

PROJECT UPDATE



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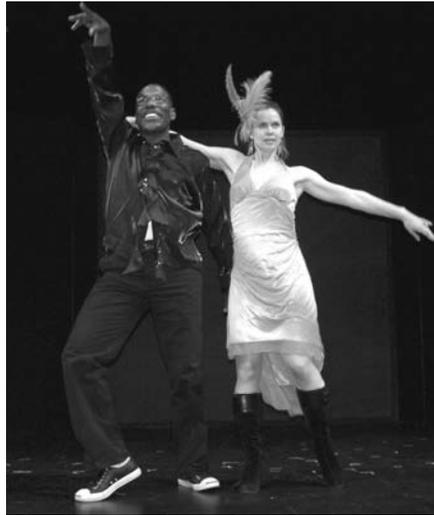
SEZ US, THAT'S WHO!

For most people, Spring is considered a season of new love, blooming flowers, budding trees, and lovely weather. But at The 52nd Street Project, the springtime only seems to bring arguments, sassy comebacks and a confrontational attitude! Well, it did this year anyway, with the production of our annual Spring Playmaking show entitled *SEZ WHO?! Plays That Talk Back*. Produced at Playwrights Horizons after a nine-week Playmaking class and a weekend away in **Kent, CT** at the homes of the **Graham, Waterston** and **Armstrong-Gannon** families, the first plays of the Project's 10 newest playwrights showed us the true depths of impertinence. But more importantly, they showed us the amazing talent these kids discovered in themselves. Don't think so?! Just you wait!!

The first play of the evening was *The Flashback*, written by **Kimberly Senteno** and directed by **Maury Schott**. **Kevin Geer** and **Elizabeth Canavan** played Greg and Sapphire, a pair of best friends who struggle with the trials of a long-term, sometimes long-distance relationship, but find a way to stay together with understanding, forgiveness, and a special song.

Next up was *Mees's Opportunity*, written by **Zoltan Lucas** and directed by **George Babiak**, starring **Matt Citron** as Mees and **Barnett Cohen** as Rocky, two mice on a never-ending search for a good meal. In *The Competition*, written by **Gabriella DeJesus** and directed by **Gus Rogerson**, Dishanair (**Florencia Lozano**) and Ben (**James McDaniel** on Friday and Saturday and **Ed Vassallo** on Sunday) struggle in their relationship and on the dance floor. When Dishanair becomes pregnant and they lose the big dance-off, Ben flees for the West Coast, leaving Dishanair to raise their newborn child. Despite its title, *The Break-Up*, written by **Raphael Irizarry III** and directed by **Julia Gibson**, followed up with only a near separation. Ben, a compulsive prankster played by **David Costabile**, goes too far and gives up trickery to make amends with his sister Monica, played by **Liza Colon-Zayas**.

Closing out the first act was a study in self-discovery and the mysteries of animal physiology entitled *Vanilla and Hoppy are Friends*. Directed by **Liza Steinberg** and written by a young post-modernist named **Brandon Leon**, the play featured **Vanessa Aspillaga** as Vanilla the iguana and **Dominic Colon** as Hoppy the curiously-named snake, two animals who meet for the first time on their shared birthday only to realize that they are, inexplicably, twins!



James McDaniel and Florencia Lozano trip the light fantastic.

After some lively discussion and scattered insolence during intermission, the audience returned to their seats ready for more confrontational theater. Their collective wish came true with *Problems in Life*, written by **Lauren Robinson** and directed by **Liliana Amador-Marty**, in which a fisherwoman named Tia (**Elizabeth Marvel**) catches and falls in love with a magic fish (**Howard Overshown**). When he uses his powers to turn himself into a human, the only thing stopping them from marrying is his extreme unwillingness, a problem she overcomes with her own powers of back-talk and compromise.

Next up was *The Smarchian*, written by **Melissa Rebolledo** and directed by **Mariana Carreño**, in which a lonely young girl named Jenifer (**Sharon Washington**) finds a special friend in a "highly flammable" time traveler known as The Smarchian (**Keira Naughton**), despite his tendency to spontaneously incinerate her father's clothes. In the middle of the second act came *Michelle and Rosey (The Musical)*, written by **Jazmine Mikell** and directed by **Megan Cramer**, starring **Nana Mensah** as Michelle and **Tonya Canada** as Rosey, two aspiring singers who croon their way through shared jealousy and impoliteness to finally belt out a song together, as friends, at the Super Bowl!

In *The Price*, written by **Chamel Rodney** and directed by **Thom Sesma**, Ice Man, played by **Danyon Davis**, and Ice Cat, played by Thom, battled dinosaurs, an Ice Age, and each other in a Jurassic quest for power. After deceiving Ice Man into giving up his powers, Ice Cat pays the ultimate price for his greed by turning into a diamond. Finally, closing out this mouthy production was *The Love of a Thief and a Lady*, written by **Tino Paduani** and directed by **Tom Schall**. **Edie Falco** played Hanna Jane, a disillusioned jewelry store owner who has no success until a thief named Ere (**Jeremy Beck**) steals her jewels and her heart... after some heated arguments, an assault with a skillet and several passionate musical numbers.

The evening also featured an incredible array of impressive costumes designed by **Arnulfo Maldonado** and **Kate Cusack**, and a wondrous selection of fantastic musical numbers composed by **Loren Toolajian**. The sound design was expertly provided by our Goddess of Sound, **Vanessa Valdes**, the lighting was brilliantly supplied by **Greg MacPherson**, and the stage was superbly managed by **Sadie Bancroft**. So, if we hear someone say this wasn't one of the greatest Project shows ever we'll say "SEZ WHO?!"

JAM

WENDY STULBERG



Comedian **Kathleen Madigan** was particularly scathing at the **Lewis Black** roast. Her tales of their relationship had Lew in tears of laughter.

OVERDONE TO PERFECTION

Now, *that* was funny. Monday, May 7, 2007 was a rare occasion, the Project's annual benefit, this year entitled, *CHARRED BLACK, The 52nd Street Project Roasts Lewis Black*. Friends, volunteers, funders and families chuckled gleefully at the public grilling of one of the Project's dearest supporters. Once again held at Gotham Hall, the evening was hosted by **Mark Linn-Baker** and featured scorching tributes from former Project kid **Richard Myrie**, **Neil Mazzella**, **Steve Olsen**, **Kathleen Madigan**, and **John Bowman**; a torch song by **Judith Ivey**; a disco inferno by **Nancy Giles** and her *Matchless Dancers* **Merlaine Mendez**, **Mathew Ortiz** and **Kayelani Silva**. All were backed by The Hot Licks Band: **Ben Butler** on guitar, **Anton Fig** on drums, **Tim Luntzel** on bass and Music Director **Andrew Sherman** on keyboard. The evening concluded with a slash and burn rebuttal by the honoree. It was the best attended and highest grossing benefit to date. Many thanks to all who joined in! JLS

REPLAY READING RECAPITULATION

On Monday, June 11th at 7:00 p.m., an eager audience began to trickle into the **Peter Norton Space at the Signature Theatre** on West 42nd Street, excited to be introduced to the staged readings of 10 brand new plays written by 10 gifted children. About three hours earlier, the directors of the readings (**Lisa Benavides**, **Jonathan Bernstein**, **Danny Goldstein**, **Michael Potts**, and **John Steber**) as well as the talented company of actors (**Bill Camp**, **Caroline Clay**, **John Ellison Conlee**, **Megan Cramer**, **Katie Flahive**, **Joel de la Fuente**, **Patrick Jones**, **Chris Mazza**, **Edward O'Blenis**, **Joanna Parson**, **Diana Rojas**, **Jeanine Serralles**, **J. Smith-Cameron**, **Felix Solis**, and **Virginia Vitzthum**) had their own moments of discovery. Did the Artistic Director forget to schedule rehearsals... again?! Nope. That's just the way we do **The Lorraine Cohen Replay Readings** 'round these parts, and despite the stress such a last minute production can cause, the 2007 batch turned out to be a great success!

Replay Readings

In just three hours, the ten scripts written by **Doris Alcantara**, **John Cacomanolis**, **Samantha Caldon**, **Lily Capstick**, **Armando Cosme, Jr.**, **Devin Gonzalez**, **Maximo Jimenez**, **Wendell Joseph**, **Ashley Smith**, and **Mari Ulloa** during their 9-week *Replay Class* -- an advanced playwriting course taught by Associate Artistic Director **Reg Flowers** -- leapt off the page and became visual and verbal feasts featuring everything from a *Tin Man* in a wrestling match to a gruesome barbed wire accident. The kids explored themes as diverse as John's study on the difficulties of being the new kid and Ashley's poignant yet heart-warming commentary upon the effects of racism on new relationships. Secret agents rescuing teddy bears from laser-filled rooms, French soccer prodigies, secret heart conditions, homeless men turned substitute teachers, merengue dance contests, and nose-picking officiants; there was something for everyone in the minds of this brilliant group of young playwrights. By the end of the night, the audience was begging for a replay of *Replay!* JAM

As always, we graciously thank the *Cohen family* for honoring the late acting teacher **Lorraine Cohen** in funding this *Project program*.

FIVEY ISSUES FORTH

Once again, the kids of the Project have spent a year digging deep into their psyches and committing their ideas and thoughts to paper. **Liz Bell** has collected their musings and filled the 9th annual issue of *Fivey*, the Project's literary magazine. This year's theme: **Issues!** That's right, it's the "Issues" issue. Stop by the Clubhouse and pick up your free copy.

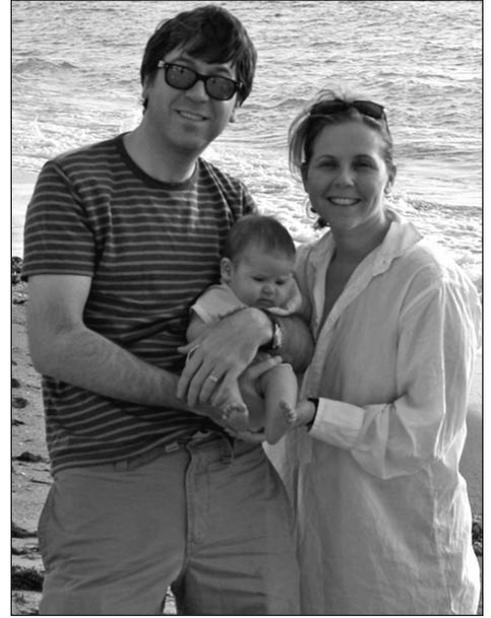


THE FOLLOWING FOUNDATIONS, CORPORATIONS AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES RECENTLY MADE GENEROUS GRANTS TO THE PROJECT. WE ARE GRATEFUL TO THEM FOR THEIR SUPPORT AS WELL AS TO THE MANY INDIVIDUALS WHO HELP SUSTAIN THE PROJECT'S PROGRAMS YEAR ROUND.

APA	5,000
Ann M. Martin Foundation	7,500
CBS Corporation	5,000
Comedy Central	10,000
Consolidated Edison Company	8,000
HBO	5,000
The Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation	30,000
I. Weiss & Sons, Inc.	1,000
JKW Foundation	1,000
John A. Vassilaros & Sons, Inc.	10,000
Jonathan Rose Companies	5,000
Kekst & Company	5,000
Latham & Watkins	5,000
Law Offices of Claudia Wagner	2,000
Lloyds TSB Bank plc	5,000
The Neil V. DeSena Foundation	10,000
Noggin/The N	1,250
Office of Senator Thomas K. Duane	1,000
Sesame Workshop	5,000
Shearman & Sterling	5,000
The Shubert Organization	5,000
Stranahan Foundation	15,000
Susquehanna Foundation	10,000
TaxPro Financial Network	2,000



◀ Back in July of 2005 we told the story of how high school sweethearts **Jessalyn Gilsig** and **Bobby Salomon** got back together after many years and got hitched. Now, we're happy to report the birth of **Penelope Clare Salomon** in Los Angeles on September 26, 2006. Jessalyn writes: "She is the greatest and we are disgustingly, slobberingly in love with her." The little family sounds messy, but very happy.



▲ **Wendy Stulberg** graciously takes hundreds of photographs of our annual benefit every year, but someone finally took one of her. Here she is with her husband **David Nanasi** and little **Lila Sophia Nanasi**, who washed ashore on Jan. 6, 2007.



▲ These two little munchkins are **Nate** and **Dash**, the brand new scions of **Diana Son** and her husband **Michael**. The boy hovering protectively above them is their older brother **Wildier**. Amazingly, Nate already does a Bing Crosby impression. He is seen at right performing "Don't Fence Me In."

▶ Some newborns, it seems, come equipped with a stylish cap. Here's **Eli Duff Catlin**, who was born to **Julie Dretzin** and **Sam Catlin** on May 22, 2006 at 6 lbs and 3 oz. Julie, who did dozens of Project shows before moving to L.A. a few years ago, tells us she is happy and healthy. So is her excellent boy.



▶ Believe it or not, **Kevin Roach**, renowned designer of the trusty Instant Set and our resident Wild Man, got married, bought an apartment, and had a baby this year. And here is our first glimpse of him: **Oscar Hugo Roach**, born March 31st at 7:30pm. He was 9 lbs. 9 oz., 20" long and has been growing ever since.



▶ Appearing right at press time: **Jackson Miles Alexander**, and his mom, artist **Leigh Pennebaker**. Jackson's dad is **Taro Alexander**, a Project vet and the artistic director of the Our Time theater company. Jackson was born Monday, June 11th, 2007 and weighed in at a hefty 9 pounds, 2 ounces.



◀ Our favorite name of the month belongs to **Finn O'Shaughnessey**, born on November 19, 2005 (we just heard about him recently). He's shown here with his moms **Kaitlyn "Jenny" Kenney** and **Katie O'Shaughnessey**. Jenny, a Project actress, says "We can't wait for him to see his first Project show, as soon as he can sit still and quietly for more than 30 seconds!"

▼ If you watched the Tony awards, you saw our pal **Bernard Gersten** collect an award for *The Coast of Utopia* and then congratulate his daughter **Jilian Gersten** on her engagement to **Brian Shuman**. Here are some more details: Brian presented the ring, a bunch of red roses, and the big question on the #2 express train between Chambers St. and 14th St. The entire car burst into applause.



▶ **Tria Leal Mertes** was born to **Brian Mertes** and **Melissa Kievman** on May 5th at 5:55 am after 51 hours. It was a natural birth at the St. Luke's Roosevelt Birthing Center and she weighed 7 whole pounds. She is, her parents boast, a real New York baby.



CAMERA-SHY BABY DEPT.: **Horatio Miner Hamilton** was born to Projector **Josh Hamilton** and **Lily Thorne** in New York City on February 8, 2007.

On March 27th, 2007, Proj Playwright **Daniel Goldfarb's** daughter **Isabel Lili Crespi Goldfarb** was born after 26 hours of labor!, weighing 6lbs 14 ounces, and measuring 20 inches long. GRB

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Barnett Cohen's
table manners
shock
Matt Citron
in the February
playmaking show
(see page 1).

GRB

Occupation- Elliot: tax and public utility lawyer, cantor, winemaker. Jennifer: artist, law office manager, volunteer

Why do you do what you do?- Elliot: "A lawyer, because I did not like the way people were treated by the law; a cantor because I trained young, and it makes other people feel good; and a winemaker because it makes *me* feel good." Jennifer: "I like to keep busy."

What they do for the Project: They've been a host family to our kids on Block Island for nearly 20 years.

Hobbies- Both: Photography and volunteering with housing problems on Block Island and national issues of peace and environment.

Last book read- Elliot: *A History of Chile*. Jennifer: *The House of Spirits*.

Most recent accomplishment- Both: "Answering this newsletter."

Best Project memory- Both: "All the kids."

Credo- Elliot: "Degustibus non disputandum est. (In matters of taste there is no dispute.)" Jennifer: "Exception: He is a vegetarian; I'm not and he makes faces when I eat meat."

Place of birth- Both: Hartford, Connecticut. **Habitat-** Block Island!

Advice to kids- "Be curious!"

Favorite thing about the Project- Both: "The staff and the kids."

On Flyer Bars- Jennifer: "I love all things chocolate." Elliot: "I want to fly."



GRB

ELLIOTT & JENNIFER
TAUBMAN

SMART PARTICLES

THE SMART PARTNER REPORT BY LIZ BELL



GRB

Joyce and Melissa in their ping-pong tournament outfits.

Joyce Cheung and Melissa Briggs have been Smart Partners for two years now. They often take their meetings outside the Clubhouse — to rollerblade, visit museums and parks, see movies, explore Chinatown, and sometimes, just talk over milkshakes. Today, they are close confidantes, and Melissa loves hearing Joyce's feelings on matters both serious and silly. She describes how they spent Joyce's 10th birthday:

I took Joyce to a diner for milkshakes and she really seemed to open up to a whole new realm of conversation. I don't know if it was the setting, the special treat, or graduating to double-digits, but she was talking a mile a minute and asking very candid, pointed, adult questions about Evolution, God and Religion, War and Politics! It was fascinating. She was interested in my views and remarkably clear on her own. We mused for ages about why people can't just accept that everyone is different and has different views and beliefs. It was a milestone in our budding relationship. I've noticed she is more interested in talking about "issues," things other than the basics of her day and school. The level of candor in our conversations and the breadth of the topics we discuss have increased dramatically this year. Joyce is a fantastic kid and I'm lucky to know her!

Joyce and Melissa are sad to end their "official" Smart Partner status when Melissa moves to San Francisco this summer, but they've promised to continue their great debates with e-mails and phone calls.

— LB