



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE 52ND STREET PROJECT

# PROJECT UPDATE

VOLUME 59 - MARCH, 2009 EDITORS: GEORGE BABIAK & REG FLOWERS

ALL PLAYMAKING PHOTOS BY DAVID FURR



## PLAYMAKING - DEC., 2008

BRAND-NEW KIDS WRITE PLAYS FOR GROWN-UP ACTORS

Over the last 6 months, the Project presented a spate of shows that were, in our extremely biased view, all smashingly wonderful. Or do we mean wonderfully smashing?

◀ The December Playmaking show at the Anspacher Hall in the Public Theater gave us the work of 10 bright new playwrights, including Samantha Paduani, who wrote *The Cupcake Master Interview*, with Celia Keenan-Bolger as a peppy TV host and James Yaegashi as a cave-dwelling chef. It was tastily directed by Maureen Towey.



In *Josh's Angel*, by Kenneth "Kenny" Smith, a late-blooming postman (Tom Riis Farrell) who lives with his mom was confronted by a meddlesome angel (Sevan Greene) who turned out to be his long-lost dad. Dad then coached Son to victory in a million-dollar singing and dancing contest. The quirky fable was directed by John Sheehy.

◀ Aidan Martinez's *Have The Big Fight With My Sister*, directed by Rick Meese, featured plenty of Trouble...the pop-o-matic game of Trouble, that is. Seen here are Joe White and Nancy Giles as the titular siblings.



▶ *Best Friends*, written by 9-year-old Diamond Deanna Graves and directed by Maria Goyanes, presented the saga of a girl (Sharon Washington, at right) who tests the friendship of a schoolmate (Zenzele Cooper, left) by demanding a solid year of protective, caring devotion. In the end, they became (you guessed it) BFF's.



CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 ⇨

**Let Me Put It This Way:  
The Straight Talk Plays**

was performed in the Anspacher Hall at the Public Theater the weekend of December 5-7, 2008.

**A Truckload of Gratitude to:**

Greg MacPherson  
& Lauren Parrish.....Lights  
Patrick Barnes..... Composer  
Crystal Thompson  
& Chris Rumery..... Costumes  
Maury Schott..... Sound  
Rachel Bauder..... Stage Manager

Oskar Eustis, Jenny Gersten,  
Maria Goyanes, Bethany Ford, and  
everyone else at the Public Theater



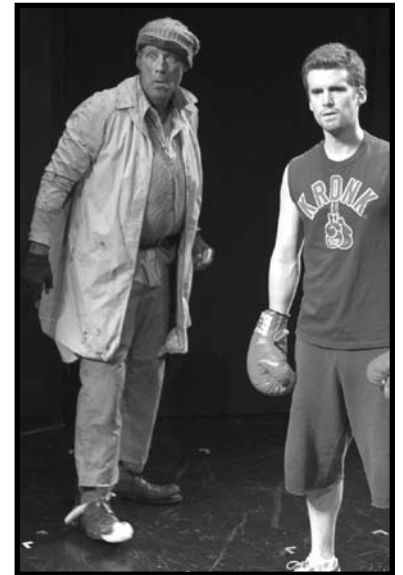
▲ Tiara Varela's *The Popular One* was a new twist on the country mouse vs. city mouse tale. Directed by Leslie Kramer; it starred Kathy Hiler and Sue Jean Kim.



▲ A girl who is half-wolf, half-polar bear (Keira Naughton) took on the school bully (Tim Cain) in Jasmine Hernandez's *When Alex Wants a Friend*, directed by Nicole Watson.



◀ Drama was just what the title promised: the story of a young rowdy (Peter Dinklage) whose sister (Jessica Hecht) gives up an American Idol audition to spring him from the clink. It was written by Alizette Zapata and directed by Davis McCallum.  
▶ Besart Bequiri's *The Last Match* was a tragic piece about a rash young boxer (Armando Riesco) and the down-and-out bum (Kevin Geer) who trains him. Jake Hart was the formidable opponent. Felix Solis directed.



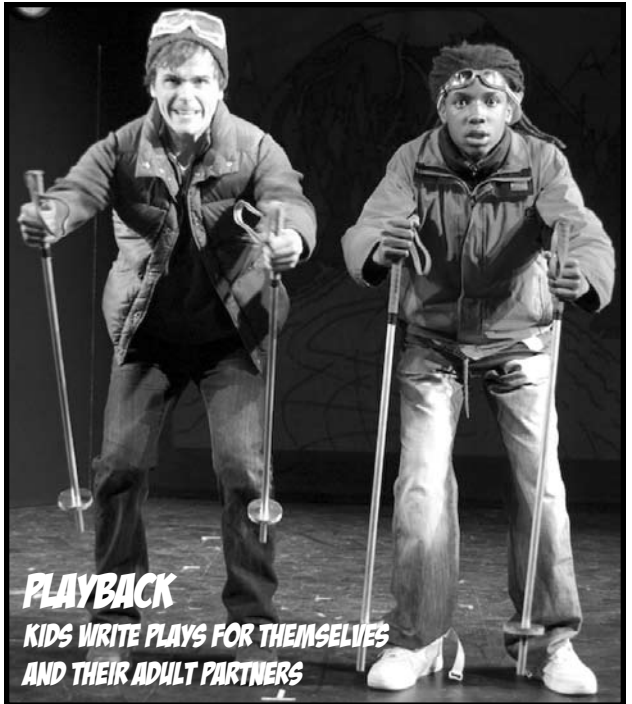
On the left above, Uzo Aduba was a frenetic star and Kenajuan Bentley a mysterious and valiant interstellar visitor in *The Dimension Traveler and the White Dwarf*, written by Jeremy Sanchez and directed by Sarah Cameron Sunde. On the right, John Ellison Conlee was a wealthy zookeeper who upset the sensibilities of gardener Mary Catherine Garrison in Gerardo Escamilla's *Vengeance Friendship*, directed by Project vet Jonathan Bernstein.  
**Lest We Forget:** Our Fabulous hosts for the weekend writing retreat in Stone Ridge, NY and environs were Steve Gorn, Barbara Bash, & Wiley Bash-Gorn; Iris Brown & Joe White; Laura Cunningham; Elaine Musselman; Deborah Freedman & Bill Woods; Charles Miles & Naomi Freundlich; Mary Louise Wilson; Penny Dillon; and David Curtis & Anne Morris.

ALL PLAYMAKING PHOTOS BY DAVID FURR



▲ In Andy Reyes' *The Bully*, Andy played the new monkey in the school. Kevin Pwyer was the sibilant snake who picked on him... until the earthquake struck!

▶ Luz Maldonado's *Dreams Do Really Happen* was a haunting period piece that had her playing Reg Flowers' daughter and yearning for her long-lost mother and sister... until she found the lost diary!



**PLAYBACK**  
KIDS WRITE PLAYS FOR THEMSELVES  
AND THEIR ADULT PARTNERS

▲ *The Cause* featured Josh Moody as a hot chocolate barista and Kara Thiam as a wealthy customer. They raced each other on the slopes... until the avalanche hit!

◀ In *The Untold Stories*, Kevin Kulego and Lauren Blumenfeld were intrepid Swedish TV reporters... until they were taken hostage!



▲ In *Purposes, O'Purposes* (L) Luisa Santiago and Annie Henk were tourists in London... until the bomb went off! Right, Jamie Yip dealt with a creepy Hawaiian innkeeper (Alexis McGuinness) in *Vampire Hotel*... until her vacation ended!

▶ *Go! Go! Go!* featured Breanna Straker and Christine Grenier as a chimpanzee and a cheetah competing in school... until the hailstorm!



▲ Armando Cosme, Jr. and Brad Aldous were roommates in Armando's *Never Trust Your Instincts*... until the telescope exploded!

**Run For Your Lives! The Disaster Plays**

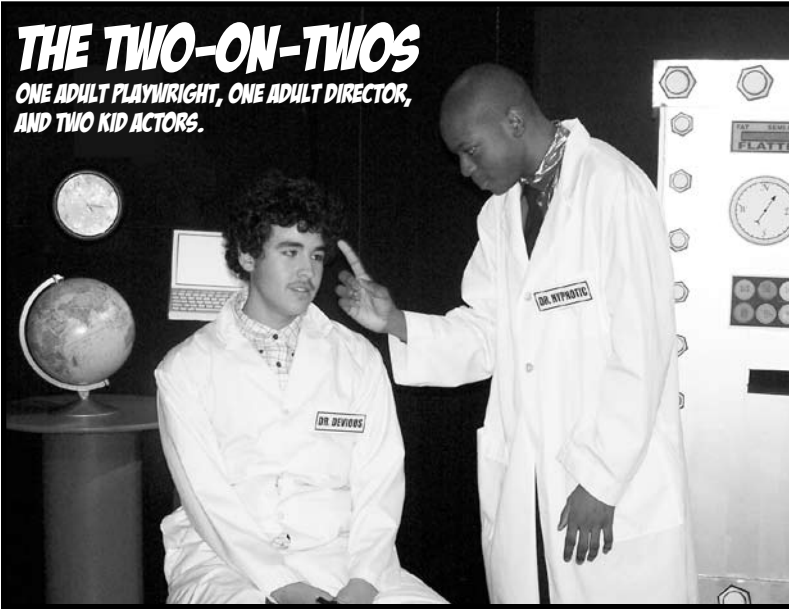
was rehearsed over the Columbus Day weekend in Bridgerhampton at the homes of John Vassilaros and Alex Gersten-Vassilaros and Louis and Patrice Friedman. It was performed at the Axis Theater in the West Village in late October, 2008.

**The Design & Tech Team**

Greg MacPherson ..... Lighting Designer  
Loren Toolajian ..... Composer and Music Director  
Ciera Wells ..... Costume Designer  
Betsy Rhodes ..... Sound Designer  
Casey Keeler ..... Stage Manager

# THE TWO-ON-TWOS

ONE ADULT PLAYWRIGHT, ONE ADULT DIRECTOR,  
AND TWO KID ACTORS.



**Don't Be Late! Plays on Time**  
was produced at TBG Theater at 312 W. 36th St.  
From January 30 through February 1.

### The Creative Team

Burke Brown ..... Lights  
Karl Mansfield ..... Composer  
Sarita Fellows ..... Costumes  
Carol Sullivan ..... Stage Manager  
Maileen Cancel ..... Sound

### Weekend Rehearsal Trip Hosts

Maria Tucci, Robert Gottlieb, Vicki Mabrey,  
Wendy Ettinger & Derek McLane,

◀ Terrence Mack (at right) was the half-mad creator of a flattening machine and Lordan Ulloa (L) was his (seemingly) half-witted sidekick in *Doctor Devious* and *Doctor Hypnotic*, written by Michael Lew and directed by Larissa Lury.



Winter Miller's *Wait! Wait? Wait...*, directed by Megan Cramer, depicted two girls (Luz Maldonado and Ashley Smith) in an existential quandary.



Director Patrick Jones doubled as an understudy with Jorge Zapata in Michael Bernard's *Formaggia and La Scalalino*.



Chloe Moore and Jason Gil were oddly powered superheros with a personality conflict in Sharyn Rothstein's *Sno-Globe and the Big Zip*, directed by Laura Konsin.



*Butter Finger Fever*, written by Deirdre O'Connor and directed by David Dalton, featured Ethan Maldonado as a real team player coping with C.J. Muentes' massive ego... that is, his character's massive ego!



Production numbers abounded in Graeme Gillis' *Here Comes The Prom*, which told the tale of two sisters (Stephanie Marion & Carla Oliva) with clashing taffeta dreams. It was directed by Carlos Armesto.

# THE 9TH ANNUAL SMART PARTNERS PING-PONG TOURNAMENT

On February 13th, no less than 24 teams mercilessly batted a small white ball until one Smart Partner team vanquished all others and took home snappy Foamcore trophies and Project hoodies. Other winners got nifty Flyer Bar T-shirts and chocolates (Thanks, John Paris!).

Here are the champs, the near-champs, the pretty good, and the just plain cute as they appeared on that day.



John Sheehy and Maximo Jimenez ("Flex Team") took home First Prize. Their secret weapons: John's killer serve and Maximo's tumble roll.



Jorge Zapata and Josh Moody fought hard for Second Prize. Note: Jorge is deliberately making that face. Their team name: "Vomit! Nice, huh?"



Andy Reyes and college kid Nikki Fangardo played as "Team Red" and came in Third.



A rare Fourth Place tie: Mordecai Santiago and Liz Bell were even with Megan Cramer and Gaby DeJesus.



Honorable Mention, or Fifth Place, went to "The Spectacles," Jennifer Ramirez and Carol Ochs.



For painstakingly making their own t-shirts, Elena Caballero and J McLoughlin got the Best Dressed prize.



The Most Improved players were Jason Hare and Michael Bannister, aka "The Graduation Kings!"



They never shoved each other, so Natalia Caballero and Katie Flahive won the Best Teamwork medals.



They never shoved anyone else, so Sean Kenealy and Jason Gil won the Good Sport awards.



Aidan Martinez and Craig Cox, known to the media as "The Fabulouses," were the Best New Players.

PING PONG PHOTOS BY GRB



SP NEWBIES: Tino Paduani and Patrick Jones are old-time 1-on-1 collaborators, but new Smart Partners.



SP NEWBIES: Laura Konsin and Samantha Caldon say they're bad players, but strum a mean guitar duet.



SP NEWBIES: Graeme Gillis and Alvin Garcia? They're a little weird, but we still love 'em.



SP NEWBIES: "Viking Cowboys" Rene Paul Santiago & Jonathan Kaplan met and became SP's at the tourney.



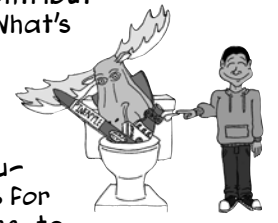
The Following Foundations, corporations, and government agencies recently made generous grants to the Project. We are grateful to them for their support as well as to the many individuals who help sustain the Project's programs year-round.

Aon .....	\$5,000
The Dramatists Guild Fund .....	\$2,400
Dramatists Play Service .....	\$1,500
Duke/Mellon/TCG .....	\$26,000
Holland Lodge Foundation .....	\$4,000
James A. MacDonald Foundation .....	\$1,100
Mellon Equity Associates, LLP .....	\$1,000
Music Theatre International .....	\$3,000
NYC Department of Cultural Affairs .....	\$42,400
New York Times Company Foundation .....	\$5,000
Tony Randall Theatrical Fund .....	\$10,000
Harold & Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust .....	\$35,000
Stranahan Foundation .....	\$25,000
Surdna Foundation .....	\$30,000
St. Vincent De Paul Foundation .....	\$5,000
Vervane Foundation .....	\$5,000
Yorke Construction Corporation .....	\$3,500



### WONDERING HOW THE FUNDRAISER WENT?

Well, we don't have to worry about kids busting the pipes by flushing props down the toilet because even if that did happen, we'd be covered due to the generosity of our supporters. The Project would like to send a big thank you to all those who contributed to the year-end campaign "What's a Donation Worth These Days?" This year the Project did things a little differently for our annual solicitation, enumerating various things that your contributions make possible, from pencils for kids in their first Playmaking class, to the last half-million left to finish the Capital Campaign. This was one of our most successful Fundraisers in many years and we are guaranteed to have plenty of pencils for the foreseeable future (though we are still working on that last half-million dollars for the Capital Campaign). We are all extremely grateful to those who contributed.



### WINTER BREAK-IT-UP: SCENIC DESIGN WORKSHOP

Every now and then, to their parents' chagrin, Project kids have a complete week off from school. We like to take advantage of these weeks by arranging one-shot specialty workshops called "Break It Ups." Last month, George Babiak and Megan Cramer ran a unique 4-day scenic design class in which kids created sets for old-time Project plays. With the help of guest designers Derek McLane ("33 Variations," "Ruined") and Kevin Roach (The Project's renowned "Instant Set") and a gang of friendly adult volunteers, including Ben Masur, Davis McCallum, Tom Schall, Alex Solomon, and Theresa Woodall, the 6 kids created props, rough sketches, ground plans and finally, scale models of their dream sets. Two of them are seen below! To kick off the week, the kids toured the Project's new space. The rawness of the site did not impair their imaginations. To infuse them with a sense of grandeur, we also took them on a backstage tour of *South Pacific* at Lincoln Center Theater, courtesy of Paul Smithyman and a friendly techie named Linda. Thanks to our pals at LCT!

PHOTOS BY REG AND GEORGE



Luisa Santiago



Marlowe Mendez & Liz Bell



◀ Here's Melissa Rebolledo's bar set for Leah Galimidi's "Give Me My Baby, Give Me My Bike," written in 2000. It has an orange shag rug, a light-up dance floor, giant speakers and a twin turntable.



Shane West & Tino Paduani



Nathaniel Butler & Jason Hare

▶ Ralphie Irizarry created a viney jungle that enveloped the audience as well as the actors on a thrust stage, for "The Giraffe and the Tree," penned by Alejandra Rodriguez in 1999.



# MEGABITS



Education Director Liz Bell is an auntie again! Here is her sister Katie with her husband Doug Jordan and their new little angel Lucia Adelaide Jordan, a.k.a. Lulu. She was born on November 13, 2008. Everyone in the little Family is a Project supporter. Lulu especially likes the Playmaking shows because the kids write such Funny things.



Above, unconvincingly dressed as Santa Claus, is Beckett Theodore Austin Lopez with his parents Beatrice Terry and Gretchen M. Michelfeld. He was born on Dec. 1, 2008.

Beatrice reports: "While Beckett is an impressive name, he has many nicknames to his credit already--or titles, I should say. The Mayor of Boobytown, the Sultan of Sleepytown, Captain Crankypants. Today he earned a new one. As I taped on the Fourth diaper of the morning, I dubbed him 'Lord of the LandFill!'"



Thalia, second daughter to costume designer Lora LaVon and Pan Friedman, was born 7:17 p.m. in New York on Oct 14th, 2008, less than an hour after they got to the hospital.

It might be a deafening wail, but we choose to believe it's an adorably huge yawn. This is Margaret Grace Sexton, who will be called "Maisie!" Newest baby on the page, she was born to Autumn Dornfeld and Michael Sexton at 6:25 a.m. on Feb. 24, 2009.



Oliver Aiden Gold arrived on Feb. 12th at 6:53 p.m. and was immediately and warmly welcomed by his parents, Projectress Jennifer Ostrega and her husband Pan Gold. They like him a lot!



Here are Project actor Jordan Mahome and his new bride Cynthia Fauvette-Mahome. She's From France! They met in Madrid, Spain several years ago when they were both on holiday. Most of their relationship has been long-distance, but they've "brought it together in Manhattan!"



**THE 52ND STREET PROJECT**  
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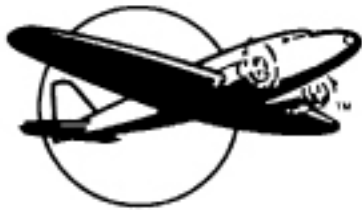


It's happening on  
**MONDAY, MAY 11**  
 at Espace on West 42nd St.!  
 A star-studded benefit  
 that celebrates the  
 move into our big new  
 headquarters this summer.  
 Come see Project actors  
 perform songs about  
 the move written by  
 5 really cool kids.

**MARK THE DATE**  
**ON YOUR CALENDAR**  
**TODAY!**

**IN THIS ISSUE OF "PROJECT UPDATE:"**

- Photos and recaps of Playback, Playmaking, and the Two-on-Two's.
- A report on the Scenic Design Workshop.
- Results of the Ping-Pong Tournament.
- A Flyer for our April show... and much more!



# Flyer Bar Profile

Place of birth: Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, NYC. "But there have been many stops between then and now."  
 Current habitat: The Upper East Side.  
 Occupation: "Full time civil servant, part time photographer - the photo is representative of the latter." Andy works for the Dept. of Cultural Affairs. His title: Director, Capital Projects Unit.  
 Why he does what he does: "Two reasons: I get to work closely with different people and personalities, and every day is different from the last."  
 What he does for the Project: Andy is our liaison with DCA and facilitates the multi-million dollar grant from the City of New York for the Project's Capital Campaign. In short, he's making our new space possible!  
 Hobby: "Well, I managed to turn my main hobby, photography, into a second career, so it's not really a hobby anymore. I love to travel, though. Especially a nice, long road trip."  
 Last book read: "The Immoralist" by Andre Gide. "I was on vacation in Morocco, and picked it up in a second-hand store on a rainy day. It was the perfect book for a glum North Africa day."  
 Most recent accomplishment: "Aside from the little ones, like cleaning my room or finding a great parking space, I met a big deadline at work last week. It was a lot of work and it was a relief to move it off my desk."  
 Best 52nd Street Project memory: "A couple of plays stand out in my memory. What the Spinach with John Conlee and Frances McDormand as spies, and The Dimension Traveler and the White Dwarf was a great sci-fi story with Uzo Aduba and Kenajuan Bentley. So much imagination."  
 Credo: "It's less a credo and more an aphorism, but I like to remind myself that 'Culture' is Pop Culture's last name."  
 Advice to kids: "Don't try to be someone you are not just to please someone else. Figure out who you are and be that person. It may take a while - even a lifetime - so don't give up trying!"  
 Favorite thing about the Project: "That's easy: the people. The staff is amazing - fun, responsive and great to work with. The volunteers impress me with their selflessness. And I am always blown away by the talented kids!"  
 On Flyer Bars: "Well, here's the thing...I don't really like chocolate that much; I am 100% a vanilla man. So I have never tried one. But maybe if I do, my chocolate opinion will be forever changed!"

HAIR STYLING BY JOHN GALLIANO



**ANDY BURMEISTER**