

PROJECT UPDATE



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THE WAIT IS OVER!



GRB

Fetch! Emilio Delgado and Riji Suh play an old game.

Spring, as we all know, is serious anticipation time. It comes each year to the Project with an extra dollop of excitement because it begins with our annual Spring Playmaking show. This year was no different, as 10 new playwrights saw their plays produced for the very first time at the Calhoun School on the Upper West Side in *Any Day Now: Plays Worth Waiting For*. After a nine-week Playmaking class, and a weekend away in Kent, CT, eating great food and staying at the homes of the **Graham, Waterston, and Armstrong-Gannon** families, the kids sat down at the Playwright's desk to watch the fruits of their labor.

Up first (no waiting necessary) was *Best Friends Never Known* written by **Kyle Fargardo** and directed by **Reg Flowers**, starring **John Conlee** as Brock Plack, a footballer, and **Fred Armisen** as Carlos Finger, a B-ball lover. Brock and Carlos were vicious sports competitors who had to consult a psychologist (**John Sheehy**, in a shockingly understated performance) to learn how to really listen to each other.

Up next was *Flowers and Magic*, written by **Lily Capstick** and directed by **Alex Barreto**. **Enid Graham** and **Annie Torsiglieri** took us on a magical journey to a place called Fairyland, where everyone is nice, but a bagel might be hard to come by. *The Wondering Dog*, written by **Jamie Yip**, and directed by **Liliana Amador**, featured **Emilio Delgado** as Jake, a deeply paranoid dog, and **Riji Suh** as Jessica, his stressed-out owner. They both felt better after a chat. Fetch followed.

Bullies, written by **John Cacomanolis** and directed by **Josh Lewis**, starred **Carlo Alban** as Billy Bob, a steak-loving squirt who tries to alter his physique to fend off Alex, (**Brian Bryant**) a contemplative bully. Unfortunately, things go a bit awry and he ends up being buffer than **The Hulk**. Muscles bulged, potions splashed, and the scrawny nerd got his revenge, proving that genetic enhancement may not be as bad as the media suggests.

More altered physiques came with *Mr. TV and Mr. Camera*, written by **Devin Gonzalez**, directed by **George Babiak**, and starring **David Zayas** as Mr. TV, and **Felix Solis** as Mr. Camera. Our foam-core Michelangelo, George, helped to

design the costumes, turning two agile, animated actors into ungainly, oversized props. The two appliances fought, made up, and sang a happy song that left everyone in the audience singing for the whole intermission.

Die, written by **Maximo Jimenez** and directed by **Rick Meese**, started the second act with a bang. **Peter Maloney** was the doomed Mr. Tree, who is celebrating his birthday when he is interrupted by Bob (**David Lansbury**), a lumberjack who wants to cut him down to build a road. The audience gasped every night as the lumberjack cruelly deracinated Mr. Tree, with the ironic condolence, "Happy Birthday."

Next up was *In Her Shoes*, written by **Kiana Hernandez** and directed by **Patricia McGregor**, with **Liza Colon-Zayas** as Lula, a dog who LOVES to dance, and **Deirdre O'Connell** as Sweetie Pie, a singing, flying, magical French poodle, who switch lives for a day and have new kinds of adventures. *Evelese's Chance*, written by **Ashley Torres** and directed by **Sonia Manzano**, starred **Myra Lucretia Taylor** in the title role as a resourceful young woman forced to take care of her brothers and sisters, and **Phyllis Somerville** as her feisty but asthmatic teacher Milagros De Jesus. Death and disguise led from despair to delight.

Planted in the middle of the second act was *Family in Garden* by **Simone Lindo**. **Sandi Carroll** directed this little nugget, which starred **Rebecca Masback** and **Winslow Corbett** as a couple of flowers who need a little time apart.

Last but far from least was *It Stinks of FHN News* by **Arpad West**. Directed by **Carlos Armesto**, Arpad's play had **Kathy Hiler** as Dacy Flow, a high-strung news anchorwoman, **Howard Over-shown** as James Kiky, a camera man, and **Reg Flowers** as their boss, Robinson. Dacy's and James' love/hate relationship led to a blur of insults, slaps, duct tape restraints, papercuts, and blundered news reports.

The evening also featured a parade of outstanding outfits designed by our creative costuming trio: **Crystal Thompson, Erin Chainani** and **Vonia Arslanian**. And our ears were treated to the lovely sounds created by **Vanessa Valdes** and composer **Greg Pliska**. **Kim D. Sherman** performed Greg's songs on the piano. Worth waiting for indeed.

MC



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Kathy Hiler and **Howard Overshown** in one of our racier Playmaking shows.

RECENT REPLAY READING READ READILY

Our latest production, **The Lorraine Cohen Replay Readings**, took place on Monday, June 5th, at the very comfortable **Signature Theatre** on West 42nd St. Playmaking Director **Reg Flowers'** 8-week Replay Class, which may best be described as Advanced Playmaking, resulted in 10 new plays written by **Joyce Cheung, Analis "Fifi" Fernandez, Laron Holt, Zakiya Jacob, George Keller, Terrence Mack, Stephanie Marion, Andy Reyes, Luisa Santiago and Malik Velazquez.** The audience was dazzled by such extraordinary characters as an imprisoned psychic, a pair of battling twins, a star that wants to live in the daylight sky, a parrot who learns English, a murderous duck and a homicidal rabbit, and a boxer who succumbs to brain damage.

Headly stuff, and it was all put together in three hours by the resourceful directors **Jonathan Bernstein, Julie Boyd, Evan Cabinet, Liz Giamatti and Erica Schmidt;** and the intrepid actors **Pascale Armand, George Babiak, Marsha Stephanie Blake, Barnett Cohen, Stevie Ray Dallimore, Alex Draper, Saidah Arrika Ekulona, Joe Haupt, Frances McDormand, Cynthia Nixon** (congrats on that new Tony, Cyn), **Edward O'Blenis, Tom Schall, John Sheehy, Felix Solis, Virginia Vitzthum and Frank Wood.** We humbly thank the warm-hearted Cohen family for honoring the late acting teacher **Lorraine Cohen** by funding this Project program. GB

CROONING CREW MAKES 'EM SWOON

During this April Spring Break, 10 kids made beautiful music together in the Break-It-Up series: **SING IT UP! CHORAL WEEK!** Our fearless leader, **Kari Swenson Riely** took us through a week of singing and music appreciation, which ended in a spirited performance at the Women's Interart Annex. The kids sang an Italian madrigal, a Spanish folk song, a South African freedom march, and a gospel song. They learned how to breathe (not a moment too soon, wouldn't you say?), sing, and harmonize; and got to write their own introductions. They even came up with a catchy name: The Harmony Crew of 52. The Crew included: **Analis "Fifi" Fernandez, Cathy Fernandez, Kamila Jacob, Joshua Joya, Stephanie Marion, Aladino Olivares, Christopher Ramirez, Jennifer Ramirez, Crystal Toro and Malik Velazquez.** Adult vols **Andrew Sherman and Angel Desai** also pumped up the kids with musical accompaniment during the week. Hopefully we will hear from the crew again! MC

MAYLEEN CANCEL'S FAREWELL



Princess Mayleen Cancel

Some say the day of one's birthday is their lucky age. My birthday is August 10 and being 10 years old was definitely the age my life changed forever.

I started The 52nd street Project in 1995 a regular 10-year-old kid from Hells Kitchen, and now I leave the Project a smart and humble woman. I went through the process like any other Playwright-kid, turned actor-kid, turned Shakespearean-

performer-teen. As my fellow peers said their goodbyes, well I, I stuck around. I had the pleasure to work as the reception-

ist for the Project for five years. Through that I learned about the "other side" of the Project, the remarkable way the great staff makes the magic happen, a magic I became so infatuated with I made The 52nd Street Project my second home.

When I turned 18 and frankly grew too large for the receptionist's desk, I thought my time had come, but, and that's a big BUT, Carol and Liz collaborated and created a position just for me. For the past year I have been working side by side with Liz Bell as a handy-dandy Education Assistant. It has been the greatest experience. The Project has given me the chance to give back to my community, I've worked with the younger brothers and sisters of my peers, and I've helped the next generation of the Project with homework, and had lots of fun in between. I have gained a life's worth of experience here, well, at least 10 years worth. I have even had the pleasure to learn how to design sound, an experience I never knew I would love, but I do, something the folks here at the project are great at. Like they always say, "You don't know you don't like it until you try it".

On August 10, 2006, I will be turning 21 and my run at the project has come to a screeching halt. I will not be working here anymore. I have decided that it will be best to expand my realm of experience, The 52nd Street Project is marked all over my resume and now is the time more than ever to take part in the outside world. Let's just say my lease is up. My plans won't take me too far from 52nd Street. I will continue to work on my bachelor's degree in Political Science and Film at Brooklyn College, and I hope to work full-time somewhere close to the neighborhood. My arms are always open to kids here; whenever anyone needs some good ol' Mayleen homework help my door is always open, literally. Mayleen

ENTER JACKIE

Hi! I'm **Jackie Frankel**, The Project's newest full-time employee. I have jumped on board as John's assistant to help raise funds for The Project's **Capital Campaign.** Helping to build our kids their own theater (while helping to keep John sane) is very exciting to me.

I began my career in theater administration and development at **The Joseph Papp Public Theater**, where I interned and worked for a year and a half. I am an aspiring cabaret singer who enjoys the stability of a day job, lounging on Far Rockaway Beach under the sun, spending time with family and friends all over the country, hanging out with kids, and creating, sharing, seeing and teaching theater and music.

I have been a part of the performing arts community for over nineteen years performing in over twenty theatrical productions and even more concerts, benefits, and variety shows. (I've been a busy bee.) I finished my BFA in Drama with honors at **NYU's Tisch School of the Arts** in three years, two of which intensively focused on musical theater at NYU's renowned studio **CAP21.** This spring I produced my own one-woman show, *The Arc of Love*, at **Rose's Turn.** I look forward to meeting and working with you all soon! JF



Jackie Frankel in search of funding.

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SMARTICLES: MUSICAL MENTORING

Smart Partners **Mathew Ortiz** (he's the kid) and **Kim Sherman** (she's the adult) met in 2004, when Mathew requested piano lessons. Who better to teach him than Kim, our long-time volunteer musical composer, and wife of Project staffer **John Sheehy** (another very fulfilling volunteer gig)? Mathew and Kim had such a great time during their musical meetings that they decided to become official Smart Partners. In their new official capacity, they have ventured beyond the Clubhouse on field trips to a bookstore, to a symphony at Carnegie Hall and most recently, to see a free concert of modern music by avant garde pianist **Anthony DeMare!** Last month, Kim went to see Mathew in his first professional acting job, in The New Victory Theater's production of *Brundibar*. Here are Kim's most memorable mentoring moments, in her own words:



This is Mathew.

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And this is Kim.

GRB

"Here's what I like best about working with Mathew. He is a wonderfully curious and creative person. I really enjoy watching him take an idea and play with it. You can almost see his brain working and making connections, taking things to the next logical step, etc. I like to refer to him as my EXTREMELY smart partner.

"One of my favorite moments was going to hear The Houston Symphony together at **Carnegie Hall** -- Mathew's first time there, as well as the first time he had ever heard a live symphony. We had prepared by studying the *Young Person's Guide to Music*, so he knew what all the instruments of the orchestra were, and we identified all the sections as we watched the orchestra take their seats. This was a full length adult sized concert, and Mathew prepared himself by reading all the program notes to me in the twenty minutes before the concert began. As the music played, he followed everything that was going on. Afterwards I asked what he thought. REALLY good was the first thing he had to say. Yeah!



"I also loved seeing him perform in *Brundibar*. He worked very hard all spring in rehearsal. It was so fantastic to see him on stage completely committed to his part."

If you are inspired by this Smart Partner testimonial, and would like to become a mentor to a Project kid, please contact Liz Bell at the Project for more information: 212-333-5252 or bell@52project.org. LB

GREATEST HITS, A GREAT BIG HIT

The occasion was just a little more special than your run-of-the-mill special occasion when, on Monday, May 1, 2006, the Project celebrated twenty-five years of working with the kids of Hell's Kitchen at our annual gala, entitled GREATEST HITS. This year's bash was held at **Gotham Hall**, where nearly 400 guests enjoyed cocktails, dinner and a show directed by **Jonathan Bernstein**, and written especially for the occasion by

Willie Reale and **John Sheehy**, featuring songs from the Project's first quarter-century, with music by **Patrick Barnes**, **Henry Krieger**, **Rusty Magee**, **Greg Pliska**, **Kim D. Sherman** and **Loren Toolajian**.

Project singers lending their talents included **Michael Potts**, **Judy Kuhn**, **Malcolm Gets**, **Marva Hicks**, **Lee Wilkof**, **Anne Torsiglieri**, **John Conlee** and **David Costabile** with "veteran" Project kids **Stephen Galimidi** and **Shirley Rumierk**, as well as newcomers **Fifi** and **Cathy Fernandez**, who were backed up by Project staffers **Megan Cramer** and **Reg Flowers**. The wonderful band assembled for the occasion featured **Peter Bernstein** on guitar, **Anton Fig** on drums and was lead by Music Director **Larry Yurman** on keyboard. **Greg MacPherson** was the lighting designer, **Scott Lehrer** handled the sound design and **Patricia McGregor** was the stage manager. The whole extravaganza was charmingly hosted by **Sam Waterston**.

The event is always a big night for the Project, and this year was no exception, raising a record amount for our annual operating fund. Part of what made the night especially special was the reading of a proclamation made by Assembly Member **Linda Rosenthal** congratulating the Project on its first twenty-five years. Then came the launch of the Project's \$10.5 million **Capital Campaign**, which will fund new, expanded space for the Project as well as our own theater across the street from the current Clubhouse. JS



Fake switch, real campaign. Gus, Carol, and Willie kick off the drive.

WENDY STULBERG



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.

BKSK Architects LLP	1,000
Bloomberg	5,000
The Brenner Family Foundation	10,000
Brunswick Group LLC	1,000
CBS Corporation	5,000
The Dawkins Foundation	5,000
The Dermot Company	5,000
Joele Frank, Wilkinson Brimmer Katcher	2,500
HBO	5,000
Holland Lodge Foundation	4,000
JKW Foundation	6,000
Kekst and Company	5,000
Latham & Watkins LLP	5,000
Lloyds TSB Bank plc	5,000
Ann M. Martin Foundation	5,000
Noggin/The N	5,000
Ira Pittelman Productions	10,000
Jonathan Rose Companies	4,000
Sesame Workshop	5,000
Shearman & Sterling	5,000
Showtime Networks	1,000
The Stranahan Foundation	15,000
Surdna Foundation	30,000
Susquehanna Foundation	15,000
TaxPro Financial Network	2,500
Tiger Baron Foundation	5,000
Tow Foundation	5,000
Vanguard Charitable Endowment	1,000
John A. Vassilaros & Son	5,000
Warner Music Group Services	1,000
Weil Gotschal & Manges LLP	5,000
Wiener Family Foundation	50,000
Williams Family Foundation	5,000
Yorke Construction Corporation	2,500

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Mr. Camera (*Felix Solis*) momentarily caught with his costume off in our Spring Playmaking show (see page 1).



JOHN SHEEHY

MICHAEL POTTS

Occupation- Actor.

Why do you do what you do?- "No one'll pay me to do anything else. Wait a minute... they don't..."

What he does for the Project: Acts, directs, and dramaturges. He is shown here with Steven Galimidi, his 1-on-1 partner in 2001. They were reunited this year for our *Greatest Hits* benefit.

Hobbies- "Creating specialty ripple wines... Pomegranate Ripple... 120 Proof and it's got antioxidants! I just dated myself; didn't I?"

Last book read- *Blindness* by Jose Saramago.

Most recent accomplishment- "Cure for athlete's foot...feet transplant." (He has also appeared this season in *Lennon* and *Grey Gardens*. -Ed.)

Best Project memory- "In the middle of a performance of our 1-on-1 play *Zazu Point* David Harold turns to me and says 'That's not your line!'"

Credo- "O, yet a man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for." (Michael's quoting Robert Browning here. -Ed.)

Place of birth- Brooklyn, New York

Habitat- Crown Heights (also in Brooklyn)

Favorite thing about the Project- "The kids...No, the flyer bars...No, NO, the kids!"

On Flyer Bars- "I plan to be buried in a coffin made entirely of Flyer Bars. You *can* take it with you!"

52ND STREET PROJECT

▼ Project playwright **Jerome Hairston** and his wife **Cindy Hairston** gave birth to **Julie Antonia Hairston** on March 28. Jerome says they're all enjoying each other's company.



▲ Seen up above are **Joel de la Fuente** and **Tallulah Atticus de la Fuente**. She was born to Joel and **Melissa Bowen** on March 4, 2006. Tallulah joins her elder sister **Elena** and hopes one day to be as big as her dad's head.

► On the night of our benefit, Projvol/actor **Armando Riesco** proposed to ex-Project kid/rising star **Shirley Rumierk** right across the street from the Clubhouse and P.S. 111. Shirley said "He wanted to do it on that night since we met through the Project. And all my memories of the Project have always been happy ones."



◀ Speaking of Project weddings, **Jessica Soto** (a distinguished ProjKid from 1986 to 1992) got hitched to lucky Mr. **Paul Goebels**. Congratulations, Jessie!

NO DARNED PHOTOS DEPT. Projvol director **Evan Cabnet** and **Rocio Galarza** met when Rocio was an intern here. Well, "se amarraron la sogá" (that is, "they tied the knot") in Puerto Rico at the end of May. From all reports, Rocio's dress was spectacular. If we had a picture, we'd show it to you! Long-time Project volunteer-guru-adviser-consultant-wiseacre **Ruth Cohen** was recently engaged to **Bob Usdin** of Showman Fabricators. We've already strong-armed him into printing some large posters gratis, so we're convinced he's a good catch. CO