



Many Heads Make Light-Hearted Work

It's time once again for the wicked big, oversized Spring edition. Let's begin with the most elaborate of our autumnal rites: this year's Playback show, entitled Two Heads: The Better Than One Plays.

We started with seven seasoned Project kids, all 14 or 15 years

old, and drove them up to the Peter and Helen Randolph homestead in Wareham, Mass. for

the Columbus Day weekend. Between rounds of sumptuous dining, mini-golf, and being stranded at sea (well, just for a half- hour or so) the kids wrote short plays for themselves to perform with an adult partner. After our return to Manhattan, a team of adult volunteers scripted "answer plays" that took the same characters and situations to new levels. The seven pairs of plays were produced at the nowdefunct New York Performance Works on Chambers St. (We had the sad honor of being the last show to perform in the space).

The opener was Alex Cooper's The Magic Genie, a loopy opus that featured Alex as an overgrown baby

who gets his very own genie (Robert Jimenez). Jerome Hairston's response, A Genie's Undying Wish, explored the ramifications of the ill-conceived wishes made in the first play. John Sheehy made a memorable cameo as the "spudtastic, mashterrific, sweet-talkin', buddalicious Potato Man," and **Zsuzsa Mysak** was a formidable Mom.

If two heads are better than one, than three must be really fantastic. At least, that was the idea behind Lorraine **Zambrano's** *Come Back With Me to My Galaxy*, in which she portrayed an alien with an extra skull on each shoulder. Our intern Rocio Galarza was her equally multicranial mom and Camilia Sanes was another alien with three hands protruding from her head. Jackie Reingold proved her facility with excruciating puns in her answer play, $A \downarrow \downarrow \downarrow \downarrow$ and our stage manager **Noël Dawkins.** MARCH, 2001 PU PAGE 1

Rocio Galarza and Lorraine Zambrano butt heads.

Super Nova of a Wish. These two shows gave newcomer **Erin Billings** a significant challenge as the costume designer. She rose to it with wit and flair!

In The Curious Coyote, Joel Lind depicted the growing pains of Mighty, a young woodland mammal whose parents are separated. Michael Bernard penned the sequel, The Curious Coyote II. Lenore Pemberton played the mother coyote in both plays, and Marcsi Mysak was Mighty's love interest, Sheila.

Nothing stirs the heart so much as a good sea story, which Natalie Musteata and Gus Rogerson provided with *Trevor and His Mom* and its follow-up *Trevor and Mary* Lou. Actor (and brilliant weekend chef) Christopher Randolph played Trevor, a 24-year old in a sailor suit who

> dreams of a life on the waves. Natalie was his overprotective mom as well as the young stowaway who turns out to be Trevor's daughter.

Mayleen Cancel brought us back from the intermission with The Message, in which a young modern woman learns that she is descended from Zeus. Robert Sean Leonard was the reluctant emissary of the gods and penned the response, Mount Olympus, which correctly pegged the structure of the universe as one big, metaphysical quiz show.

Doomsday I and Doomsday II, by young Kevin Hartwick and somewhat older Keith Reddin, charted the destructive relationship

between a Super Nerd (Keith) and his nemesis Evil Scientist Guy (Kevin), who is this evil guy who's a scientist, see?

Two Heads took a serious turn in the final pair of plays, *Cry Baby, Cry* by **Vionel Ortiz** and *Isn't She Lovely*?, by Martha Plimpton. Vionel played Illyana, a young woman who is pressured into terminating a pregnancy. Martha was her mom in the first play and returned in her own piece to play another pregnant woman whom Illyana befriends years later.

Two Heads was a great show, but it was made even greater by our composer Virginia Pike, our lighting designer Matt Staniec, our sound designer Becky White, GB

HEATHER CARNDUFF



Look Ma, 11 Plays!

Forget about rollercoasters or runaway trains or even New York taxicabs; the wildest ride yet came in the form of eleven brand-new plays by eleven brand-new playwrights, who debuted their work in Look Ma, No Hands! The Wild Ride Plays, at the CAP21 Theater back in early December.

The evening's first show, penned by Mike Grullon, had good boy Lee Wilkof guiding stray soul Jonathan Goldblatt back to the straight and narrow. Revealingly, the *Bad Boys* of the title were portrayed by certain members of the Project staff, who asked to remain anonymous. In The Lonely Hearts, Sacha Centeno showed us the burgeoning friendship between a substitute teacher and one of her students. Though poor Phillip Christian was terrified when Gwendolyn Mulamba asked to adopt him, he softened up when she started reciting poetry. Stephen Galimidi reminded us of the bad things that can happen when Mom makes bagels for breakfast in *The Day* The Boy Answered His Mom Back. Robert Montano played the Boy and Caroline Hall was his long-suffering Mom.

Kamila Jacob showed everyone the difference between Good Friends, Best Friends, and True Friends in a probing examination of friendship in the mall. Nancy Giles let her heart sing (and sing and sing) while she pondered the right way to tell Emily Wachtel that credit card theft is like, kinda wrong. The play with the highest body count (two), *The Daring Cut*, came from **Mark Gamero**, who had the Two Greatest Stuntmaster Daredevils That Ever Lived, Reg Flowers and Natasha Lyonne, facing off in a tragic bungee jump from atop the World Trade Center. Scarcely had the corpses been cleared from the stage when **Wendy** Rivera's Always and Forever showed us the touching relationship between a dying woman (Phyllis Somerville) and a nurse who didn't know how to put on his pants (Angel David).

After two plays in a row ending with bereaved relatives, it was time for a break. Audience members stumbled out to the lobby to choke back their sobs and eat a few Flyer Bars, then returned to their seats to be revived by the rousing Bandits, Angel Matta's story of a football coach (Sam Wright) who wants to win the Super Bowl. There was only one problem: the star quarterback, **Tom** Carrozza, missed his mom. Next up was Octavia Rodriguez's Gabby and the Puppy David, wherein Stephen DeRosa and his one day old puppy, David Grillo, conquered their fear of cats. Leah Galimidi's Give Me My Baby, Give Me My Bike featured **Denise Burse** as a woman who, as the title suggests, just wanted to hang out with her kid and ride her Harley. The versatile Kim Sykes played both the abusive husband AND the sensitive boyfriend. In The Blind Man That Was Teased, Anthony Mejia revealed the enduring pain and resentment that can come from spending one's childhood in a town full of blind people. Priya Ayyar played Pickimz, a woman with *play* to avoid ulcers and migraine headaches.

such an upbringing, and Reg E. Cathey was the unsuspecting Blind Man who became the butt of her cruelty. The curtain came down on The Biggest Lie, Shakeema Green's examination of how money can come between two sisters (played by Adina Porter and Heather **Carnduff**), and how turkey can help you get out of debt.

No doubt the show would have fallen flat, hands or no hands, if not for the careful stewardship of our director/dramaturgs: Joel de la Fuente, Liz Flahive, Michael Young, Susan Vitucci, Larry Nathanson, Greg Allen, Sascha Paladino, Lizzie Gottlieb, Kate Ryan, Megan Sandberg-Zakian, and George Babiak. These generous souls made the trip with us and the kids out to Tyler Hill, PA, where Mike Sell and Eric Karpeles' beautiful house and sumptuous meals provided a feast for everyone's hearts, minds and bellies. We also owe a shoutout to ace composer Rusty Magee who supplied the kids' lyrics with some great tunes.

If reading about the last show is making you hungry for the next, you're in luck! Our next Playmaking show is upon us. March 23rd through 25th we'll be presenting Just Askin': The Curiosity Plays at the HB Playwrights **Foundation**. See our enclosed flyer for more info. *MS-Z*



A Little Shop Talk

2001 brought us our annual Twoon-Two production. In this venerable Project program, two kids are cast as actors and teamed up with an adult playwright and an adult director (two...on two! Get it?). The playwright concocts a short play and the other three go on a trip to

the homes of Maria Tucci, Wendy Ettinger and Derek McLane, and Terry Fitzpatrick and Stephen Perpeluk (all in the environs of Poughkeepsie) to rehearse the shows over the Martin Luther King Day weekend. Six such teams presented their work at the Ensemble Studio Theatre during the last week of January. The theme, and title, of the show was Talking Shop: Plays That Work. Some of the shows were about working, others...well, let's just say they worked!

Johnathan Roldan and Peter Granados kicked off the evening with **Robert Shaffron's** Jest Friends, the tale of a court jester (Peter) who longs to win the heart of Princess Sarah Michelle Tiffany Amber (Diana Rojas), a harsh critic of humor. Johnathan was his older and wiser (or perhaps, wise-acre), companion.

If The Twilight Zone ever returns, Regina Porter's What's In Your Shopping Bag? would make a great script. It featured Felicita Jerez as a maladjusted shopper who falls under the spell of a living window mannequin (Mona Lisa Barthelemy).

George Babiak, who spends far too much time listening to morning shock-jocks, wrote Betty and the Brute for Steven Vasquez and Anju Andre-Bergmann. The kids played a pair of radio talk-show hosts who find out how Returning to the motif of shopping, Lorraine Calderon and Marlene Moran were a pair of calculating women who learn the value of a dollar in Theresa Rebeck's *Do The Math.*

In *Work With Me*, by **Oni Faida Lampley**, **Justin Aponte** and **Shevonne Hernandez** were a pair of kids stuck in a hospital room who find release in their fantasy lives. **Luis Anthony Maldonado** was their able-bodied nurse.

Writer **Jerome Hairston** returned to the Project with *The Legend of Duke Hogwallar*. In this bittersweet piece, a young "cowpig" (**Michael Feliciano**) learns just why he must squeal as loud as he is able when his mentor (**Robert Tomas**) is taken away by the farmer.

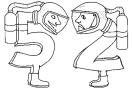
Some of the hardest working folks of *Talking Shop* were the directors. They were, in the order above, John Steber, Martha Banta, Josh Lewis, Jenny Pollack, Keira Naughton, and Jonathan Bernstein. Patrick Barnes was our very composed composer. Great work, guys! *GB*

Half-Dozen Whole Hearted

The 52nd Street Project's Scholarship Fund has arrived. In fact, it has been endowed, thanks to a generous grant from the **CAP Foundation** and a matching grant from **Lloyds TSB Bank plc**. The Fund has also been renamed for a late

Lloyds Bank employee and a very dear Project pal, **Ron Black**. This past October 24th, there was a kick off party at the **West Bank Cafe** for the **Ron Black Memorial Scholarship Fund**. The event, called **Night of Half-a-Dozen Stars**, was put together by Ron's brother Lewis Black and helped raise money for the endowment.

Peter Phillips of Lloyds, the Fund's founder **Willie Reale** and Lew Black shared the hosting duties for the evening. Over sixty people attended the performance held in the **Laurie Beechman Theater**, which featured the talents of **Joe Grifasi**, **Janet Moomjian**, **Mary Testa** and **Lee Wilkof**. In all the event raised over \$32,000. Heaps of thanks to one and all. JS



Cosmic Comics

The Project is blasting off into the future for this year's annual gala, **52001: A Space Benefit**, which will be held on **Monday**, **May 7**, **2001** at the **Altman Building**.

Last year's benefit, **Aargh! The Piratical Gala**, was such a larcenously good time that we decided to do it all over again. This time, instead of swashbucklers and parrots, we are going to break out the moon boots and jet packs. The rocket riot blasts off with cocktails and dinner, with phase two being a show exploring the outer limits of the comedy universe by the likes of **Willie Reale**, **Lewis Black** and the hilarious Project staff and directed by **Mark-Linn Baker**. The honorary co-chairs of the evening will be **Gina Torres** and **Laurence Fishburne** (see Megabits for a scoop on the hosting couple). An invitation will be beamed your way this April. JS

Free Willie!

Shall we compare them to a summer's day? No, that's ridiculous. They're teenagers, not a warm twenty-four hour period. But they *are* the authors and performers of the 2001 *Sonnet Scenes* presented at the **Women's InterArt Theatre Annex** on February 10th and 11th.

In October, after spending



several weeks hanging with their own personal Shakespearean sonnets, the Teen Ensemble and their intrepid dramaturgs retreated to the beautiful mountain home of board chair **Frances McDormand** (thanks to Fran, and also to **Susan Ross** who let several of the menfolk crash at her cabin in the woods). There, they discovered that Artistic Director **Gus Rogerson** makes a mean pasta with bacon, and in their spare time they churned out plays based on and including the (now fully internalized) Shakespearean sonnets. After returning to the big city, each play was cast with fellow class-members, rehearsed, and performed.... just in time for Valentines Day.

And romantic it was. Thomas Santoni showed his sensitive side while falling for his best friend in My First Love. Princess Mary Vamvoukakis saved a kingdom from war, famine, and television in As the Kingdom Turns. For those who were wondering when they would next see a dalmatian in a Project play, Sahara Walsh delivered with The Sun and the Rainbow, in which she and her pooch bonded over unrequited love. Audiences had the chance to glimpse the moral dilemmas we may face after death in The Telegram, Tessa John-Connor's purgatorial love story. In The White Lady, Deshana Hamid showed us all that the Bard may have known a thing or two about substance abuse. Judy Agosto almost lost her best friend to the most popular girl in school in *Crushes* – but don't worry, in the end she got him back as MORE than a friend. Somehow, in Learning to Trust, Alex Metzler got the girl simply by being a talented, yet poor and marginally successful actor (don't try this at home).

While the teens blew everyone away, we're pretty sure they couldn't have done it without their wonderfully dedicated dramaturgs and directors: **Buzz Bovshow**, **Melissa Bowen**, **Chris Ceraso**, **Roz Coleman**, **Enid Graham**, **Abigail Lopez**, **Catherine Mueller**, **Megan Sandberg-Zakian**, and **Annie Torsiglieri**. *MS-Z*

Nights On The Town

The Project would like to thank its many pals for providing tickets to theater and other such events for our "Nights on the Town." We've been to see *The Music Man*, *Jane Eyre, Cobb, Arabian Nights,* and *Princess Turandot*. We are very grateful to **Cora Cahan** and **The New Victory Theater, Candi Adams** and **The Publicity Office, The Blue Light Theater Company, Joe Brancato,** and **an anonymous benefactor** from *The Music Man. CO*

CAPTION AMERICA CAPTURES IMAGINATIONS

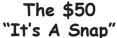
Yes, it is I, **Caption America**, back from my vacation – and not a moment too soon by the looks of it. You may recall that this year's fundraising contest was designed to give me a break by captioning some Project snaps. Give me a break, indeed! I had no idea that there would be those who wanted to replace me permanently. Nice try, folks, but this is MY gig. I do appreciate the little respite though, and the Project really appreciates the over \$54,000 raised to help them continue their work with the kids of Hell's Kitchen.

The contest judges were looking for humor, originality, and a wacky slant on the contents of the pix. While all entries showed some of these qualities, the following are the runners-up in each category; they came closest to putting it all together. They will each receive a Flyer bar gift box.

The \$25 "Give It a Shot"



"In a bizarrely quaint and provincial ritual, Dogboy and Dogman gum fake steak..." Susan McGinnis





"When is the British Navy going to issue Immodium to all it's sailors?"

Elizabeth WIIliams

The \$100 "Shutter To Think"



"Rockabilly Moosician Bull Didley doing his trademark 'salt lick'" Jilian Gersten

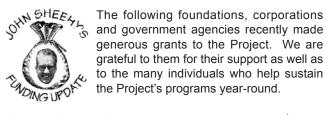
The "Any Amount" Photo Opportunity



Woman: "Oh honey, don't go." Man: "I must go, there's free beer at the salad bar." Daniel Giansante

And the overall winner this year comes from the *Any Amount Category*. **Mr. Buzz Bovshow** will receive a gift certificate for dinner for two at **Eleven Madison Park** for his caption, which seemed to sum up the feeling of so many in this contest. (Remember, it goes with the 4th picture above.)

"Please, please, just accept my donation and don't make me come up with a photo caption. I beg you..."



The Barnsley Foundation	\$7,500
Dept. of Youth and Community Development	\$12,000
The Dramatists Guild Fund	\$3,000
Dramatists Play Service	\$1,500
Eleanor, Adam & Mel Dubin Foundation	\$1,000
The Ford Foundation	\$20,000
The Horace Goldsmith Foundation	\$27,000
Hudson Scenic Studio	\$1,000
Laura Pels Foundation	\$1,000
New York Times Foundation	\$7,500
Newman's Own	\$10,000
Rita J. & Stanley Kaplan Foundation	\$2,500
The Vervane Foundation	\$1,500

Hearts and Smashes

This past Feb. 15, the Project held its very first **Smart Partner Valentine's Day Party** and **Ping-Pong Tournament**. The guests divided their time between mauling opponents on the big green table and creating glitter-glue valentines for



each other. An odd combination, but it worked! Joel Lind and Kurt Mueller proudly took home the foam-core First Prize trophy. Mayleen Cancel and Julie Feldman-Abe came in second (with an assist from Carol Ochs), and Johnathan Roldan and Beth Janson were third (aided by Ashby Semple).

Intern Honor Roll

We'd like to give our thanks to all these marvelous young folk who've been working for us this year for nothing but the glory and the experience: Liz Bell, Jennifer Boring, Emily Crow, Rocio Galarza, Jessica Greif, Kate Hancock, and Yufen Kung. Love ya!

CAP tio



Seventh-grader Jaymaree Rosado and Smart Partner Amy Rice have become fast friends. They speak proudly of each other and the things they've accomplished in their year and a half as a team. Their first feat was memorizing those multiplication tables from 1 to 12.

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They came up with a carrot (well, cookie) incentive to carry them through anticipated slump times – a final chocolate chip baking celebration. The reward written clearly on their numbers chart, they drilled flashcards and took practice tests mercilessly until they could practically smell that chocolate melting. The final test: Director of Education **Julie Feldman-Abe** reeled off numbers at full

speed, but Jaymaree could not be stumped! The team savored their victory at Amy's apartment, after a firsttime experience baking from scratch. Eight times seven never tasted so sweet.

Amy and Jaymaree consider each other an important part of their lives. Everyone in

Amy's life has heard of Jaymaree. Amy's parents recently came to visit NYC and finally got to meet the girl whom their daughter praises so highly. They all went to see *Chicago*. When Amy's work took her out of New York this fall, Jaymaree (along with Amy's grandma) got postcards from every airport. The Smart Partners even set Jaymaree up with an e-mail account so they could keep in touch (and learn a little technology.) When Jaymaree played her first basketball game this season, she got a good luck email from Amy's parents. And Amy was thrilled to be on the sidelines for Jaymaree's first basket!

This team has lots of plans for the spring... They're setting up Jaymaree's new datebook so she can keep track of her busy schedule and start making plans for the future. They want to take photographs together, bring up Jaymaree's math scores, and check out high schools where she'll pursue her dreams of acting, modeling, photography, and writing. Plus, there are more scary movies to scream at, and books to discuss. Their favorite book (which they both read in 6th grade) was *Homecoming*. Their favorite thing about Smart Partnering? Jaymaree: "You get to trust someone." Amy: "How can I follow that?"

CAN YOU DRAW THIS USED-UP, CRUMMY, OLD TUBE OF TOOTHPASTE?

Or just color it? Of course you can! So why not join us for our next Prop-making party on Saturday, March 17? Call George for details at (212) 333-5252



Whew, it has been very busy in the Megabits Office - the shouts of "Copy boy!" and "Stop the presses!" have been deafening. On Sept. 18th Maxwell Murray Mutch (3M to his pals) was born to project volunteer Melissa Murray and husband Kevin Mutch. Jose & Lisa Dominguez, recently of Washington, D.C., were happy to welcome Joshua Earl Dominguez into their home on September 27th. Board member and Project alum José Soto and his wife Michelle gave birth to Alyssa Jordon Soto on October 26th. Alyssa has already been to her first Project show and gurgled high praise for the company. And, in just under the deadline, Wilder Cosaboom-Son was born on Feb. 3rd to Diana Son and Michael Cosaboom. He clocked in at 9 lbs, 1 oz. Guess that's why they named him Wilder. Wait, there's more: on February 4th Anna Caroline Jacobs was born to Project

supporters **Tricia** and **Mark Evan Jacobs**. Anna will be well cared for with all the yummy Watkins Products that her Daddy so generously gives the Project every year. On the nuptials front our good friends **Ron Kastner** (see Flyer bar profile) and **Vanessa Boeye** tied the knot in the South of France in December and went on to honeymoon in Tanzania! **Heather Carnduff & Martin Gobbée** got hitched on October 22 in **Blossburg, PA** which is actually in **"Bux-da-hoo-da, Nowhere,"** according to the bride.

In **pre**-nuptials news, we are happy to report that right after we asked them to be our honorary co-chairs for **52001: A Space Benefit** (see blurb on page 3) **Gina Torres** and **Laurence Fishburne** got engaged. The starry-eyed couple are over the moon about the Project party, and as for the wedding – they'll plan-et.

Imaginative Proposal Dept: Last October in L.A., Jennifer Crittenden received an urgent call from her swain (and Project pal) Bill Wrubel, who'd been complaining about car trouble all week. His car had just sputtered out on Sunset Blvd., he claimed. She drove to his rescue, but as she pulled up, Bill was tinkering with the engine. "I think I figured out what it was," he said. "You fixed your car?" she replied skeptically, as if it were the last thing that could happen. "Yeah, I think it might have been this...," he said as he extracted a diamond ring out of the engine and got down on one knee. Their wedding engine is now purring along nicely, and we are SURE they'll come to our benefit even though it's the day after the ceremony.

We are proud to report that **Diana Rojas** completed a oneyear degree in Computerized Business from Drake Business School with a 3.98 GPA. You go, girl!

Meet Our Mom at the Met: Mary Beth Mackenzie, mother of Project kids Zsuzsa and Marcsi Mysak, now has her self-portrait hanging in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Cool, huh? It's on view through May 6 in the exhibition *Looking At You* in the Lila Acheson Wallace Wing of Modern Art.

NOVEMBER, 2000

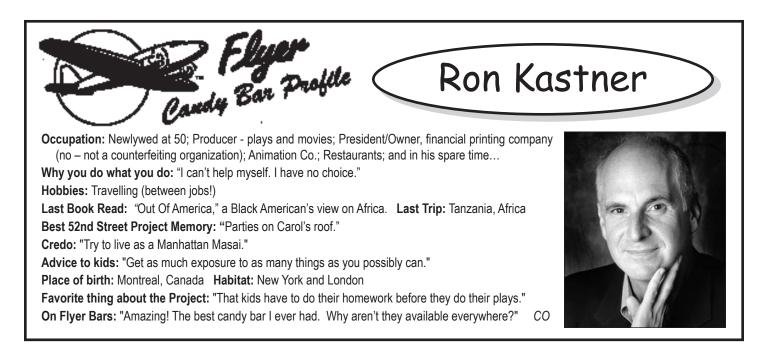
The 52nd Street Project 500 West 52nd St., #2B New York, NY 10019



Playback partners Martha Plimpton and Vionel Ortiz

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Above: Noah & Aidan Walsh, Nat Magee, and **Thom Babe** play a large bug in Block Island in 1996.



Below: Thom with 1-on-1 partner Yazzy Troche in Tyler Hill, 1998.



Left: **Elaine Smith** (far left) in the early 80's with some of the very first Project kids.

Thom Babe and Elaine Smith

The Project mourns the loss of our dear friend **Thom Babe**. Thom wrote and performed plays with the kids over the past fifteen years and by virtue of his indomitable spirit and his formidable talent, elevated the level of work at the Project. He is also credited with the following variation on "Liar, liar pants on fire!" --

"Liar, liar. Dainty frilly underthings a blazing inferno!"

There will never be another like him.

The Project also mourns the loss of another dear friend, **Elaine Smith**. In 1983 **Dave Smith**, Elaine's dad, took Elaine to watch a rehearsal and we all decided that we should include Elaine in our next show. As it worked out, she ended up starring in a little movie. To this day Elaine remains the only kid who never complained about rehearsal. There are a fair number of us who were inspired by Elaine and will not forget how she touched our lives that summer long ago. *WR*