

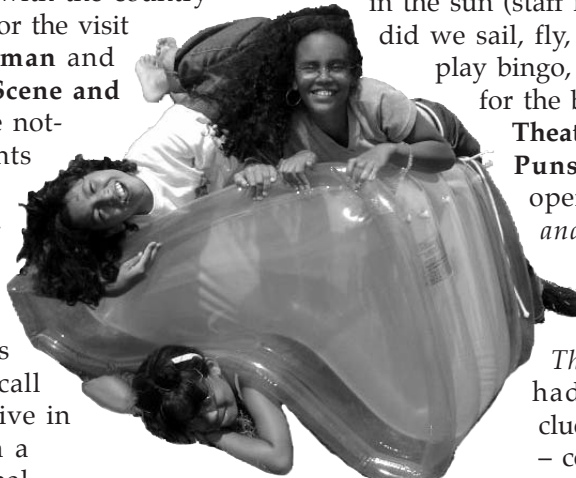
# PROJECT UPDATE

Volume 38

November, 2001

## TEMPEST AND A TEAPOT

And now, today's Tempest report. After a boffo opening on their home turf in Midtown, at the **Peter Norton Space**, courtesy of our good friends at the **Signature Theater Company**, the **52nd Street Teen Ensemble** hopped over the pond to Merry Olde England to share their theatrical derring-do with the country what brung us the Bard. Our hosts for the visit to London Towne were **Kate Coleman** and **Sophie Boyack**, the boss ladies at **Scene and Heard**, Britain's answer to our little not-for-profit. They showed us the sights and brought in a very appreciative audience for the first stop on our U.K. tour, at **Theatro Technis**. We then took the wrong side of the road out to the beautiful countryside of Suffolk and the home of our new pals **Eleanora** and **Oliver** (but you can call 'em Legs 'n' Oli) **Knowland**, who live in **Crow's Hall**, a manor house with a moat that was built in 1540. Our final performance was to be in a natural amphitheater in their Elizabethan garden, but there was this, uh, tempest, so we put the show on in the barn. Kudos to the teens: **Judy Agosto**, **Ahmed Attia**, **Deshana Hamid**, **Tessa Connor**, **Alex Metzler**, **Thomas Santoni**, **Mary Vamvoukakis** and **Sahara Walsh**, and many thanks to all the good folks on both islands who gave generously of their time, talent and



Frankie Ventura, Ariana Casablanca and Octavia Rodriguez romp on Block Island. Photo by John Sheehy.

hospitality. We'd like you to know that nobody got foot and mouth disease, because humans can't, and that we highly recommend a trip to the demi-paradise. GR

## Once U-Pun An Island

This July, ten lucky adults, accompanied by kid chaperones, sailed off to **Block Island** for a week of fun in the sun (staff members tagged along). Not only did we sail, fly, boogie-board, eat ice cream, and play bingo, but we also managed to rehearse for the big show at the **Ensemble Studio Theatre**.

**Puns in the Oven: Plays on Words**, opened with **Josh Lewis' Betty Bold and the Cootie Caper**, wherein **Ani Kehr** (as the tough-as-nails title character) struck at playground bullies everywhere. Next up, *The Joke's On You*, by **Priya Ayyar**, had **Suzette Santana** teaching a clueless comedienne (Priya) the ropes – complete with a trip into fairy-tale land. *Gramma Lesson*, by **Willie Reale**, featured **Octavia Rodriguez** as a wizened matriarch who convinces

her heartbroken granddaughter (**Cecilia Arana**) that what seems like a lost cause is really an opportunity to learn. In *I Never Fanged for My Father*, by **Chris Regan**, **Wonkezeh Newenle** and **Godfrey Simmons** played father and son werewolves who couldn't agree on what (or who) to have for dinner. The act finished with **Theresa Rebeck's The Mystery of the Sobbing Sister**. **Susan McGinnis** played a weepy victim, and the indomitable **Katherine Acosta** was the detective/therapist who solved the case in a snap.

After being forced to make small talk during intermission, the audience rushed back into the theater for the second act. They were greeted by the rousing *Mountain Man* chorus (sung by the ever-popular **MENERGY**). **Jeremy Butler** was a grumpy hermit, and **Robert Sean Leonard** (also writing and directing) was a show-tune singing hiker. Then came *Jasmine of the Squares* (written and directed by **Kim Sykes**), wherein young math whiz **Ariana Casablanca** faced down an evil soap opera star (Kim). In *Witches* (written and directed by **Megan Sandberg-Zakian**), **Britney Castro** and **Zabryna Guevara** fled from an angry mob played by our backstage crew of Project vets (**Mayleen Cancel**, **Noel Polanco**, and **Mary Vamvoukakis**) and then discovered that everyone

All of us here at The 52nd Street Project are grateful that we had a place to come to on September 13th, when our mayor said it was okay to go back to work and go on with our lives. We're also grateful that we have lives to go on with, and encourage all our friends to come by the Clubhouse anytime for a chat and maybe even a Cheeto or two. We also promise as many chuckles as we can manage in our shows in the coming months. Feel free to join us then, too. Most importantly, we send our best wishes and our sympathy to all who suffered loss as a result of the events of September 11th. We hope and trust that life, work and play will go on unchecked both here and throughout this great city of which we are proud to be a part.

can, and should, be a witch. Every evening of theater needs a couple of surfer jokes, and **Joe Mihalow** delivered with *Bob the Dragon*, in which dragon **Alex Kehr** taught surfer **Doug Lockwood** that, duh, "you gotta love the game." Closing out the evening was **George Babiak's** road epic, *The Angel on Eighteen Wheels*, starring **Frankie Ventura** as an iconoclastic trucker and George as the state trooper who befriends him. Ace intern **Sarah Peterseil** was a gum-snappin' waitress.

Goddess of music **Kim Sherman** composed all the songs and **Alison Kyle** was our stage manager. **Pat McQuade** and **Martha Velie-Gass** cooked while lodgings were provided by **Christina Biaggi** and **Pat Walsh**, **Joya Verde** and **Virginia Dare**, **Jane Muskey**, **Josie Merck**, **Wendy vanden Heuvel**, and the **Tierney**, **Taubman**, and **Draper** families.

MS-Z

## Over the Tyler Hill

The August **Puns In The Oven** had a distinctly bittersweet flavor, being the last One-on-One hosted by **Mike Sell** and **Eric Karpeles**, who've been doing it for exactly ten years. Citing a bizarre compulsion to have their house to themselves, they are passing the baton of summer on to others. Never fear, we'll be back to torment them in November with a Playmaking weekend.



Eric Karpeles and Mike Sell

GRB

Despite the occasional aroma of wist in the air, kids and adults succeeded in generating a light-hearted crop of shows. The production at EST was kicked off by **Marilyn Sanchez** as a disenchanted cod and **Lisa Leguillou** as an unscrupulous starfish in **Jackie Reingold's** *A Cod Piece*. Their show featured a special appearance by **Mike Sell** as a "Mussel Man." It was very finny, er, funny.

**Gus Rogerson's** *End Of The Line* cast **Anthony Mejia** as a hapless mechanic who owns a garage in the middle of nowhere. **Catherine Mueller** was his fairy godmother and first and only customer. **Matt Saldívar** took us way into the desert with *Showdown In Sevilla* for **Berto Rodriquez**, who played a tiny Mexican town's sheriff, barber, butcher, and choir director while Matt was his sidekick.

In *One Tough Cookie Crumbles*, by **John Sheehy**, **Lizette Natera** was a junior chef at Madame Borgia's Evil Genius Bakery (**Denise Burse** was the culinary saboteur). **Dan Berrett's** *Bolt* saw **Stephen Galimidi** and **Michael Potts** as a disgruntled racehorse and his craggy trainer. The audience was nuts about *Bolt*, and galloped out for the intermission to strap on feedbags filled with Flyer bars.

The second act was brought back by **Jonathan Hagemeyer** and **Ed Vassallo** in **Tim Nelson's** *A Shaggy Fly Story* about a couple of hicks who slaughter a fly with a shotgun and are tried by an insect judge (**Peter Jay Fernandez**). Next up was **Adam Felber's** *Slashdance*, which featured **Ivana Granados** and **Jeanne Simpson** as a pair of dancers menaced by a killer cactus (thorny **John**

**Sheehy**). **Willie Reale's** *Mellow Drama* had **Leah Galimidi** as a weeping widow and **Peter Jay Fernandez** as both her evil landlord and her asthmatic artist son.

No show is complete without two baking plays, so **Annie Torsiglieri** furnished us with *Taking the Cake*. Annie was a nasty (but fetching) queen who learned a valuable lesson from cupcake chef **Wendy Rivera**. The show closed with **Michael Bernard** and **Justin Aponte** in *Conjoined Twin Prison Break*. Michael refused to tell us what the show was about, so you'll just have to imagine it.

**Kim Sherman** again penned our songs, this time assisted by **David Gaines**, who taught the tunes to the kids and played during the shows. **Elissa Errick** was our steadfast stage manager while all-purpose intern **Sarah Petersiel** joined us again. In addition to Mike and Eric, housing was contributed by the **Pursch**, **Heyn**, **Cobb**, **Halvorsen**, **Stoeckle**, **Myers**, **Homans**, **Grunn**, and **Snyder** families. Many thanks to all!

GB

## "O" Some Party

In 1995, Founder **Willie Reale** established the Scholarship Fund for kids who are going on to some form of higher education. He could hardly have imagined the scene at the screening of **Tim Blake Nelson's** stunning new film "O" on August 21.

Usually the Fund is supported by an annual cocktail party. This year, Tim generously arranged a screening to benefit the Fund. The film's stars **Julia Stiles** and **Mekhi Phifer** attended, along with many celebrities, models and paparazzi (almost too many). Both the screening at the **Union Square Theater** and the after-party at the restaurant **Park** were sold out. In true Project style, some people even sat on the stairs.

Grants for the kids were handed out before the screening. This year's recipients were **Amy Barbosa** (Bronx Community College); her sister **Jill Barbosa** (Hostos Community College); **Jean-Pierre Barthelemy** (Polytechnic University); **Jedidiah Clarke** (Bard College); **Nyita Hanley** (New Paltz University); **Ray Harold** (SUNY Purchase); **Annette Myrie** (SUNY Rockland Community College); **Eric Santoni** (TCI College); and **Jennifer Socarras** (Hartford University). The whole evening was tremendously successful, raising nearly \$13,000 for the **Ron Black Memorial Scholarship Fund**.

JS

## Musical Chairs

**Frances McDormand**, who has chaired the Board with grace and aplomb for 4.5 years, is handing over the gavel to long-time board member **Stephen Graham**. We are grateful for her stellar leadership and look forward to having her keep us up to snuff as she continues her membership on the Board. A big hearty welcome to Stephen who is really looking forward to wielding the gavel and calling folks to order.

CO



Stephen Graham and his Smart Partner, Osage Lewis-Ashley.

GRB



## Bell Toils for Project

We searched o'er land and sea to find the Project's new Education Assistant. We needed someone who could run five days a week (even in winter), read *Catcher in the Rye* four times, and eat Greek salad from the 10th Avenue Diner

five days in a row. Wouldn't you know, the perfect candidate was right in our own backyard. **Liz Bell**, last year's Education Intern and Project kid **Steven Vasquez'** dedicated Smart Partner, met all three requirements and more. Liz can hang with the kids and critique texts with the scholars (she's completing her masters in literature at NYU), but it's her ability to hang with the scholars and critique books with the kids that is most impressive.

Liz's memories of herself as an overly enthusiastic student nailed her the position: "I was the dork in the first row, desperately waving her hand at the teacher."

Liz hails from the Iron City (that's Pittsburgh, Pa., kids) and got her undergraduate degree at **Villanova University**. She comes from a large family (three sisters and a brother) and loves stand-up comedy, going out to dinner with her friends, and all types of music from Tupac to Radiohead. She's fond of sketching, painting, and writing as well. When she's not at the Project, Liz can be found playing in sandboxes with **Sophia Ochs MacVittie** and other toddlers. Welcome, Liz! (her first P.U. piece appears below).



Liz Bell, Education Assistant.

## Teeming with Teams

Our 35 Smart Partner pairs are ready to take on the 2001-2002 school year! Here are the newest teams to join the line-up: **Octavia Rodriguez** and volunteer **Kim Sykes**, **Shevonne Hernandez** and **Joselin Reyes**, **Frankie Ventura** and **Michael Brown**, and **Aisha Jabour** and **Trish Cooke**.

Extra special thanks to the **JP Morgan-Chase Bank's Baseball is for Kids** program for sending Smart Partners and families to cheer on the **Mets** all summer long! JFA

## Proj Kids Go Into Politics

On September 19, I went with **Osage Lewis** and **Candy Godoy** to **Community Board Four's** Introductory Youth Committee meeting. Osage and Candy were invited to the meeting as teen representatives of the Chelsea and Clinton neighborhoods. They were the only kids to show up, but in light of the city's recent tragedy, the low attendance made sense.

Everyone wanted to know exactly what was important to high schoolers living in Manhattan. Both talked about the importance of safety in Clinton (ahem...Hell's Kitchen), where they live, and in Chelsea, where Candy attends high school. Osage mentioned rivalries between groups within the neighborhoods and Candy wondered if the streets in her neighborhood could be better lit at night. The two also discussed the availability of after-school programs for all Manhattan's youth.

At the end of the meeting, Candy asked **Lynn Chaleff**, the Youth Advisory Board chair, what kind of power the Community Board would have in realizing their suggestions. Perhaps fearing that Candy was already intoxicated by potential power, Lynn explained that each teen representative's role was merely an advisory one. Candy surprised Lynn by asking, "No, I mean, what kind of power do *you* have?" With that, it was final. Because of their honesty, maturity and enthusiasm, Osage and Candy were offered two elite positions on the Youth Advisory Council of Community Board Four as well as on the Borough President's Youth Advisory Council. Maybe the two were drunk from the possibility of "actually being listened to," as Osage said, because they accepted the positions on the spot!

LB

## "Never Say Di-ana" Joins Staff

For years, **Diana Rojas** has begged us to let her come back. We hoped that another stint as a "teen" counselor (she's 23) in Tyler Hill would appease her, but no such luck. So, we're finally giving in and creating the post of **Executive Assistant** just for Diana.

All teasing aside, we're delighted to have Diana become the first kid-turned-staffer. She'll work part-time for us while continuing her education.

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.



Blythmour Corporation	\$2,000
The J. Paul Getty Trust	\$10,000
Holland Lodge Foundation	\$4,000
Lloyds TSB Bank plc	\$5,000
Newman's Own	\$2,000
Paramount Pictures	\$10,000
Roulette Entertainment	\$2,000
Theater Communications Group	\$26,000

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The 2001  
 Tyler Hill  
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JOHN SHEEHY

PROJECT **P.U.** UPDATE

Editor-in-Chief: George R. Babiak



Tom Schall

**Occupation:** Actor, fight choreographer, cabinetmaker.

**Why you do what you do:** "You have to have a job, and if you're lucky, your job finds you."

**Hobbies:** Running and napping.

**Last Book Read:** *Seabiscuit*: "It's a true story about an unlikely racehorse, a loser jockey, and a trainer nobody thought was any good coming together and finding greatness."

**Best 52nd Street Project Memory:** "Building a 4 1/2" Newtonian reflector telescope with Jonathan Villanueva and seeing Saturn's rings through it." It's at the Project and available to all, says Tom.

**Credo:** "In order to finish something, you have to start it first."

**Advice to kids:** "Be curious."

**Place of birth:** Bismarck, North Dakota. **Habitat:** "Anywhere within 10 blocks of the Project."

**Favorite thing about the Project:** "You get to play with your friends."

**On Flyer Bars:** "I think they're the best in the world, but I wish they'd make a Cajun Spicy Flyer Bar."



It finally happened! Associate Artistic Director **Michael Bernard** and fab Proj vol **Anne Torsiglieri** got hitched on Block Island on Sept 29. As they said their vows, a Nor'easter blew in, suspending ferry service. The party continued for an extra two days until the weather cleared. This wedding party was a literal blow-out! Mazeltov to Michael and Annie!

On July 31, **Neil Pepe** and **Mary McCann** gave birth to the lovely **Lena Isabella Pepe**. On Aug 20, **Elena de la Fuente** arrived, to the great joy of **Melissa and Joel de la Fuente**. Long-range plan consultant **Lisa Cowan** and **Jonathan Spear** were graced by a happy, healthy **Jacob Pablo Spear Cowan** on Sept 24. **Heather Carnduff** and **Martin Gobbée** were joined on Sept 6 by **Phoenix Enriquė Gobbée**—he weighed in at 8lb 10 1/2 oz, giving him the grand baby prize.

Just days after Sept. 11, Proj vol **Lorraine Tobias** went into labor. Volunteer and husband extraordinaire **Alex Draper** commandeered a car to drive them to NYU hospital! Of course, First Ave in Manhattan was closed...but not for Alex. At each check point he would lean out the window and bellow, "My wife is in labor", and Lorraine would add a loud moan. Each cop gladly waved them on. Then, a block away, they encountered the ur-cop, legs planted, arms crossed, mirrored sunglasses in place. Alex yelled, "My wife is in labor" but the cop, not budging an inch, replied, "Is she now?" After a pause, he broke into a grin and waved them on. **Nora Rose Draper** was born (inside) at 3:36 pm on the 15th.

And finally, a plug for a new play with many Project ties. *Havana Is Waiting*, by Proj writer **Eduardo Machado**, opens at the Cherry Lane on October 11th. **Bruce MacVittie** and **Ed Vassallo**, (along with **Felix Solis**) star and they are being produced by Proj pal and vol **Angelina Fiordellisi** along with **Barbara Liggety**. It is a beautiful play, go see it. (No bias from the Megabits editor.)



GRB