

# PROJECT UPDATE

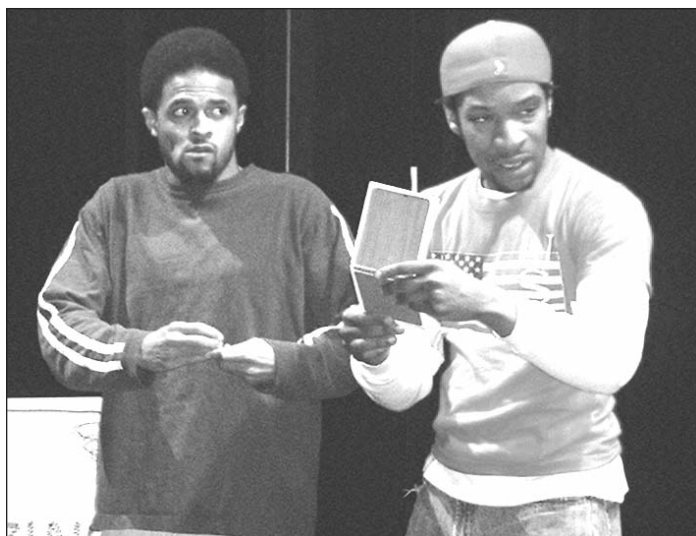
Volume 40, July, 2002

Editor: George R. Babiak

## FIGHT SONG

Nobody gets down to brass tacks better than the 10 brand new playwrights who brought us this winter's Playmaking show, *Heart of the Matter: Basically Ten Plays*, a rip-roaring evening that featured 10 fights and 10 songs.

The evening's first bout was between classmates (She's No) **Angel Desai** and **Rebecca** (not of Sunnybrook Farm) **White** in **Tiffany Paget's** *Emotions*. Their closing duet, *Be Friends Forever*, left little doubt as to the outcome. Think penguins are cute and cuddly? **Joshua Omana** proved otherwise with his hard-hitting melodrama, *Reddy's Evil Plan*. **Jonathan Goldblatt** and **Dale Ho** both looked real nice in their bird get-ups. The same cannot be said for **Karen Trott**, a chick who didn't know how to dress California-cool in **Jazzlyn Hernandez's** *On and Off*. **Kaitlyn Kenney** played a Left Coaster who set her straight. **Anna Li** gave us a world class figure skater/pro football coach to **Jay Patterson's** world class dork/pro football player, and crew kid **Joel Lind** provided the fisticuffs in **John Cuevas's** *A Football Player's Dream*. **Chassity Damiani** closed the first act with the epic battle of *Cloudman and Sun vs. Meltman*. The title characters, played by **John Sheehy**, **Femi Plimpton** and **Alex Draper**, fittingly chose companionship over global catastrophe.

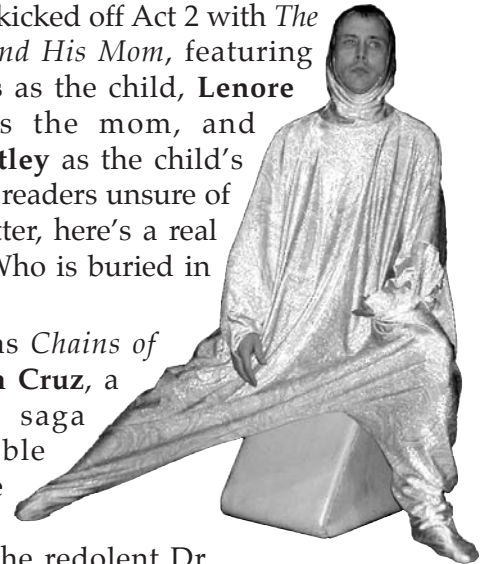


J. WELLINGTON PICCADILLY

**Danyon Davis** and **Kenajuan Bentley** identify a mom.

**Paul Dixon** kicked off Act 2 with *The Child Who Found His Mom*, featuring **Danyon Davis** as the child, **Lenore Pemberton** as the mom, and **Kenajuan Bentley** as the child's friend. For any readers unsure of the subject matter, here's a real brain-twister: Who is buried in Grant's Tomb?

Next up was *Chains of Love* by **Megan Cruz**, a super-hero saga pitting the noble White Dove (**Stephanie**



**Alex Draper** as the deranged Meltman

TRP: WAYNE LEDBETTER

**Bast**) against the redolent Dr. Pink (**Jennifer Ostrega**). They fought. They sang. They joined forces. **Caroline Rodriguez's** *The Fight Between Friends* blended fighting, singing, basketball and tap dancing in the story of two contentious pals brought to life by Project vet **Kevin Geer** and Project alum **Shirley Rumierk**. The penultimate play had **Duane Boutte** and **David Grillo** as the Project's answer to Madison and Unger, in **Eddie Cuevas's** *Let Me Stay*.

The donnybrooks and ditties came to an end with *The Parrot and the Old House*, by **Christian Alvarez**, about a diseased misanthrope (**P.J. Brown**) who learns to love his singing parrot (**Maddie Corman**).

Each kid had a top-drawer director/dramaturg in his/her corner. We're sure they join us in giving big ups to **Joe White**, **Peter Herdrich**, **Marcella André**, **Connie Grappo**, **Liliana Amador**, **Elizabeth Giamatti**, **Danny Goldstein** and **Jace Alexander**. The same goes for our weekend hosts **Cathy** and **Stephen Graham**, **Lynn** and **Sam Waterston** and **Liz** and **Paul Giamatti**. We must also pay tribute to **Karen Munkel**, our stage manager, and **Crystal Thompson**, our costume designer. And although he refused to have anything to do with all the roughhousing, our ever-lovin' composer **Rusty Magee** made every one of the ten songs a chart-topper. Thanks Rusty.

GR

**Suzette Santana, Paul Dixon, and Steven Galimidi** boogie down on May 13.

WENDY STULBERG



## DISCO BASH A BALL

Back when the Project began, the sun was beginning to set on the Disco era, but the Project resurrected all of the glamour and gaudiness of the days of "Boom, Boom, Boom" one last time on Monday, May 13, 2002 at *STILL STAYIN' ALIVE*, the Twentieth Anniversary Disco Bash.

The Eyebeam Atelier was awash in mirror balls and colored lights. In keeping with the dance club theme, **Ronnie Davis** of **Great Performances** festooned the tables in Mylar and devised the family-style menu. **John Laird** of **Diageo Chateau & Estate Wines** provided the accompanying fermented grape extract.

Over 500 guests tapped their toes as **Paul Dixon**, **Stephen Galimidi** and **Suzette Santana** performed the Hustle by way of introducing emcee **Lewis Black**. **Kate Burton** and **Billy Crudup** joined in to present a short film retrospective of the Project's first twenty years which was directed by **Noël Dawkins** and **Wendy Ettinger**, edited by **Tricia Cooke** and mixed by **Margaret Crimmins**. The disco kids were next joined by alumni **Diana Rojas**, **Shirley Rumierk** and **José Soto** in a tribute to all of the volunteers who have made the Project possible over the years. Finally, **Peter Jay Fernandez** lead the cast, along with **Peter Herdrich**, **Michael Potts**, **Anne Torsiglieri** and **Karen Trott** in a gospel-flavored closing number, featuring an impromptu tambourine performance from **Anton Fig**.

The show was written by **Willie Reale** and **John Sheehy**, directed by **Jonathan Bernstein**, and choreographed by **Jeanne Simpson**. The set and rigging was designed by **Kevin Roach**, the mammoth lighting plan by **Greg MacPherson**, the

sound by **Scott Lehrer**, and the costumes by **Crystal Thompson**. **Rob Reale** wrote the song with his brother and the performance was stage-managed by **Hank Meiman** with music direction by **Irwin Fisch**, whose last foray was our 10th anniversary show.

The entire event was tremendously successful; our highest grossing party to date. Honorary chair **Tom Cruise** helped to make it that way, along with **Arthur Dantchik**, **Cathy Dantchik**, **Wendy Ettinger & Derek McLane**, **Louis & Patrice Friedman**, **Angelina Fiordellisi & Matt Williams**, **Cathy & Stephen Graham**, **Maurice Kanbar**, **Laura Valeroso**, **Jenny Wiener & Jon Steingart & Mosaic Entertainment**, **Joanne Woodward & Paul Newman**, and **Jeffrey Yass**. As the guests left, they were rewarded with gift bags donated by **Watkins, Inc.**, and filled by **Giorgio Armani Parfums**, **Kenneth Cole Productions**, **Entertainment Weekly**, **Jive Records** of the **Zomba Music Group**, **Noggin**, **Scholastic Inc.**, **Sesame Workshop**, **Ultimate Impressions**, **John A. Vassilaros & Sons Coffee** and **Watkins Inc.** The event was also made possible in part by generous in-kind donations from **Peter Contarino & Backstage Productions**, **Big Apple Lights**, **Iris A. Brown**, **Capital Printing & Ron Kastner**, **Dog Bark Sound**, **Hudson Scenic Studios**, **Kevin O'Shea & Jack Morton Williams, Inc.**, **The Post Factory**, **The Printing Store**, and **Wendy Stulberg**. Disco DJ **Max Salpetrier** not only turned the beat around, he turned it upside down. JS

## Replay Rescheduled with Regal Results

In spite of some last minute rescheduling due to inclement weather, our May Replay Picnic went off without a hitch. Well, not completely without a hitch... first of all, young playwright **Alex Tomas** was sick and had to miss the whole thing... and then



JOHN SHEEHY

Desperate for the Replay Picnic barbecue to begin, **Katie Grullon** begins munching on **Katherine Acosta's** shoulder.

there was that little matter of forgetting all the paper plates, cups, and napkins... oh, and then there was the no-running-water-in-the-house-so-please-don't-use-the-toilet thing. But heck, the plays were good, and we all enjoyed frolicking around the stream and porch swing at the beautiful country home of **Wendy Ettinger**, **Derek McLane**, and their kids **Cooper**, **Hudson**, and **Kathryn**. Plus, there was some tasty BBQ to be had.

The seasoned playwrights took it all in stride. After all, they were the lucky students in **Michael Bernard's** last-ever Project playwriting class, so they already felt pretty special. During their 8-week tutorial with Michael, **Katherine Acosta**, **Solangee Acosta**, **Ariana Casablanca**, **Lilli Cooper**, **Victor Ariel Cortes**, **Katie Grullon**, **Kamila Jacob**, **Joshua Joya**, **Alex Kehr**, **Anastasia Kehr**, **Spencer Lopez**, **Wonkezeh Newenle**, **Evelyn Nicole Rosario**, **Suzette Santana**, **Zebulun Santiago**, **Michael Velez**, and **Johanna Vidal** all had a chance to come up with a play about – get this – whatever they wanted! No restrictions on theme, number of characters, or anything else. Needless to say, the young writers produced many works of enduring brilliance. Some especially memorable moments included: **Katherine Acosta's** hilarious yet poignant vaudeville tale, *The Truth About Dummies*, with **Josh Lewis** as a wanna-be ventriloquist, **Dale Ho** as the conniving ventriloquist trainer, and **John Sheehy** as (what else?) the dummy; **Bruce MacVittie** and **Danyon Davis** as hyperkinetic swimming dragons in *The Not So Everlasting Friendship*, by that master of the dragon drama, **Victor Cortes** (directed by **Erica Schmidt**); and **Johnathan Bernstein**, **Sarah Kay**, **Rachel Shroeder**, and ace intern **Julia Miller** as a family torn apart by domestic violence in **Joshua Joya's** sober *Christmas Stole My Mother*.

Muchas Gracias to all of our talented volunteer actors and directors (who also make great salads and desserts; who knew?), our hosts, and all the parents who trooped all the way upstate to show their support. You'll be happy to know, we all got home safely without any problems at all. Oh yeah, except for that horrifying traffic jam on 11th Avenue... but that's another story. MSZ

### Meanwhile, Back In Adolescence...

Though everyone keeps talking about the national downturn, 2002 has thus far been wildly productive for a certain group of 12 teenagers who meet every Thursday in a little clubhouse at the corner of 52nd and 10th. The dynamic Teen Ensemble started the year by developing, writing, and performing



**Mayleen Cancél** gives **Joe Mohamed** a piece of her mind in *The Teen Scenes*.

personal monologues. In these pieces, the group held forth on their experiences with and feelings about everything from ways to make money to the death of a parent to strange dreams... and so much more. Never a bunch to quit while they're ahead, these teens forged on into their second big project of the year: rehearsing and presenting lengthy scenes from modern plays. The icing on the cake was a performance at the beautiful, new, and conveniently located **Ars Nova Theater** (thanks, **Jenny Wiener** and **Jon Steingart** of **Mosaic Entertainment**, for hosting our little production!), right around the corner on 54th and 10th.

The first two scenes (directed by **Chris Ceraso** and **Michael Bernard/Cecilia Arana**, respectively) came from **Kenneth Lonergan's** play, *Lobby Hero*. **Johnathan Roldan** and **Noel Polanco** tackled the opening scene of the play, in which Security Guard Captain Noel berates his young employee Johnathan for his incessant joking and lack of ambition. In the



**Jennifer Jimenez** (left) and **Jaya Rosado** (right) with their director **Josh Lewis** (center).

following scene, the slacker security guard (**Jonathan Villanueva**) tries to pick up a tough rookie cop (**Aisha Jabour**) with problems of her own. The tone shifted a bit for the next piece, an intimate romantic scene from Proj Vet **Jerome Hairston's** *a.m. Sunday*. In a festival of hyphenation, **Anju André-Bergmann** and **Osage Lewis-Ashley** (directed, of course, by **Megan Sandberg-Zakian**) portrayed suburban teenagers playing the exhilarating yet tortuously awkward game of adolescent attraction.

The second half of the evening opened with **Matthew Jellison** and **Natalie Musteata** as early 20th century teenagers contemplating a dangerous stunt in **Naomi Wallace's** *The Trestle at Pope Lick Creek*, with direction by **Doug Lockwood**. The night ended with a pair of scenes from **George Walker's** *Tough!* The first, directed by **Gus Rogerson**, featured **Mayleen Cancél** as Tina, a pregnant teenager confronting her rather inarticulate boyfriend (**Joseph Mohamed**). **Josh Lewis** and **Diana Rojas** helmed the second *Tough!* scene, in which Tina (now played by **Jennifer Jimenez**) finally found comfort in her best friend Jill (**Jaya Rosado**), who kindly promised that if anyone felt sorry for Tina raising a baby alone, she would kick them to death. And thus, the evening came to a moving close.

We owe a big shout-out to **Nancy Giles** and **Jenny Pollack** for their help as well as to the generous volunteer directors who invested so diligently in this class since September. Just look at the huge dividends they got out of it! Now if only everyone would invest in the Teen Ensemble instead of all those silly stocks and bonds... MSZ

### Staff Plays Musical Chairs

Megabytes readers may recall that **Julie Feldman-Abe** earned her doctorate recently. Not long after that, her landlord announced his intention to move his kinfolk into her apartment. As they stared at the sheepskin and the eviction notice, Julie's husband **Mauricio** declared that there was no better time to "load up the truck and move to Beverly Hills, that is. Swimmin' pools, movie stars." After



Liz (top) and Megan are very excited about their promotions.

GRB

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.



Assembly Member Richard N. Gottfried	\$2,500
Capital Research Group	\$12,695
Comedy Central	\$1,000
Davis Polk & Wardwell	\$5,000
Department of Youth and Community Development	\$6,454
Entertainment Weekly	\$5,000
Holland Lodge Foundation	\$4,000
JKW Foundation	\$5,500
Kanbar Charitable Trust	\$10,000
Lloyds TSB	\$5,000
Lucille Lortel Foundation	\$7,500
Mosaic Entertainment	\$30,000
New World Foundation	\$5,000
RJK Production	\$2,500
St. James Church	\$3,000
TaxPro Financial Network	\$1,000
John A. Vassilaros & Sons, Inc.	\$5,000
Watkins, Inc.	\$2,500
Zomba Enterprises	\$2,000

shaking her Brazilian husband out of his reverie (and his Tennessee accent) Julie gave her notice. As you are reading this, our trusty Education Director for the last four years is packing up her dude, dog, duds, and dad and relocating to Los Angeles (see her farewell column on page 5). Good luck, Julie!

The good news is that **Liz Bell**, Julie's assistant, will make the transition ultra-smooth by taking over the reins as the head of our Smart Partner program. Congratulations, Lizard Belly!

But wait! There are even more upheavals afoot. Last issue revealed that after a decade of loyal service, **Michael Bernard** is vacating his position as Associate Artistic Director. An exhaustive nationwide search for his replacement ensued. The Project employed supercomputers, spy satellites, corporate headhunters, psychics, bloodhounds and Magic 8-Balls only to discover that the best candidate for the job was already occupying Michael's old desk! In other words, **Megan Sandberg-Zakian**, our Volunteer Coordinator for the last two years, is being promoted to A.A.D. The entire staff (especially Megan) are all mighty delighted that she'll be continuing on in her new, more powerful form. Both experiences have reaffirmed the moral of *The Wizard of Oz*: the next time we go looking for our heart's desire, we'll check our back yards first. GB



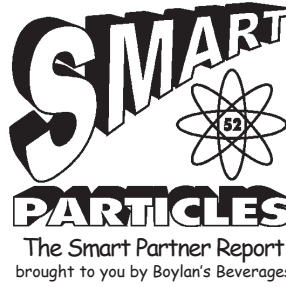
### In Memoriam: Bob Reale

The Project mourns the loss of our dear friend and Project dad **Bob Reale**. As Bob was wont to do, he welcomed Project kids into his home for many, many years and never failed to come over for a meal even when he and **Lynn** were no longer hosting. Our love and sympathy go out to all of the Reale family. We know Bob is looking down upon us with that huge smile and watching over us all. CO

### A Midsummer Night's Blowout

Feeling puckish? Come to the sixth annual **Ron Black Memorial Scholarship Fund Cocktail Party, Wednesday, August 7, 2002** starting at 6:30. This year's bash will be hosted by Board Member **Jenny Wiener** at the luxurious offices of **Mosaic Entertainment** on West 54th Street. The suggested donation is \$25, and all proceeds will go toward the Fund, which makes gifts to Project kids who are continuing their education. About a dozen scholarships will be handed out to new students and to returning students who have kept a B average.

Keep an eye out for an invitation coming your way soon. Oh, what fools these mortals be who don't mark their calendars now. JS



Dear Project Pals:

By now, many of you have heard that I graduated and it's time for me to make my way west to Los Angeles, of all places (with a little summer detour to Asia.) Thankfully, a wonderful new Education Director appeared in the form of **Liz Bell**. In other words, it's time for the Smart Partner program to graduate too.



GRB

One of the most difficult parts of leaving New York is saying goodbye to all of you who have been such an important part of my life. When I started at the


Project more than four years ago, I had no idea what an amazing group of kids, families and volunteers I would be working with, and how quickly you would flourish with more regular opportunities to get together and focus on learning and life goals. I, of course, was the luckiest of all, since I got to have all of you as Smart Partners. You taught me more than you'll ever know, and I'm not just talking about TV Wrestling.

Smart Kids: Please remember that even though I won't be at the Project, you are always in my heart. Never before have I met such a talented, smart, good-hearted group of kids and I will always take great joy in hearing from you. I hope some of the things I bugged you about stay in your mind, too. I'll repeat them again, just in case: Expect great things from yourself; do your homework; and move away from people who distract you-- in class and in life. And please, please call your Smart Partner Adult if you can't make an appointment!

Adult Volunteers and Parents: Please remember how much I and the kids appreciate you. You've all taught me a great deal about raising kids, creativity, and commitment. Don't be fooled by how smart and mature the kids are, they still need to be reminded to turn in homework. And please, please don't forget to turn in your evaluations!

Everyone, I'd love to hear from you and see you on this coast or the other. My e-mail is: [julie@alumni.brown.edu](mailto:julie@alumni.brown.edu) and my cell phone is: 917-412-4384. And please don't think you're losing a friend in New York: you're actually gaining a friend in Los Angeles. JFA

**GET YOUR OWN PROJECT JEAN JACKET!**



Tell the world you're a proud pal of the Project! These spiffy black or blue jean jackets feature a big embroidered version of our Shel Silverstein logo on the back and a small Fivey and Twoey on the front. The jackets are **\$100.** and come in sizes **S, M, L,** and **XL.**

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I would like a Project jean jacket in size \_\_\_\_\_ in the color \_\_\_\_\_ (specify black or blue).

I enclose a check for \$100., made payable to the Project.

Check one box:

I will pick up my jacket at the Clubhouse.

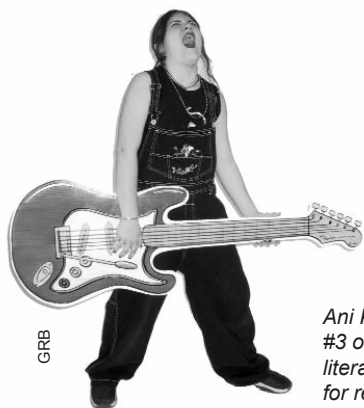
Please mail my jacket to my home.

Please send checks to The 52nd Street Project, 500 W. 52nd St., #2B, New York, NY 10019. Att: George Babiak. We'll notify you when your jacket arrives.



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

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Ani Kehr rocks out for issue #3 of *Fivey*, the Project's literary magazine, scheduled for release this summer.



## Kim D. Sherman

**Occupation:** Composer **Why you do what you do:** "I can't help it."  
**Hobbies:** "Growing plants on the fire escape, cooking, going to the gym, Pilates, knitting square-shaped things."  
**Last Book Read:** *Bee Season* by Myla Goldberg: "It's about spelling but it has several dangling participles."  
**Best 52nd Street Project Memory:** "Eating lobster on the porch of the house on Block Island and having the kids call me 'Hey, Music Lady!'"  
**Credo:** "If it's not fun don't do it."  
**Advice to kids:** "Say what you think, but think before you speak."  
**Place of birth:** Crystal Lake, Illinois **Habitat:** "Washington Heights, five blocks from the Cloisters."  
**Favorite thing about the Project:** "No matter how many times you participate it is always a new experience."  
**On Flyer Bars:** "Mmmmmm. My new favorite is the dark chocolate big bar. I miss them when I am in California."



On April 27th Project pals **Ned Eisenberg** and **Patricia Dunnock** tied the knot in a lovely ceremony (so this editor has been told) on Martha's Vineyard. They carefully planned their honeymoon to be back in time for our big disco benefit. Now that's love.

On May 11th Board member **Noël Dawkins**, and Proj. vol **Joe Mihalow** tied the knot in a beautifully festooned downtown loft. The long tables were divided by signs assigning a NY neighborhood to each section. Project friends were cleverly seated in Hell's Kitchen. Joe and Noël postponed their honeymoon so they could make it to the benefit two days later. That's love, too.

On April 13th, Board Member **Laura Valeroso** gave birth to the delightful **Alex Daniel Seidman** who weighed in at 6 lbs, 10 oz. His dad **David** could not be happier. And despite being brand new parents who never sleep, even they came to the Project benefit. Talk about above and beyond volunteers.

Now, let's talk about whirlwind romance...In March, Proj. volunteer **David Eigenberg** volunteered for another organization and went to a gala for the USO. Lucky for him he did. Literally across a crowded room, he spotted **Chrysti Kotik**, an Army Specialist at Fort Monroe in Virginia. Two and half months later they were engaged. David eagerly waits for his fiancé to get off active duty in September. We wish them much happiness.

And this just in...stop the presses...A beautiful baby girl, **Lucia Bonicelli Stephenson** was born on June 15 to proud parents **Adriana Trigiani** and **Tim Stephenson**. She was 9 lb 7 oz. Wow. She has a full head of thick black hair and voluptuous red lips just like her momma.

On a more academic note, we congratulate our own Dr. Feldman for receiving a certificate from the Pasesetter Awards . They honor those who have given outstanding service and leadership to our city's youth. Makes sense to us.