

FREE POEM INSIDE!

PROJECT UPDATE

Volume 47; October, 2004 Editor: George R. Babiak

Location Locutions

Ah, location. They say it's the most important factor, and anyone who's spent a week on Block Island will agree. We – that is, ten kids, ten adults and their entourage (namely, the Staff) – had the good luck to spend a week at the island homes of our generous hosts (**Dr. Christina Biaggi; Virginia Dare and Joya Verde; Alan and Roberta Alpert; Sue Black; Jane Muskey and Tony Goldwin; Jim Stevenson and Josie Merck; Ron and Judy Tierney; Elliot and Jennifer Taubman; and Wendy vanden Heuvel**), eating delicious cuisine (prepared by **Pat McQuade and Martha Velie-Gass**), boogie-boarding the waves, and, in our spare time, rehearsing some plays. Upon our return to the city, we re-located to the **Ensemble Studio Theatre** – which, while not quite so beautiful as our hilltop performance venue on Block Island, sure had better acoustics.

Angel Silva eased the audience into the evening with a song – actually, quite a few songs – in **Stephen Barker Turner's** military operetta, *The Good Soldier*. Although Angel initially wondered (musically), "Why would anyone love anyone, when all it brings is pain?," he soon fell head-over-heels for a comely villager (comely Teen Counselor **Leah Galimidi**). After leaving the Army, we went *Underground* in **Nina Daniels'** play of that name. Her scruffy subway musician faced off against an extremely dapper rat (**Muhammed Cunningham**). None of us will ever look at subway rats the same way again. Maybe. In *City Story*, **Erica Schmidt** was a tourist trapped in an elevator with intimidating professional wrestler/CEO **Jennifer Ramirez**. Though the two bonded with a surprisingly funny song while their lives hung in the balance, they went their separate ways when they were back on solid ground. In **James Stevenson's** *On Location*, **Joaquin Torres** and **Pablo Maldonado** played a has-been film director and a has-been vampire, respectively. Not to worry, both of their careers were resuscitated. The act closed with *Fowl Play*, in which house hunting hen **Stephanie Vamvoukakis** was gazumped by realtor **Eris Migliorini** (also a hen, but she'd been raised by vegan weasels). With the help of many, many bad puns, they reconciled their differences and sang an empowering anthem: "You come from good chicken stock!"

The second act began with a flourish as **Kayelani Silva** and **Diana Rojas** melodramatized their way through **Willie Reale's** *Armando*. Muy macho intern **Andrew Kelsey** played the heart-breaker of the title, but was ultimately vanquished by some particularly emasculating poetry. In *How Master Ly Got His Groove Back*, **Georgie Zapata** was the proverbial wise sage on the mountain top and **Kate Marks** the young apprentice who sought his counsel. He gave her some advice, and she did a really cool back flip. **Jonathan Rosario** was a real knock-out in *The Adventures of Captain Funk and Dr. Knockout*, by **Ross Berger**. The goofy crime-fighting duo saved the world from pessimism by vanquishing the evil Negativity Man (**George Babiak**). Next came **Daniel Goldfarb's** *The Amazing Dr. Jungle*, with **Arielle Velasquez** as a shrink who liked to howl at fluorescent lights. Luckily, this didn't impede her ability to cure a weepy patient (**Becky White**) who just needed a good laugh. Closing the evening's festivities was *Fools Russian* by **John Sheehy**. John and **Jason Peterson Ridge** played circus acrobats with some trust issues, provoking gasps from the audience as they attempted daredevil acrobatic feats WHILE SINGING A DUET!

This duet, as well as all the rest of the evenings melodious tunes, were composed by **Maestra Kim D. Sherman**. The pleasurable auditory sensations were augmented by the Goddess of Sound, **Vanessa Valdes**, and the lovely **Perry McBain Daniel** made sure

The Block Island Teams, top to bottom: Stephen and Angel, Muhammad and Nina, Erica and Jennifer, Joaquin and Pablo, Eris and Stephanie, Diana and Kayelani, Georgie and Kate, Jonathan and Ross, Becky and Arielle, and John and Jason. Photos, pages 1 and 2, by JLS and GRB.





everything happened when it was supposed to. The indomitable **Bryan Gmitter** proved his mettle as Costume Designer, while **Greg MacPherson** proved nothing that we didn't already know as Official Project Lighting Guru (a.k.a. O.P.L.G.). Hey everyone, thanks for your help with the show! Now come visit us back in our regular location: The Project Clubhouse. MSZ

Cut! Print! Move On to the Next Location!

Speaking of locations, if you're looking for a swell spot for sun, surf and scenery-chewing, you would have dug our week in Wareham this past August. You'd have found us at the home of our generous hosts, **Helen and Peter Randolph**, madly rehearsing ten short plays in preparation for their Off-Broadway world premieres at E.S.T. the following week. Here's how it went.

Not to be outdone by Spiderman or Harry Potter, our favorite superhero, Mall Girl, as imagined by **Jackie Reingold** and portrayed by **Katherine Alvarez**, returned in *Mall Girl Returns* (how 'bout that?), to join forces with her former nemesis, Tacky Girl (**Shirley Rumierk**, who looks anything but tacky, no matter how awful the outfit - ah, well). Speaking of tacky, **George Babiak** and **Hera Andre-Bergmann** took us to the faded glory of the Coney Island Boardwalk with *Bean The Bozo*. If you beaned the Bozo (that would be Babiak, naturally), Hera would give you a stuffed doll resembling **Edgar Allan Poe**. **Jules Verne** was also available. Back to the movies we went with *The Texas Chainsaw Match Occurred*, a story of two long lost brothers, played by **Aladino Olivares** and **Bruce MacVittie**, getting together in the middle of nowhere for some dreadful screenwriting and some real fine crooning. Order was restored by **Luz Maldonado**, as a meter maid nonpareil, opposite **Jennifer Ostrega** as a latent rock star, in *Meter? I Hardly Know Her* (one title with a bad pun deserves another, no?). Just before intermission we had *A Tad Excellent Adventure* with **Bryant Acosta** and **Reg Flowers** (and **Luis Anthony Maldonado**, the evening's King of Cameos, as "Slug"). As the world's greatest deep-sea diver, Bryant survived shark attacks, a protracted dance number and Reg's performance as the world's wealthiest eccentric to carry the day.

Nobody cut the rug better than **Merlaine Mendez** and **Megan Cramer** in **Liza Steinberg's** *Fake It Like You Mean It*, in which Merlaine introduced Megan to the whole new world beyond karaoke, one filled with original lyrics and brand-new dance moves. **Chassity Damiani** transformed the evening with *Chunk-A-Change Guaranteed*, by convincing **Ed Vassallo** that being a dog is for the birds. Then things got spooky in **Michael Bernard's** *The Will*. All that stood between **Junior Chatman** and his hundred jillion dollar inheritance was a homicidal ghost played by **Drew Cortese**. One smackdown later, Junior was a hundred-jillionaire. He would have fit right in at the world-class hotel, The WaldTrump Towers, where **Carla Olivia**, with the help of some barnyard animals, schooled **Zabryna Guevara** in **Liz Tuccillo's** *For Whom The Bellhop Toils*. Finally, we went *Troubadour To Door*, in **Liz Flahive's** tale of a singing duo (**A.J. Welsh** and **Susan McGinnis**) who went bust in Wisconsin. Hey, it happens. They got back together for a swell closing number.

The swell numbers were by **Patrick Barnes**, the flattering costumes by **K. O'Reilly**, the brilliant lighting by **Greg MacPherson** and the clever sound cues by intern **Andrew Kelsey**. Additional skillful interning was provided by **Reese Smith & Emily Meisler**. Stage management was courtesy of **Karen Munkel**. Thanks also to our Wareham chef **Christopher Randolph** and our host families: **Emily & John Morgan**, **Patty & David Strauss**, **Sidney Worthen & David Pearce**, **Larry Stifler & Mary McFadden**, **Bob & Marina Whitman**, and the fabulous **McNay** family. GR

The Wareham Teams, Top to Bottom: Shirley and Katherine, George and Hera, Bruce and Aladino, Jennifer and Luz, Reg and Bryant, Megan and Merlaine, Chassity and Ed, Drew and Junior, Carla and Zabryna, and Susan and A.J.

WHERE WERE THOSE LOCATIONS, ANYWAY?



This year's One-on-One theme truly tested the imaginations of the writers. Each play had to take place in...A LOCATION! Here are twenty sites that our authors brilliantly conjured up.

Block Island

- A U.S. Army butterfly sanctuary
- A rat-infested subway platform
- A stalled elevator
- A film set in a spooky old canyon
- A real estate office for chickens
- A Mexican cantina
- The top of a mountain in the "6th borough"
- An overpriced apartment/training facility
- A psychiatrist's office
- The high wire at the circus

Wareham, Mass.

- A changing room at a store in a mall
- The boardwalk at Coney Island
- A broken-down old motel in Texas
- N.Y. Traffic Corps Sector X-87
- 500 fathoms beneath the sea
- The Karaoke World Championships
- A self-help seminar meeting hall
- A haunted mansion
- The Waldtrump Towers Hotel
- A roadside in Wisconsin

Ode to Kimani's Hair

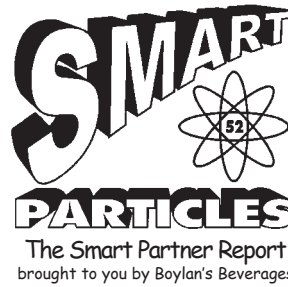
How his hair is wild.
 Wild like vines growing on an old castle, wild like trees
 rising up to the sky twisted and weirdly shaped.
 How his hair is long.
 Long like the river flowing though the empty woods,
 long like his feeling of being proud walking down
 the street, of him connecting with his African heritage.
 How his hair makes him feel.
 How his hair makes people feel.
 How kids find ways to put him down, shut him down.
 But all these words they speak, positive or negative,
 at the end, they can't stop looking, can't stop asking
 questions, can't stop making him feel that he
 has knowledge that they don't.
 How his hair is so fine.

— Kimani Lewis-Ashley, age 13

Pork Barrel and Pork Fat

The party was a blast, plenty of dough was raised – as well as passed around – and best of all, no one got arrested. Clearly, we are not talking about the Republican National Convention. No, the party for **The Ron Black Memorial Scholarship Fund** (featuring **Daisy Mae's BBQ**) was held at the beautiful offices of **Jenny Wiener** and **Jon Steingart** and **Ars Nova** on July 27, 2004, well before that other grand old party came to town.

This year's scholarship recipients are **Anju Andre-Bergmann** (Sarah Lawrence), **Osage Lewis-Ashley** (John Jay), **Amy Barbosa** (John Jay), **Lorraine Calderon** (St. Thomas Aquinas), **Mayleen Cancel** (Brooklyn College), **Candy Godoy** (Cornell), **Jennifer Jimenez** (Johnson & Wales), **Zaida Natera** (Dowling), **Lori Quinones** (Lehman), **Diana Rojas** (La Guardia Community), and **Sahara Walsh** (Hunter). **Yazzy Troche** received not only this grant but **The Henry and Gloria Jacobs Scholarship** to the University of Michigan. **Nyita Hanley** (SUNY, New Paltz for MA in Sociology) is our first graduate student. Thank you to all who attended or sent in donations, helping to make the party a huge success. JS



Poetry, Performance and Pizza, Oh My!

Summer is all about the sequels, so here at The 52nd Street Project, we decided to create our own. Our Summer 2004 **Break It Up!** workshop, *Poetry City 2*, was the follow-up to the critically-acclaimed 2002 original. The Break it Up! program is a series of workshops in various art forms that take place during the kids' breaks from school. From Monday, August 5 through Thursday, August 8, 2004, 7 Project poets came to the Clubhouse to focus on all things poetic: **Janiece Aponte**, **Nicole Fargardo**, **Kimani Lewis-Ashley**, **Pablo Maldonado**, **Crystal Toro**, **Michael Velez**, and **Skye Blu Welsh**. Each morning we read and discussed some published poetry. We went on field trips to Riverside Park and the Planetarium, where we were inspired by both the everyday and the extraterrestrial! We even threw performance into the mix by inviting spoken word artist, **Eric Sandberg-Zakian**, a.k.a. Attic, a.k.a. AAD **Megan's** "little" brother, to the Clubhouse. He talked to us about his own inspiration and poetry-writing process, performed some of his own work, and then coached the kids on their own spoken word techniques. This was all to prepare for the culmination of the workshop on Thursday evening—a wildly successful Poetry Reading to a packed audience of family and friends. (A free sample appears at left.) Each kid also walked away with a compilation of all the poetry written during the week (If you'd like a free copy of the anthology, just ask me!). Special thanks to Eric, **Charlie Tocantins** for volunteering as a "poeturg" (another Project neologism!), and **Lisa Gugenheim** for hooking us up at The Planetarium!

Unfortunately, the summer is coming to a close...but get excited, 'cause SCHOOL started on Monday, September 13th! Yes! Logically, so did the Project's Homework Help program. **Smart Partners, 2004-2005** is set to formally kick-off with a Pizza Party on Monday, October 4, 2004. Yummy. LB

Mayleen Gets Big Promotion, Hands out Cigars to Kids on the Block

Mayleen Cancel has soldiered on as receptionist here at the Clubhouse for so many years that we decided to reward her with a big, fat promotion. The winsome Brooklyn College frosh is now putting in 20 hours a week as our official Education Assistant. That makes her **Liz Bell's** right-hand woman and she is eagerly looking forward to bossing her former peers around. Contrary to the foolish headline above, Mayleen does not smoke, nor does she encourage the practice. GB



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.

Carnegie Corporation	.....\$50,000
Capital Group	.....\$15,000
CBS	.....\$5,000
Citigroup Foundation	.....\$10,000
Comedy Central	.....\$10,000
Consolidated Edison	.....\$2,000
Department of Cultural Affairs NYC	.....\$7,000
Department of Youth and Community Development	.....\$5,000
Henlopen Foundation	.....\$10,000
HBO	.....\$5,000
JKW Foundation	.....\$1,000
James A. Macdonald Foundation	.....\$900
National Endowment For the Arts\$20,000
Council Member Christine Quinn/Member Item\$7,500

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JOHN L. SHEEHY



No fair!
 Jason Peterson Ridge
 and George Babiak
 receive their portions on
 Lobster Night in Block
 Island.



JLS

Peter and Helen
Randolph

Occupations: Peter is a semi-retired psychiatrist and they are the parents of five. ("From which we can never retire...nor do we want to.")

Places of Birth: New York City ("Both of us.")

Habitat: Cambridge and Wareham, Massachusetts

Why they do what they do: "It's a great privilege to be able to earn a living talking with people and getting to know and help them. Our family has brought us great joys and challenges. We have been very lucky in our lives and are grateful. And we love having the Project come to Wareham."

Hobbies: Theater, opera, reading, traveling, collecting and needlework.

Most recent accomplishments: "Hosting the 52nd Street Project August One-on-Ones, refurbishing the wood pile."

Last Books Read: *Surprise, Security and the American Experience*, by John Gaddis; *Homegrown Democrat*, by Garrison Keillor; *Play to the End*, by Robert Goddard (an English mystery writer).

Credo: "Respect for others, honesty, sense of humor, hard work, giving back to the world."

Best 52nd Street Project Memories: "John Sheehy's & (eldest son) Christopher's fabulous meals."

Greatest regret: "We missed Hurricane Bob." (That's the giant storm that knocked the power out for their very first One-on-One week back in 1991.)

Favorite thing about the Project: "The wonderful spirit which everyone brings to the program; the love, respect and caring for the kids; the camaraderie among the adults."

On Flyer Bars: "We've never had one - they better be good!"

5-1-08-07-39



Sarah Horowitz and David Venarde welcomed tiny **Thomas Saul Venarde** into their home on March 16, 2004. He is pictured here with his sister Emma and her teddy bear. ▼



California is definitely sinking into the ocean, because more and more people keep rolling to that side. The most recent migraters are handsome **Adam Felber** and his beautiful wife **Jeanne Simpson**, who have relocated to West Hollywood. ▼

▲ **Rue Chiara Gobbée** was born to **Martin Gobbée** and **Heather Carnduff-Gobbée** on May 8, 2004. She joins Big Bro **Phoenix**, who just turned 3. She weighed 7 lbs., 6 3/4 oz. And was 20 1/2" long... or is it tall?



▲ Here's some news from **Jenny Pollack** and **Rob Handelman**: Their new tot **Charlie Pollack Handelman** is now 3 1/2 months old but he weighed in at a strapping 7lbs, 6oz on May 31, 2004. Jenny swears she will return to volunteering.

