our new S.P. teams: **Liz Bell** and **Steven Vasquez**, **Tiffany Butler** and **Edelen McWilliams**, **Adalberto Rodriguez** and **Liz Flahive**, **Allary Seda** and **Heather Carnduff**, **Oscar Padilla** and **Matt Sussman**, **Jeremy Butler** and **John Sheehy**, **Marilyn Sanchez** and **Caroline Sharman**, and **Nadya Jabour** and **Mary Grieco!** JF



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.

Barker Welfare Foundation	\$15,000
Consolidated Edison	\$1,500
Dammann Fund	\$5,000
Dept. of Youth and Community Development	\$2,980
The Fan Fox & Leslie R. Samuels Foundation	\$5,000
J.P. Morgan Charitable Trust	\$7,500
New York State Council on the Arts	\$15,750

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JOHN SHEEHY



Frankie Ventura serenades the audience in Willie Reale's *Woo Woo*.

PROJECT **P.U.** UPDATE
 Editor-in-Chief: George R. Babiak



Chris Ceraso

Occupation: "I call myself a freelance theatrical artist... at least, that's what's on my tax forms." Chris has recently been christened The Project's *Teen Dean*, in honor of his four years of coaching our teen ensemble, including two trips to Europe.

Why you do what you do: "It's the only thing that lets my life and my work be the same thing. Otherwise, I'd have to be a farmer."

Hobbies: "Amateurish" home remodeling, "amateurish" cooking, and, finally, "amateurish" fishing.

Last Book Read: "The Wind in the Willows." Chris is catching up on the books he should have read as a child.

Best 52nd Street Project Memory: "We were in the van in France, driving down to the Mediterranean to swim, and spontaneously, without being forced to, the teens started a line-through of *Midsummer* – in perfect iambic pentameter, with clean, clear meaning."

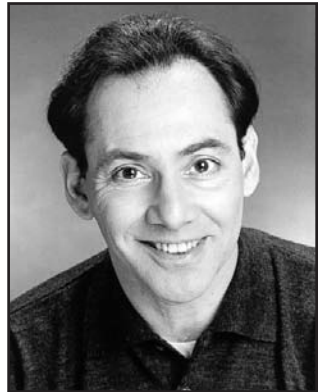
Why Teens and Shakespeare: "Because Shakespeare is about big crazy emotions and life changes, and so are teenagers."

Credo: "If anybody thinks they know all the right rules to doing something creative, they're bound to have it all wrong."

Advice to kids: "Be yourself, and make yourself as big as you can. By learning, not eating!"

Place of birth: Leechburg, PA. "When I was there, I wanted to leave, but now I'm making a movie about it."

Favorite thing about the Project: "It makes both kids and adults feel valuable." **On Flyer Bars:** "They stick to your teeth!" MS-Z



Mamma mia! Project romance has gone continental. **Chris McCann** surprised **Susan Shopmaker** at the Excelsior Hotel in Florence, Italy. While Susan was waiting for another friend, Chris magically appeared four days before his planned arrival and popped the age-old question. The answer was a resounding yes.



STEPHANIE BERGER

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 Meanwhile, **Steve Olsen** and **Janet Momjian** were getting married in Carmel, California and then honeymooning in Italy. Coincidence? Perhaps!

 Shortly after that, Executive Director **Carol Ochs**, her husband **Bruce McVittie**, and their daughter **Sophia** returned from a long-overdue holiday. Where? ITALY!

 Just after the Project Teens left London (see page 1), we learned that *Scene and Heard's* **Sophie Boyack** and **Mark Gough** were engaged. Where's the honeymoon? "ITALY, ITALY, ITALY!!" you scream repeatedly over your morning bagel. Nope. Mexico. Gotcha.

 Education Director **Julie Feldman-Abe** won't stop getting married. She's on her third! Fortunately, it's always the same chap: **Mauricio Feldman-Abe**. The August nuptial occurred in Brazil, where they have a passel of relatives who missed the first two hitches.

 On May 17, **Jessica Bauman** and **Ben Posel** welcomed **Leo Bauman Posel** into this world. He was a very lucky 7 lbs., 7 ozs. but probably weighs a lot more right now.

"Who's That Girl?" Dept.: Last issue we listed several Project alumni who just received their college diplomas. We're mortified to find that we left out **Jessica Soto**, seen at left in her Project heyday, about 12 years ago. She graduated from the **College of St. Rose** last Spring. Sorry about that, Jessie, but we're no less proud of you. CO