

PROJECT UPDATE



VOLUME 49, JULY, 2005 EDITOR: GEORGE R. BABIAK

JUST LIKE MEGAN, ONLY TALLER

That would be **Reg Flowers**, The 52nd Street Project's new Associate Artistic Director. You may already know him as an all-star volunteer and a good man to have around when you need something off the top shelf.

All of which goes to say, he's our choice to take Megan's place as she heads to Rhode Island to bless some other fortunate folks with her abundant gifts. She will be greatly missed. So long, Megan. Hello Reg. GR

JUST LIKE REGGIE, ONLY SHORTER

Well, the time for the transfer of power is finally here. And as much as I, Megan, know that all you Project staff, kids, and vols are going to look up to Reggie... I'm sure going to miss you all looking down on me. But seriously folks, I moved to New York City five years ago for one reason: to work at The Project. I wasn't a Big Apple kind of girl (for goodness sake, I grew up in Seattle!) But over those five years – through two different Smart Partners and three Shakespeare plays and ten Playmaking classes – Hell's Kitchen became my home. It's scary to think about moving away from a place where I feel so comfortable. But sometimes it's good to do things that are scary. All you Project kids keep asking me "Why do you have to move?" and I always answer "Because change is good." I know that sounds like the stupidest answer in the world, but, well... like many stupid things, I think it's kinda true.

So kids – anytime you're thinking about making some totally terrifying change – like singing a solo or transferring to a school outside the neighborhood or interviewing for a job you really want or applying to college – give me a call. I'll understand. MSZ

REG, WITH MORE HEIGHT JOKES!

My interest in arts education began at an organization called Moonstone, while I was a student at University of the Arts in Philly, my hometown. I taught theater to preschoolers, wrote plays for our staff, and staged performances. After graduating from U of A, I went on to the Yale School of Drama. Since then I've been an actor, a playwright, a director, the founder of a not-for-profit, an arts educator, a domestic partner of 9 years, a Brooklynite, and a volunteer at the 52nd Street Project.

Working here is a thrill. There are challenges ahead, like



learning the names of all the kids, parents, volunteers, board members and many project friends; sharing an office with the legendary **George Babiak**; finding a comfortable chair (Gus's is not bad); and ducking when passing under the 52nd Street Project Corner sign. I am proud to put on the shoes worn by **Michael Bernard** and **Megan Sandberg-Zakian** (a little tight but they'll give). I look forward to meeting all of you in person. RF

BIG IDEAS FOUND AND DRAMATIZED

Ah, ten-year olds! They have the knack for capturing funny, bizarre, thrilling, and transformative events in plays that are only 4 or 5 pages long. The most recent Playmaking group displayed this skill in the April production of *What's the Big Idea? Plays to Think About*. The plays were written in **Stephen** and **Cathy Graham's** house in Kent, CT and staged at the **Calhoun School's** new theater on 81st Street.

First on the program was **Stephanie Marion's** *Nerdy Nerd and the Princess and the Friendship of Life*, which has a title that renders a summary superfluous. **Lois Smith** was Da Princess and **Joel de la Fuente** was the unfortunate Mr. Nerd. In *Godzilla Meets Anaconda*, by **Laron Holt**, **Marva Hicks** met an untimely and crispy end at the claws of giant lizards **Martin Moran** and **George Babiak**. **Sarah Petersiel** and **Nikki Phillips** vied for a juicy stage role (and both got it) in **Jenisse Bouret's** *Broadway Miracle*.

Lee Rosen, our resident expert on comic book lore, got the part of his lifetime as Secret Agent A.J. in **Malik Velasquez's** *Good vs. Evil*. The high point had him dispatching a band of evil **Sharon Washington's** invisible Ninja minions. In *Fighters*, by **George Keller**, **Matt Saldívar** and **Stevie Ray Dallimore** played a horse and a kangaroo who fought savagely during meals until they picked up a banjo and guitar and played a reggae tune.

After the audience played a round of musical chairs, the second half opened with another musical competition. In **Luisa Santiago's** *One Sister Jealousy*, **Marsha Stephanie Blake** and **Pascale Armand** sought to win a



Joel de la Fuente and Lois Smith share a foamcore slice.

singing contest. Next came *Rony Makes Friends with His Own Predator* by **Analís “Fifi” Fernandez**. **Ephraim Lopez** was a beaver, **Lee Briggs** was a wolf. Can you figure out the plot of this one?

Joyce Cheung’s *Day After Day* saw **Kathy Hiler** as a fearful young girl seduced into going outside by her bold friend **Johanna Day**. Ex-ProjKid **Ray Harold** was a carnivorous elephant in hot pursuit of gentle giraffe **Arthur French** in **Marcus Quinones’** *The Giraffe King*. Finally, **Amoro Pargas** presented the life of a budding young rapper (**Paco Tolson**) who clashes repeatedly with his sibling (**Kari Swenson Riely**) in his opus *Brother vs. Sister*.

As the audience filed out, there was no longer any question as to the Big Idea. It was the inspiration that each of the 10 kids turned into a play, with the aid of their dramaturg/directors **Evan Cabnet**, **Reg Flowers**, **Liza Steinberg**, **Beatrice Terry**, **George Babiak**, **Zakiyyah Alexander**, **Gus Rogerson**, **Julia Gibson**, **Joe White**, and **Rick Meese**. Thanks to them and to our host families the **Grahams**, **Sam and Lynn Waterston**, and **Emily Armstrong** and **Patrick Gannon**. GB

PROJECT PLAYWRIGHTS EXPAND HORIZONS

At the beautiful **Playwrights Horizons Mainstage Theater** on Monday, June 6, ten new plays were seen and heard for the first time at the Third Annual Replay Reading.

A top notch group of Project vols tackled not one but two plays each, giving them the opportunity to morph radically over the course of the evening – for example, from overprotective mother to rat-turned-human-turned-rat (**Caroline Clay**), or from an evil television trying to take over the world to a Greek chariot racer trying to stop her evil twin from taking over the world (**Nancy Giles**). Such challenging roles came from the pens of the following Project playwrights (average age 10.7): **Hera Andre-Bergmann**, **Janiece Aponte**, **Muhammad Cunningham**, **Carlos Dume**, **Catherine Fernandez**, **Dale Fetterman**, **Jason Gil**, **Emmett Goodman Boyd**, **Pablo Maldonado**, and **Lordan Ulloa**.

The dazzlingly versatile company also included **George Babiak**, **Nate Corddry**, **David Costabile**, **Lizzy Cooper Davis**, **Emilio Delgado**, **Reg Flowers**, **Kevin Geer**, **Danny Goldstein**, **Lizzie Gottlieb**, **Peter Jacobson**, **Becca Masback**, **Deirdre O’Connell**, **Michael Alexis Palmer**, **Victoria Row**, **Megan Sandberg-Zakian**, **John Sheehy**, **John Steber**, and **Chris Varmus**.

Jason Gil summed up the celebratory feeling in the final lines of his play, which was the evening’s last. “Why don’t we just be friends?” asked Atlas. His nemesis “Fix It” replied joyously, “Finally! This fighting is all over! Let’s go get some candy!” And then the audience retired to the lobby to eat brownies and be friends. MSZ

HEROES WORSHIPPED, SCHOLARS REWARDED

Superheroes everywhere joined forces on Monday May 9th to come to the rescue of Truth, Justice and The 52nd Street Project. Our annual gala, entitled **A SUPER HEROIC ACT** was held once again at Capitale, and this time nearly 400 guests enjoyed cocktails, dinner and a show written especially for the occasion by **Willie Reale & John Sheehy** with music by **Kim D. Sherman** accompanied by **Anton Fig**. Performers included **Oliver Platt**, **Martha Plimpton** and **Sara Ramirez** as the heroes, along with their wards **Hera Andre-Bergmann**,

Zebulun Santiago and **Kayelani Silva**, all foiling the plot of super-villain **Michael Stuhlbarg** and his side-kick **Alex Tomas** and thus saving the world.

If you don’t want to miss out on the next Project shindig, mark your calendars NOW for Tuesday, August 2nd, the date of the annual Scholarship Party, which will be held at our good friends **Jenny Wiener** and **Jon Steingart’s** swank *Ars Nova* digs (see their Flyer Bar Profile on p. 4). There will be libations and tons of delicious food as the Project kids who are furthering their education receive the proceeds from the **Ron Black Memorial Scholarship Fund**. Call 212/333-5252 and ask for John for more information. JS



To the super-mini van! Captain Gesundheit drives his ward Hanky, along with Harpy, Redunda, Aphorisma and Foresight to the rescue.

WENDY STULBERG

ANOTHER PLACE TO SPOT A SUPERHERO.

The Smart Partners and Homework Help programs are once again coming to a close. Before signing off until next year, I have to thank some unsung heroes.

Bonnie MacSaveny (Mom to Project kid Dale Fetterman) led a fall mentor workshop in *Teaching Literacy Skills*. She teaches immigrant students at Manhattan International High School and her expertise came in handy as she coached our vols in inspiring reluctant readers, improving grammar and increasing reading comprehension.

In the spring, **Mike Stone** led *Teaching Math Skills*. Mike was a Smart Partner before being snatched from us by the New York City Teaching Fellows program (we’re not bitter). He taught middle school math at I.S. 162 in Bushwick, and in the fall will teach at a new high school in Manhattan. His workshop helped us confront our math phobia, rampant among adults in the theater arts!

Eric Pomert, a successful Film Editor, managed to give his time to a handful of Project kids struggling in math and science. He helped **Johnathan Roldan** to graduate high school last summer, and **Ariana Casablanca** to raise her math grade this spring. He also helped three of the **Rosado** clan — **Jaya**, **Jayme** and **Jaymaree** — to pass the Regents exams.

Finally, there was the amazing College Prep League: **Tara Gordon**, **Emily Wolper** and **Jean Marie Donnelly**. Tara offers professional advice to college-bound Project kids. This winter, she teamed up with Emily, president of E. Wolper Inc. Admissions Consulting, and Jean Marie, a teacher at Adali E. Stevenson High School. Their College Prep Workshop focused on the importance of SAT scores, choosing a school, meeting application deadlines, and writing an impressive personal essay.

I cannot thank these Project heroes enough. We hope they’ll offer their powers to us again in September! LB

2008-1-15



◀ **Hugo Walter Bacon Turner** was born in New York City to ProjPals **Jenny Bacon** and **Stephen Barker Turner** on February 23, 2005. This Brooklyn bruiser was a full 21 inches tall at birth and started turning bacon as soon as he got home.

▶ Remember **Sally Bock**, our old Director of Development and Marketing? She's developed another baby and is marketing her as **Beatrice Matsumi Wurfel**. The little Seattle-ite is seen here being introduced to her big brother **Zachary** with dad **Mark Wurfel**. Sally reports that she was so dazed after Bea was born on April 4 that she was seen counting her baby's nose.



▶ In the great *West-Coast-Ex-staffer Baby Derby*, **Julie Feldman-Abe** finished first by giving birth to **Stella Feldman-Abe**. Julie, Stella, and her dad **Mauricio** are all happily living in the deprived state of California, which, to our great vexation, continues to steal away staffers and volunteers at an alarming rate!



▼ **Julie Dretzin**, who moved to California and became the sister of fellow ProjVol **Lili Taylor** on *Six Feet Under*, now has a little boy named **Benjamin Joseph Catlin**, born Aug. 31, '04. He seems a bit bewildered here, but maybe he's just having one of those creepy *6FU*-style visions. Get used to it, kid. That's what happens in California.



◀ In December of 2004, ProjVol **Edie Falco** became the proud momma of **Anderson Falco**. He's a cool kid. You can tell by the bald hipster hairdo and the black t-shirt with the "Mom" tattoo on the front.

▶ **Melissa Jones** and **Lee Briggs** were walking along the river Thames in Melissa's hometown in England when all of a sudden, Lee popped the question. No, it wasn't "Want some bangers and mash?" it was "Will you marry me?"



▼ And who says marriage is just for lovers of bangers and mash? Vegetarian and Museum of Natural History bigwig **Lisa Gugenheim** (for whom our kitchen sink at the Clubhouse is named) has tied the knot with our long-time buddy **Larry Nathanson**. They got hitched on June 12 at the home of rock-solid ProjFans **Ronnie Eldridge** and **Jimmy Breslin**. They plan to spend a lot of time indulging in their hobby of standing very close to each other and the camera.

Melissa immediately said "Cheerio, guvnah!" They are seen here on the river just before heading off for some bangers and mash.



▲ This cute little bookworm is **Nicholas Kyung-Hwan Morgan**. He was born in Daegu, South Korea on August 6, 2004. The **Morgan** family (**Emily** and **John** and their boy **Gus**) is famous for letting our kids stay in their home on our trips to Wareham, so they have brought Nicholas state-side to take him in for a very long-term sleep-over. Like 20 years or so.



◀ On New Year's Day of 2005, our old pal, well-established actress and once-upon-a-time intern **Jessalyn Gilsig** got married to **Bobby Salomon**. Jessalyn told us a nice story about her old/new love. "Bobby and I were high school sweethearts -- He was my prom date! -- and 17 years later we said 'I do.' Nothing has ever felt so natural to me in all my life."

Yeah, yeah, love, schmu. All we have to say is that we hope Jess will explore her roots even farther and return to New York. Curse you, California!

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Lee Briggs and Ephraim Lopez as a wolf and a beaver who forge a friendship in spite of their natural inclinations. For some big news about Lee, see Megabits on page 3.



JENNY WIENER
 JON STEINGART

Occupation- Theater producers. They run the Ars Nova Theater on West 54th.
Why do you do what you do?- "We get to hang out with smart, talented, funny people all day, and lead a creative life."
What they do for the Project: Jenny is on Project's board, and together they host countless events, including the upcoming annual scholarship party.
Hobbies- Jenny: Cooking, knitting, yoga. Jon: Guitar, sports
Last book read- Jenny: *Dreamland*, by Kevin Baker. Jon: *The Israelis: Ordinary People in an Extraordinary Land* by Donna Rosenthal
Most recent accomplishment- "Becoming the parents of Leo Gabriel Steingart 19 months ago. We've done some cool stuff since then, but nothing we think even compares."
Best Project memory- "The Playmaking weekend we spent in Connecticut with an amazing group of kids. It was terrific getting to know everyone and then seeing the fantastic work at the show!"
Credo- "There's no problem so big that it can't be solved with a bagel and a schmeer."
Place of birth- "We're both proud New Yorkers!"
Habitat- "We live in an apartment on the Upper West Side with our son Leo and our 2 cats, Boo and Nibby (who thinks she's a dog)."
Favorite thing about the Project- "We love watching how much confidence the kids get as they learn play-making. Oh yeah, and the staff isn't half-bad either!"
On Flyer Bars- "They're chocolate and delicious...what's not to like?"



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.

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