

SEE PAGE 5 FOR YOUR
SHOW FLYER!

PROJECT UPDATE

Volume 45; March, 2004

Editor: George R. Babiak

How Estrange!

We could just keep doing Playback the same old way. On the other hand, we could try an exciting alternative ... which is what we did this Fall with *On the Other Hand: The Alternative Plays*. See, Playback has always been the territory of 14 and 15 year olds who have finished the Two-on-Two's. We decided to try a little switcheroo and assign Playback to our delightful 12 and 13 year olds (the Two-on-Two's will now be the domain of the older lads and lasses). Our daring trial began with some writing sessions at the Project, during which seven kids wrote their chef d'oeuvre. Their seven adult partners followed suit with equally brilliant "answer plays." The whole group repaired to Franklin, NY to clear their collective heads and rehearse beneath the luminous fall foliage.

The evening kicked off with **Jazzy Rosado's** *Like Mother, Like Daughter*, wherein Jazzy played a mom with a proclivity for low-rise jeans, Beyonce, and phrases like "that's mad grimy." Her daughter (adult partner **Kate Marks**) was not pleased. In Kate's play, *Like Daughter, Like Mother*, the tables were turned: Kate's character grew up to be an even more regressive mom (she enjoyed finger-painting and thumb-sucking), with Jazzy as her frustrated daughter who comes to realize that traditional parent/child structures just don't work for some families.

John Cuevas carried on the evening's unofficial "estranged family members" theme in *The Mystorie*, in which evil super-villain Mystoman is foiled in his attempts to rule the world by Mermaid Mary, a girl in a really tight turquoise suit who turns out to be his sister. In **Megan Sandberg-Zakian's** answer, *Behind the Mystorie*, we discovered the true story behind the siblings' estrangement (it had something to do with a really cool exploding foam-core prop).

Next was **Johanna Vidal's** *Just Put It Like This*, a musing on what happens when a judgmental high school student (Johanna) is approached by a persistent homeless lady (**Diana Rojas**). Just put it like this: it had a happy ending. **Jolie Tong's** answer play, *Lost and Found*, had our homeless lady reuniting with her long-lost mother (yep,

more estrangement) who, it turned out, had won the lottery and relocated to Monaco.

Closing the act was **Aladino Olivares'** mystery *The House*, in which two feuding (read: estranged) brothers became trapped in a mysterious abode. They were rewarded by a talking light that gave them three million dollars. It turned out in **Reg Flowers'** *The Money Trap* that the windfall had some strings attached. Moral: don't accept large sums of money from a talking light without asking some questions, people!

Next, **Alex Kehr's** martial arts drama *The Swordsmen*, had Alex and **Tom Schall** playing estranged brothers who nearly killed each other before discovering their kinship. In Tom's answer, *The Unkindest Cut*, their newly forged relationship was nearly destroyed by credit card debt, but brotherly love prevailed.

Katherine Acosta decided to keep it real by titling her play *Family Issues*. **Gus Rogerson** and Katherine played a brother and sister whose bickering leads to larceny and jail time. In *Sweet Sixteen*, they found they could love each other in spite of estrangement, and sang a really nice song about it (composed, along with all the show's songs, by the terrific **Loren Toolajian**).

Kayelani Silva broke the mold by writing about *The Relationship Between Two Friends*. Kayelani was a teenager with a secret, and **Becky White** her loyal best buddy who loved her anyway. In *Home Is Where You Make It*, Kayelani played a baby bird who received a visit from (take a wild guess) her long-lost sister! But in the end (looking very avian in their feathery duds, thanks to costumer **Munee Hayes**), they flew off into the sunset together.

And we couldn't have flown off into the sunset with these plays were it not for: our stage manager, **Erica Schmidt**, singing coach **Kari Riely**, ace lighting team **Greg MacPherson** and **Kelly Blackwell**, and goddess of sound **Vanessa Valdes**. We also owe a big shout-out to **Ed Vassallo** and to our hosts **Gene, Carol, and Carmela Marnier, David Bridel, and Wendy, Tom and Erna Morgan**. Without them the company would never have spent a lovely long weekend together – just like one big, happy, non-estranged family.

MSZ



JOHN SHEEHY

Erik Bowie and Johanna Vidal in *Lost and Found*.

DOLING OUT ADVICE AND CASH



Like, hi. It's me, Kay. I am totally here to report on the super-helpful contest the Project held this year. You might remember that the goal of this year's fundraiser was to help me to figure out what to do when I grow up. The expert judging panel from the Project (all of whom have actual jobs) was thrilled with all the practicality and insight into the workings of the working world. The Project also appreciates the over \$45,000 raised to help them continue...um...working with the kids.

I am very grateful to everyone who sent in some advice – you gave me a lot to think about. While I still have no idea what I am going to do as an adult, it also seems clear that plenty of adults have no idea either, and that makes me feel SO much better. The following are the winners in each category. Winners will each receive a Flyer bar gift box. The grand-prize winner will receive a gift certificate for dinner for two at 'CESCA.



THE \$25 BALLERINA

Winner:
**Jennifer
Ostrega**

ON THE ONE HAND:

"I get into great shape and get to wear my hair in a bun."

ON THE OTHER:

"There's the smell of the chicken salad breath of the theater patrons at Lincoln Center and hearing random hearing aids go off during the Nutcracker performances."

THE \$50 RESEARCH SCIENTIST

Winners:
**Connie Grappo
and Lee Wilkof**



ON THE ONE HAND:

"You could win the Nobel Prize!"

ON THE OTHER:

"You might get cooties."

THE ANY-AMOUNT "WHAT DO YOU DO?"

Winner: **Cathy Dantchik**

Here's what I do: "I'm a party planner"

ON THE ONE HAND:

"I get yelled at by celebrities who don't have reserved tables."

ON THE OTHER:

"I have lots of juicy stories about drunk celebrities."



THE \$100 CEO

Winner:
**Aram Edward
Kailian**

ON THE ONE HAND:

Corporate responsibility can create opportunity for positive change provided one maintains a moral & socially conscious center. The capabilities of a caring person, especially one of corporate power, are limitless.

ON THE OTHER:

You can earn more money than you know what to do with. You could donate occasionally to ease your conscience, but still are unfortunately on a path at the cost OF YOUR VERY SOUL!!

THE GRAND PRIZE WINNER (From the What Do You Do? Category)

Winner: **Liz Tuccillo**

Here's what I do: "I'm a comedy writer"

ON THE ONE HAND:

"It's great money, incredible lifestyle, fantastic opportunities and impressive to all my friends."

ON THE OTHER:

"I can't think of one lousy punch line for this and I want to kill myself."

AND ANOTHER THING...!!

What was that ruckus coming from Hell's Kitchen just before the holidays? Funny you should ask. Ten kid playwrights giving us a piece of their minds, that's what. And thanks to our pals at Playwright's Horizons, they got to do it in style at the fancy *and* schmancy **Peter Jay Sharp Theater**, in our Fall Playmaking Show: "*A Piece of Our Minds-Plays With Opinions.*"

First to sound off was **Matthew Ortiz**, with *War Between Love*, a tale from the Dark Ages featuring **Walker Jones** and **Liza Colon-Zayas** as a couple of medieval hotheads. Fast (very fast) forward to the present day, the setting for **Jason Peterson Ridge's** *Pro Skateboarders*. **Nathan Lang** played a...you guessed it... who thought the skatepark was junky. **Erik Bowie** had a different opinion. A talking skateboard saved the day. **A.J. Welsh** made us



Jed Clarke decides whether to kiss or kill **Martha Plimpton**.

an offer we couldn't refuse in *The Mafia Tragedy*, with **Martha Plimpton** torn between two lovers (and feelin' like a fool). **George Babiak** was the jealous mob boss and Project alum **Jed Clarke** his consigliere. Tragedy ensued. Then **Luz Maldonado** posed the question, *How Did A Princess Turn Into A Cat*.

Hmmm... The answer was provided by **Lenore Pemberton** and **Caroline Clay**, playing a pair of princesses, one of whom...right. The first act ended with *The Big Argument*, as rendered by **Carla Olivia**. **Kathy Hiler** and **Ellen Foley** ended as friends, and everyone went to the lobby happy.

They came back even happier, thanks to liberal consumption of Flyer Bars (they don't call them "Flyer" for nothing), and were introduced to **Stephanie Vamvoukakis's** *Dancing Fool*, in the person of **Joselin Reyes**. Her sister, on the other hand, played by **Wendy vanden Heuvel**, was a dancing disaster. But she meant well. *The Horror*, written by **Junior Chatman** and performed by **Peter Appel** and **Paco Tolson**, took us inside the amazing world of scary story publishing. **Mercedes Herrero** and **Christopher Randolph** met cute in **Katherine Alvarez's** *Love Birds*. Will they live happily ever after? Katherine wouldn't say. **Georgie Zapata** told us *The Legend Of Dragons And Dinosaurs*, in which **Thom Sesma** and **Shona Tucker** clashed and crashed as Thunder and Lightning. It all ended with *The Deadline*, by **Jennifer Ramirez**, starring **Stephen Barker Turner** and **Felix Solis** in a tale of love, death, basketball and baseball.

None of these kids would have had their say without the help of: Dramaturg/Directors (in order of appearance) **Lee Wilkof**, **Jonathan Bernstein**, **John Sheehy**, **Liliana Amador**, **Liza Steinberg**, **Madeleine George**, **Danyon Davis**, **Rick Meese**, **Jeanne Simpson**, and **Jennifer Ostrega**; Composer **Patrick Barnes**; Lighting Designers

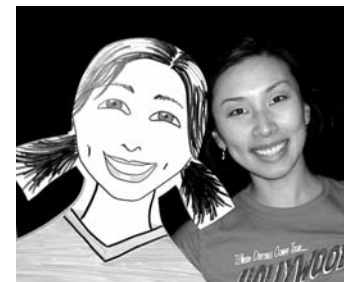
Greg MacPherson and **Kelly Blackwell**; Costume Designer **Elizabeth Bourgeois**; Sound Designer **Maury Schott**; Stage Manager **Katie Ahern**; and last but in no way, shape or form least, our weekend hosts the **Cobbs**, the **Pursches**, the **Rutledges**, the **Heyns**, the **Bakers**, **Sohail Raikhy**, **Joan Henry**, **Katy Homans** and **Patterson Sims**, and our very dear friends **Eric Karpeles** and **Mike Sell**. Thanks. GR

We Tried Again...and Succeeded Again

Remember that first paragraph on page 1 where we talked about doing "New Formula" Playback with younger kids? Well, we couldn't overlook the group of kids who have been waiting to do it for years, so we did one more "Classic" Playback, just for old time's sake. For this batch, we journeyed up to Clinton Corners for the President's Day weekend and rehearsed at the homes of **Maria Tucci** and **Robert Gottlieb**, **Terry Fitzpatrick** and **Stephen Pempeluk**, and **Griffin Dunne**. Between rehearsals, we went bowling, visited a roller rink, and sledded in the Valley of Fear. Once back in the city, we swiftly commandeered **Theatre Three** on W. 43rd St. and performed our aptly-titled show *If At First You Don't Succeed... Plays that Try Again* for four packed houses over Feb. 27-29.

Now for the recap: the opener was **Jeremy Butler's** *The Jock and the Geek*, a play that followed the long and hallowed tradition of Bully vs. Nerd drama. **Carlo Alban**, the Jock of Part 1, answered the piece with *Dr. Spencer and Mr. Cool*, wherein we saw Jeremy do a Nutty Professor turn by morphing himself and most of the school into super-cool dudes and dudettes. Carlo reprised his role as the breathtakingly dense football player.

In *The Decision*, **Anthony Mejia** was Wild Joe, a tender-hearted nogoodnik with a compulsion to rob banks and **Stephanie Bast** was Bonny, the long-suffering pal who tries to reform him. **Jerome Hairston's** follow-up, *The Heart of a Madman*, explored Wild Joe's efforts to replace Bonny with a foam-core replica. Needless to say, the real one was nicer and cuter.



Stephanie Bast meets her doppelganger.

Ani Kehr's *Out of the Box* dealt with the angst of an adolescent poet who clashes with a little brother and then unleashes a long-lost imaginary friend. Both were played by **Danny Goldstein**, who skillfully distinguished his characters with the subtle use of an enormous red wig and an equally voluminous **Jimmy Stewart** impression. Danny ushered them all into adulthood with his sequel, *Under Your Nose*.

Wonkezeh Newenle was an orphaned teen who bumps into his mom, **Phyllis Somerville**, on a street corner in his play *I'm Sorry*. Not only do they go through some conflict, but in **Michael Bernard's** answer play,

entitled *I'm Sorry II*, they find that a pair of violinists who inhabit their fantasies begin to invade their real lives by underscoring their every move... and mooching pancakes. Director **George Babiak** and **Kari Riely** demonstrated their foam-core musicianship in this play, but Kari REALLY displayed her virtuosity as the musical director and pianist for the entire show.

After the customary audience stampede to the lobby for chocolate and conversation, the show resumed with **Berto Rodriguez's** *The Help of A Friend* and **Ed Vassallo's** *Which Friend Should You Help?*. The two plays told the tale of a "famous person counselor" (Berto) who feels compelled to help his seedy, drug-dealing pal (Ed) purchase a fancy, up-to-date "housecar." He realizes in the end that his elven-shoed, plaid-panted chum Malf (**Alex Tomas**), though exceedingly nerdy, is the better friend.

The Best of Both Worlds, by **Solangee Acosta**, pitted her character Janay against **Lee Rosen's** tough kid Chris in a no-holds-barred candy-selling match. Lee's show, *When Both Worlds Collide*, had the grown-up Janay as a confectionologist in the employ of greedy CEO Chris. The climax came with the creation of a bar of anti-gravitational white chocolate. **Jon Paris** (Flyer Bar CEO), take note!

Wrapping it all up was **Ariana Casablanca's** *Dreams* and **Erin Quinn Purcell's** *Dreams II*, which together comprised the saga of two young girls who realize their dreams of being in a show "that's popping out on 42nd." Jealousy rears its ugly green head, and a lot of cellphone minutes are used up, but in the end they iron out their differences. One! (that's kid-parlance for 'bye!).

If At First owes a debt of gratitude to our composer **Greg Pliska**, our costume designer, **Lora LaVon**, our sound designer, **Betsy Rhodes**, and our stage manager, **Linda Marvel**. All of them succeeded masterfully on their first try. Thanks, guys. GRB

...AND WE'RE BACK

The Project is making news -- from scratch. This year's newsflash will be *THE PROJECT SHOW with Jon Stewart: The Most Important Project Benefit, Ever*. It will be held on **Monday, May 10, 2004** at Capitale.

Last year's shindig, *HEIST SOCIETY: The Bank Job Benefit* was such a huge score that we decided it was time to do it all over again.

This time, instead of gun molls and safecrackers, there will be anchors and news breakers.

The fake news broadcast begins with cocktails and dinner, then we will stage our own version of *THE DAILY SHOW*. An invitation will be channeled your way this April. For more information, contact **John "Tivo" Sheehy**, at the Project Clubhouse, (212) 333-5252. JS



SMART PARTICLES

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

Introducing some new Smart Partner pairs!

Mordecai Santiago and **Rick Meese** have had some rather colorful meetings so far, literally. Their artwork graces the walls of the Project, their subjects ranging from fish to hot rods to Spongebob Squarepants. When they're not doing homework, they enjoy playing Scrabble, Uno, and brainteaser games—and their enthusiasm for trivia is contagious. Recently their game grew to include the entire room of homework help kids, and most of the staff!

Jennifer Ramirez and **Sarah Kay** make an equally creative pair. Their meetings also successfully balance homework with board games and of course, lots of ping-pong playing in preparation for the highly competitive, er, all-in-good-fun Smart Partners Ping-pong tournament! **A.J. Welsh** and **Erik Bowie** — who first met through the Fall 2004 Playmaking program — have also caught the Ping Pong bug. They've spent their first few meetings getting to know each other better while playing. Did all the ping-pong practice pay off? Check the back page!

Carla Olivia and **Liza Steinberg** are another pair to emerge from the Playmaking 2004 shows. For their second meeting, Liza took Carla to the taping of the Nickelodeon show *U Pick Live* — a cool sketch-comedy program for kids. As you can see in the photo above, Carla actually got to meet the rather ubiquitous Spongebob Squarepants! We hope their conversation was absorbing. Heh. LB



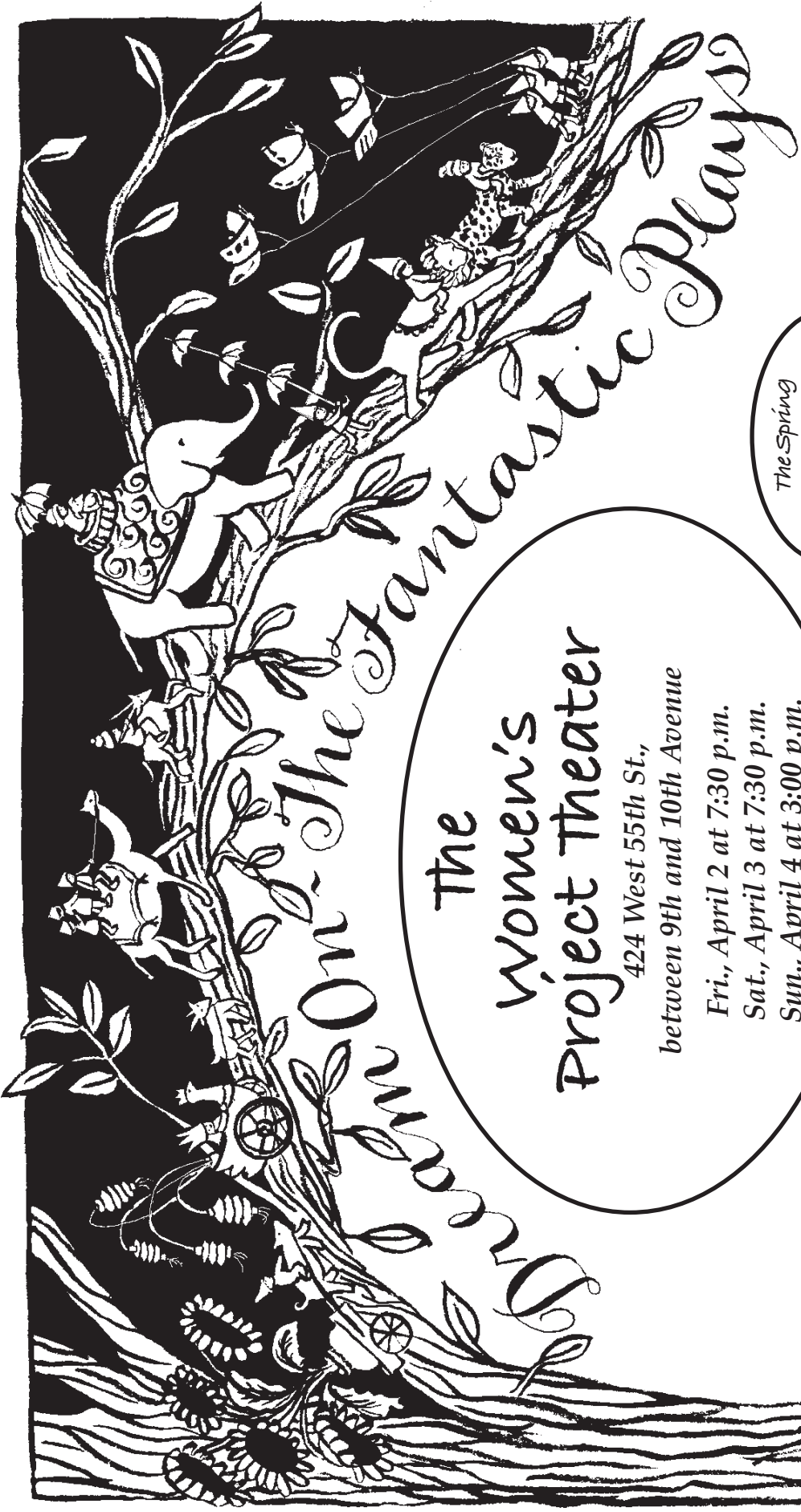
LIZA STEINBERG



The following Foundations and corporations 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	\$7,500
Blythmour Corporation	\$2,000
Con Edison	\$2,000
Dramatists Guild Fund	\$3,000
Dramatists Play Service	\$1,500
Eleanor, Adam and Mel Dubin Foundation	\$1,000
Entertainment Weekly	\$5,000
The Horace Goldsmith Foundation	\$15,000
JKW Foundation	\$25,000
New Generations/Duke/Mellon/TCG	\$39,000
New York Times Company Foundation	\$7,500
Paul Newman Charitable Giving	\$10,000
Fan Fox & Leslie R. Samuels Foundation	\$5,000
Tiger Baron Foundation	\$4,000
Vervane Foundation	\$20,000
Wiener Family Foundation	\$15,000

The 52nd Street Project Presents:



The Fantastical Plays

The
Women's
Project Theater
424 West 55th St.,
between 9th and 10th Avenue
Fri., April 2 at 7:30 p.m.
Sat., April 3 at 7:30 p.m.
Sun., April 4 at 3:00 p.m.

The Spring
2004
Playmaking
Production

GLIS ROGERSON,
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
CAROL OCHS,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
MEGAN SANDBERG-ZAKIAN,
PLAYMAKING DIRECTOR

Admission is free, but
reservations are a must! Call
(212) 642-5052



DREAM ON

The Fantastic Plays

The Kids

Janiece Krystle Aponte
Hera Andre-Bergmann
Muhammad Cunningham
Dale Fetterman
Lily Houghton
Pablo Maldonado
Carlos Muentes
Grace Pineda
Angel Silva
Arielle Velasquez

The Adults

Jenny Bacon
Jessica Bauman
Liz Bell
Marsha Stephanie Blake
Lucia Brawley
Joel de la Fuente
Lizzy Davis
Emilio Delgado
Alex Draper
Edie Falco
Nancy Giles
Stephan Kolbert
Ephraim Lopez
Sonia Manzano
Chris McCann
Mary Pat Walsh
Michael Potts
Glynis Riggsby
Joaquin Torres
Joe White



The 52nd Street Project

The 52nd Street Project is a non-profit organization that brings children of the Hell's Kitchen neighborhood together with professional theater artists to create original shows. "DREAM ON: THE FANTASTIC PLAYS" is a production of our Playmaking program, in which children are taught how to write plays. After nine weeks of classes, each child is given two adult actors, a theme, and a dramaturg/director who helps him or her through the writing of a play during a weekend in the country. The Playmaking classes were adapted for the Project by **Daniel Judah Sklar** from his book *Playmaking: Children Writing and Performing Their Own Plays*.

The Playmaking Program is made possible by public funds from many corporations, foundations, individuals, and the New York State Council on the Arts (a state agency), and the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs.



MONSTER MEGABIT PICTORIAL!



Here's **Annie Torsiglieri** with **Harry T** and **Jackson T Bernard**, not long after their birth on Feb. 4. Their dad, long-time staffer **Michael Bernard**, wanted to name them **Oy** and **Vey**, but cooler heads prevailed.



Christmas came one day late this year for **Robin Morse** and our artistic director **Gus Rogerson** when #2 child and #1 son **Francis Morse Rogerson** came early, really early. Here he is waving "hi" from the world-renowned winter spa at the **Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center**. 10 weeks later, he's home safe and sound.



"Now that you're back from China with a new baby, what are you going to do?" Go to Disney World, of course. So said **Becky Browder** (2nd adult from left) and **Ted Neustadt**, who's holding little **Carly**. Her big bro **Jack** is flashing the peace sign. The others? Why, it's **Carol Ochs**, **Bruce MacVittie**, and their daughter **Sophia**. The mice in the foreground are unidentified. All reports confirm that the whole group had a great time.



It's twin boy season! **Jace Alexander** and **Maddie Corman** gave birth to **Mac Geoffrey** and **Finn Moses** on Dec. 11th. F.Y.I., that's big sister **Isabelle Moon**.



Leo Steingart plans to spend his childhood with his mom, Project Board Member **Jenny Wiener**, and his dad, **Jon Steingart**.



Mayleen Cancel is no baby. In fact, she just graduated from **Satellite Academy High School**. Way to go, May!



Finally, a girl! **Noa Cathryn McCrane**, born to **Paul McCrane** and **Dana Kellin** in Los Angeles.



Elisa Atti and **Evan Handler** had their wedding on Oct. 12.



Josh Lewis and **Sarah Kay** got engaged on Feb. 15th in London. This pic was snapped moments after the question was popped.

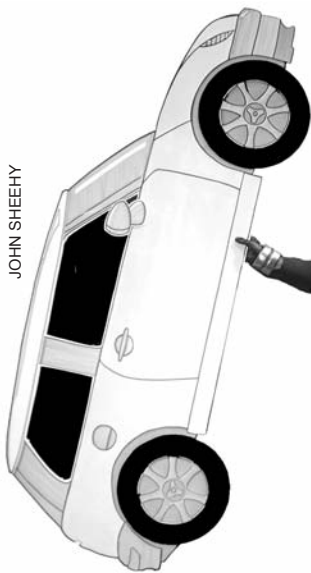


Project Vols **Taro Alexander** and **Leigh Pennebaker** tied the knot on Sat., July 5th, 2003 in Catskill, NY.



Sound designer and Webhead **Jeremy Posner** was married to **Rabbi Paulette Robin Gross** on Nov. 30, 2003

JOHN SHEEHY



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



John Cuevas as the rather strong Mystoman in "On The Other Hand."

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GALIMIDI COLLECTION

Maria Galimidi

Occupation: Family Worker at P.S. 111 (the school across the street from the Project) and the mother of Project kids Leah and Stephen (that's them in the picture with Maria).

Place of Birth: New York, NY.

Habitat: Hell's Kitchen.

Why she does what she does: "I love working with children. Children, children, children. I like to help them with their communication and to choose between doing right and wrong."

What she does for the Project: She's the official P.S. 111 Project Liaison, which means she is constantly recruiting new Playmakers and lauding the virtues of going to rehearsal even on a beautiful spring day when you'd rather be playing basketball.

Hobbies: "I won't lie to you. I have no hobbies whatsoever. I even volunteer at school on my day off. School is everything to me."

Most recent accomplishment: "Getting my job back. With the budget cuts at school I got the pink slip. But then I volunteered for six months and got rehired!"

Last Book Read: "I was just forced to read *To Kill a Mockingbird* for school. It was pretty good. So is the movie."

Best 52nd Street Project Memory: "Seeing my children perform. It was amazing, it was like wow! Everything shocks me. The 52nd Street Project is a shock to me, I just love it."

Advice to kids: "To believe is to succeed."

Favorite thing about the Project: "The trips, the places you take them, the things you see. If it wasn't for The 52nd Street Project I don't think some kids would be able to know the things they know and see the things they see."

On Flyer Bars: "They're yummy. I won one once. I was a winner! It felt good to stand up there and say, 'I got it!'"

THE 4th ANNUAL SMART PARTNER PING PONG DOUBLES TOURNAMENT

Once again, Smart Partners, Homework Helpers, and After-School Kids assembled in the Clubhouse Classroom Colosseum on Feb. 11 to do bloody battle with one another. The weapons: round paddles and feather-light plastic balls. Oh, the carnage! Twenty teams faced each other and mercilessly smote the small white globe again and again. In three hours, only one kid and one adult were left standing. The others were sitting and eating sundaes.

In addition to the top finishers at right, 4th place went to **Michael Velez** and **Perry Daniel** (aided by **Ed Vassallo**). **Nicole Fargardo** and **Diana Rojas** got honorable mention and the Best New Players were **Jennifer Ramirez** and **Sarah Kay**. The noblest honor of all, the Good Sport Awards, went to **A.J. Welsh** and **Erik Bowie**.
GRB



Carol Ochs and Adrian Zambrano



Jonathan Rosario and Drew Cortese



George Babiak and Anthony Mejia