

# PROJECT UPDATE

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## WHEN DID BLOCK ISLAND BECOME ANOTHER COUNTRY?

Most P.U. readers know that the 52nd Street Project is now 25 years old, but few are aware that the oldest of our programs, the summertime One-on-Ones, celebrated their 20th birthday this year. For novice Projectiles, each One-on-One pairs a kid with an adult. Together they perform a short play written by the adult (or another adult). The big perk: all 10 kid/adult teams get to spend a week in the country rehearsing their shows (as well as immersing themselves in cold water, mastering bocce, and eating pancakes voraciously). The July destination, as always, was **Block Island**, that small sparkling pendant at the mouth of **Long Island Sound**. After a rousing performance for the host families on Block Island, we took 'em to New York to be performed at the **Ensemble Studio Theatre** from July 21 to July 23. If you didn't see them, well, you'll have to content yourself with gazing sorrowfully at the strip of photos to your right. Oh, yes, and reading the recaps below.

Starting up *Another Country Heard From: The International Plays* was **Reg Flowers' Pain In My Art**. Complying beautifully with the theme, this play took us to an art gallery in Japan where two critics (Reg and **Lily Houghton**) sniped, carped, and cavilled at paintings until they had the cathartic experience of seeing something they actually liked. Number two in the line-up was *The Luck O' the Irish*, by **Angel Desai**, in which a leprechaun (**Emmett Goodman-Boyd**) helped an ogre-ly old foe (Angel) get over her lust for revenge and find gainful employment. **Nicole Fargardo** was a memorable banshee, too.

We heard from another continent entirely in **Cynthia Kaplan's Penguin Dreams**, which journeyed farther into the psyche of an Emperor penguin (**Joyce Cheung**) than *The March of the Penguins* ever did. **Catherine Mueller** was the French filmmaker who learned how ambivalent the Antarctic avians really are about their eggs. **Bruce MacVittie** played the title role in his play *One*, which explored the relationship between an arch-villain and his arch-rival (**Terrence Mack**) who was, surprisingly enough, named Two. By the end of the show they were arch-buddies. In *Melinda Y Maya*, scripted by Project veteran **Michael Bernard**, a couple of mud-pie makers (**Erica Arce** and **Riji Suh**) plotted to overthrow their dictator Fidel (intern **Drew Vanderburg**) by using guns and disguises fashioned from mud. It didn't work, but everyone wound up singing and dancing anyway.

At this point, we staged an audience-participation performance called *Eating Candy and Chatting With Your Friends in the Lobby*. It garnered raves from even the harshest critics. After the audience took their bows, they returned to their seats to watch *Blood Sport*, **John Sheehy's** opus about a demonic mastermind (**Lily Capstick**) and her not-so-evil acolyte (John) who try to bring about the End of Days. All they succeeded in bringing about was the End of Play, and it was rather happy. Next up was **Deirdre O'Connor's Trapped in the Louvre Museum**, which featured **Chloe Moore** as a living statue of Aphrodite and **Nikki Phillips** as the French guard she tries to fix up with another guard (**George Babiak**). Having had our fill of cheesy (or should we say "fromagesque?") accents, we moved on to England in the Dark Ages with *The Stable Boy Who Would Be King*, by **Lee Rosen**. Lee and **Lordan Ulloa** played a pair of medieval ostlers who test their royal mettle with the legendary Sword in the Stone. Lordan's character easily extracted the foamcore blade, but declined the throne for the simple life.

Well, our appetite for cheese was already re-whetted, so the next show was *Say Cheese*, by **Megan Cramer**. Megan portrayed a very surly Swiss shop owner who couldn't find a singing cheese seller worth hiring. Until, of course, she met young Pepper Jack from Wisconsin, played by cheery **Luz Maldonado**. The evening's closer was Project founder **Willie Reale's The Morovian Bunny**, in which we saw a young king (**Malik Velasquez**) end a war by wooing the enemy's Queen Fantoopia (**Diana Rojas**) with a singing group sneaked past the ramparts in a giant foamcore bunny. **Tim Cain** (who played Malik's adviser), Reg Flowers and Lee Rosen were the back-up singers, better known as **Menergy 2006**.

The cast was huge, as usual, but there were many thanks-worthy individuals who toiled backstage, including composer **Andrew Sherman**, lighting designer **Greg MacPherson**, Goddess of Sound **Vanessa Valdes**, stage manager **Patricia MacGregor**, costume designers **Chloe Chapin** and **Katherine Brown**, and last but not least, our trusty interns Drew, **Sean Kenealy**, and **Lauren Blumenfeld**.

Big dollops of gratitude go out to our terrific B.I. host families: **Sue Black**; **K.C. and Carolyn Perry**; **Josie Merck** and **Jim Stevenson**; **Alan and Roberta Alpert**; **Jennifer and Elliot Taubman**; **Ron and Judy Tierney**; **Katie Homans**, **Dr. Christina Biaggi**, and **Joya Verde**, **Virginia Dare** and **Spiderdog**. GB

*The Block Island Teams, top to bottom, at right: Lily and Reg, Emmett and Angel, Catherine and Joyce, Terrence and Bruce, Erica and Riji, Lily and John, Chloe and Nikki, Lee and Lordan, Megan and Luz, and Tim and Malik.*



## ...WHEN WAREHAM, MASS. BECAME YET ANOTHER COUNTRY!

Yet another group of kids were heard from with the Wareham One-on-Ones. This time we set off to Buzzard's Bay in **Wareham, Massachusetts** (known as the Gateway to Cape Cod) with nine internationally-minded kids and their jet-set adult partners. Our friends and main house hosts, **Peter, Helen, and Christopher Randolph**, welcomed us with open doors and arms and the kids were treated to summer fun in the typical Project fashion (swimming, sailing and the works). We returned to New York with a thrilling show. Starting in E.U.-tiful Belgium, **Kyle Fargardo** as tough-talking inspector Antonio Von Baguette, and **Reg Flowers** as his bumbling lieutenant Ziggy took on an evil meat smuggler in **Adam Felber's** *An EU-tiful Friendship*. An equally beautiful friendship was begun when fanatic fans **Breanna Straker** and **Erin Quinn Purcell** went head to head and foam-hand to foam-hand in Erin's *Beautiful Game*.

The phrase "We're going to Disneyland" took on new meaning when **Saidah Arrika Ekulona** as Snow White took Magic Kingdom guest **Jason Gil** hostage in *The Last Resort*, by **Liz Tuccillo**. We took a left turn at absurd in *The Ex-Pats*, by **Keira Naughton**, when Keira and **Stephanie Marion** "schooled on the surf," ate lots of fish, and went a little stir-crazy. There's no place like Rome to end an act, so we did with **Mordecai Santiago** as a gladiator trainer, and **George Roman Babiak** as his worthy student in George's *Rome, Sweet Rome*. Mordecai left them in tears (of laughter) with a death scene complete with weeping tigers.

Our world tour continued in the Borneo jungle when **Jamie Yip** showed **Christopher Randolph** that *There's No Cure Like Travel* in a play conveniently of the same title. The play, written by Christopher, included world-class cameo appearances from **John Sheehy** and our indefatigable interns **Lauren Blumenfeld** and **Sean Kenealy**. Going from jungle to jugular in no time at all, **Chris Tineo** vamped (literally) as a pint-sized schoolboy vampire who bullied **Michael Puzzo's** mild-mannered Frankenstein's monster in Michael's *Lunchroom of the Living Dead*. Island girl **Marlowe Mendez** helped fashion designer **Caroline Clay** get in touch with her lighter side in **Leslie Kramer's** *Innerwear*. In the final play of the evening, *The Laughing Mistress*, by Reg Flowers, **Samantha Toro**, as banished kung fu fighter Niu Li, dispatched many a deadly opponent before she met her match in **Megan Cramer's** Aunt Yu Wen. Their enemies were all brought down and so was the house.

On hand to score many an international anthem was **Patrick Barnes**. Supplying the robes of many nations were costume designers **Ciera Wells** (making her auspicious debut with The Project) and **Crystal Thompson** (making her umpteenth sparkling appearance). **Drew Vanderburg** designed the sound and **Karen Munkel** provided expert stage management.

No foreign correspondence would be complete without divulging our resources. A world of thanks to **Emily and John Morgan; Suzanne and John Potts; Bob and Marina Whitman; Sidney Worthen and David Pearce; Joe McNay** and the entire McNay family; and **Beamer Weems & the Wareham Gatemen** baseball team for being great with the kids, signing autographs and almost winning the game. RF

## TEENS MAKE SCENES

Since September 2005, our current teen ensemble has been immersed in a whole new world of training. Masks, mime, improv, movement, and voice all led to a final presentation of 5 scenes written by 5 dynamite playwrights, performed by the 13 teens in June.

We packed the Interart Annex theater and started out with a bang with *Cornography*, by our own **Reg Flowers**. **Nicole Fargardo, Joshua Joya** and **Adrian Zambrano** played three friends plagued by secrets and shifting alliances. Up next was *Above it All*, by **Leslie Ayvazian**, in which **Zebulun Santiago** played a seasoned acrobat/tightrope walker who teaches a tentative pupil (**Nikki Rosario**) to walk the line. In *The Last Goodbye*, by **Megan Mostyn-Brown**, a trio of friends (**Ani Kehr, Suzette Santana, and Alex Tomas**) learn on the eve of their graduation that parting is truly sweet sorrow, especially after a Slurpee fight.

In **David Auburn's** play *Dinner, Lunch & Breakfast*, **Christian Alvarez**, as an honest-to-a-fault waiter, loses his job but wins over his heartbroken customer, played by **Kamila Jacob**—in spite of the very bad food. We closed out the evening with *Dominica...*, by **Stephen Adly Guirgis**. In this dynamic Cyrano tale, an outspoken **Anthony Mejia** coached the lovestruck **Mark Gamero** in the art of wooing. The two narrowly avoided the wrath of **Megan Cruz**.

**Viviane Galloway** designed the costumes and intern **Drew Vanderburg** did sound. **George Babiak, Chris Ceraso, Megan Cramer, Gus Rogerson**, and guest artist **Julia Gibson** directed the plays. We were grateful to present this evening of winners at **The Women's Interart Annex**, thanks to their on-going support and generosity! A big thank-you also goes out to **Mike Sell** and **Eric Karpeles** for hosting us for a special Saturday outing at their beautiful home in Tyler Hill, Pennsylvania. RF



Above, the Wareham Teams: Kyle and Reg, Breanna and Erin, Jason and Saidah, Keira and Stephanie, George and Mordecai, Jamie and Christopher, Chris and Michael, Marlowe and Caroline, and Samantha and Megan.



GRB



The kids of Hip-Hop Week stage a big finish to a piece, yo.

## HIP-HOP HOOPLAH

"Hip-Hop the culture, in which no matter who you are, you can connect with one another — is cool."

"When I walk out the door I see/That not everyone can live the same life as me."  
— Group poems

In the middle of a hot hot summer, 9 kids got together to create some hot hot dancing and poetry. **HIP-HOP WEEK** was our summer **Break-It-Up** workshop, and it gave our kids a chance to move and groove during their summer vacation. We were led by the pop-and-locking **Ms. Vee** (aka **Valerie Ho**), a hip hop dancer/choreographer/teacher from Broadway Dance Center, who taught the kids how to create their own moves and routines. As an added bonus, we had a special guest artist, **Joe Hernandez-Kolski**, *HBO Def Poetry* hip hop artist, who performed his original poetry for us and helped the kids write their own soulful spoken word pieces. From Tuesday to Friday, the kids spent the mornings sweating it out, learning hip-hop choreography, and spent the afternoons crafting original dances and writing original poems. With the magic combination of collaboration and patience they taught their choreography to each other to produce a group presentation that they performed for a packed house of excited fans. It was mad hot, yo. Our breakin', flava-ful kids were: **Muhammad Cunningham, Nicole Fargardo, Kiana Hernandez, Merlaine Mendez, Mordecai Santiago, Kayelani Silva, Alex Tomas, Ashley Torres, and Malik Velazquez**. They were assisted by our fearless and fierce adult vols: **Barnett Cohen, Craig Cox, Sean Kenealy, Becca Masback, and Nikki Phillips**.  
MC

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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.

CARNEGIE CORPORATION	.....\$50,000
CONSOLIDATED EDISON	.....\$2,000
DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS	.....\$2,500
DOWNTOWN ARTS DEVELOPMENT	.....\$5,000
NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS	.....\$16,500
NEW YORK COMMUNITY TRUST	.....\$5,000
NYS COUNCIL ON THE ARTS	.....\$10,500
TIME WARNER	.....\$1,000

## IMAGINE THAT

The 52nd Street Project is moving – in a couple of years – across the street. The new home of the Project will be in the **Mosaic Development**, those buildings going up on both sides of 52nd Street. Probably the most exciting part is that the new space will include The 52nd Street Project Theater. Yeah, the Project is going to have it's own 150-seat theater dedicated to the children of Hell's Kitchen.



The Raw Space: Here's what the space looked like as of late September, 2006.

GRB

Of course, putting together a new Clubhouse and Theater (making the Project five times bigger than it is now) is going to be expensive. So the Project has organized a Capital Campaign to pay for it all. The Campaign, which was launched at the annual gala this past May, is called **THE PLACE WE IMAGINE**, and has already gotten a lot of support from the Office of the Borough President, the Mayor's Office, the Department of Cultural Affairs and the City Council, as well as from individuals, corporations and foundations. But there's still a ways to go, and we want everyone who's interested to participate. If you'd like more information, call the Project and talk to Director of Development **John Sheehy**, 212/333-5252, or email [sheehy@52project.org](mailto:sheehy@52project.org).

Imagine, a home, right here in the neighborhood – finally putting an answer to that question: "Where's the next show?" "Right here!"  
JS

## SMART PARTNER PORTRAIT: CHRIS AND "KATTY"



Smart Partners **Christopher Ramirez** and **Catherine Mueller** met two years ago at a Playback show. Christopher explains that he and "Katty," as he calls her, are a successful pair "because we really get along and she is crazy like me. We like the same things, like movies and books, and it was fun talking about weird topics. One day we

talked about space and another day we talked about the beginning of the world." Katty agrees on their shared zaniness, but adds, "Chris is hilarious, but what doesn't get as much attention are his thoroughly undiminished spirit and his relentless pursuit of any activity or partnership that will serve

him or feed him or make a difference. When he determines he wants something, he goes for it with every ounce of his being."

This determination, coupled with Catherine's unwavering support, helped him to achieve his ultimate goal: to get into a boarding school. Catherine was thrilled: "What kid comes to you and says 'I want to change my setting because the city is too tight. I think I'd like to go to boarding school?'" They immediately got to work, researching schools and preparing applications.

This fall, Christopher begins ninth grade at **Milton Hershey Boarding School** in Pennsylvania. "It will be sad to see him go, but I am certain he will make his presence known, and write me long and frequent letters about his exploits there." Chris is certain of their longevity: "I'm going to miss her and I really thank her for helping me with all this process. When I come back I'm going to try to see her during my vacation."  
LB

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Sean Kenealy  
 and Lauren  
 Blumenfeld  
 as devotees of  
 the wilderness in  
 the Wareham  
 One-on-Ones.

GRB



SCHOTT COLLECTION

**MAURY SCHOTT**

**What he does for the Project:** Since 1999, Maury has volunteered in a plethora of capacities, including Sound Designer, Smart Partner, Dramaturg/Director and kibitzer par excellence.

**Occupation:** "Database System Management & Sound Design, also some graphic design (I have a short attention span)."

**Why he does what he does:** "I readily retain millions of pieces of arcane information and love to make noise."

**Place of Birth:** Kenmore, NY (part of Buffalo).

**Hobbies:** "Theater, movies, volunteering, computer geeking, and maintaining a slightly twisted sense of humor (OK, that one should be first)."

**Habitat:** The West Village.

**Last book read:** "'Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation' by Joseph J. Ellis."

**Most recent accomplishment:** "Finishing 'Founding Brothers' (see above)."

**Best 52nd Street Project Memories:** "There are SOO many, but I guess watching Catherine Mueller and Angel David in *Underwear Man* and *Kathy Get Married* and *Kathy Wins*."

**Credo:** "No matter what your gifts, give back."

**Advice to kids:** "Find a place to escape reality."

**Favorite thing about the Project:** "All the people I work with, even the kids. No, really!"

**On Flyer Bars:** "The dark chocolate, plain or with crispy rice (it's just like sushi!)"

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▲ Melissa Jones and Lee Briggs took the leap of faith on July 1st 2006, in Winston-Salem, NC. They say they "rang a bell after the ceremony." Some kind of euphemism, we guess. By the way, our former intern is now known as Melissa Briggs.

▼ Proj Composer **Greg Pliska** and **Jessica Switzer** got married on June 3 in NYC at a crossword puzzle-themed wedding that was so cool it made the "Vows" column in the New York Times.



▲ We're happy to report that **Ceci Arana** and **Kevin Grant** gave birth to "gassy, fussy, and sweet." **Andreas Rafael Arana Grant** on August 6th. He was 8lbs, 9 Oz., and it was an all-natural birth. "Youch!" said Ceci, who adds that his just-a-bit-older brother **Alexander Mason Arana Grant** is NOT responding well to this new addition. Ah, well. Give him time...