

The 52nd Street Project Presents

UP THE ANTE!

PLAYS THAT GO ALL IN!



KAT ALMIRANÉZ,
ASSOCIATE ARTISTIC
DIRECTOR

NATALIE HIRSCH
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

CAROL OCHS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PLAYMAKINATOR

5200-1 MAX

SERIES 2026 - SPRING

FIVE ANGELS THEATER
789 10TH AVE.

Fri, Mar. 27, 7:30pm
Sat, Mar. 28, 3:00pm
Sun, Mar. 29, 3:00pm

POSTER ART BY CAYLYN & DIEGO

UP THE ANTE - Plays That Go All In, ACT 1

All original music composed by James Powers

CRAZY TWIN DREAMS

Written by Victoria V., age 10; Dramaturg/Director: Tasha Gordon-Solomon

Nailya, 14 year-old bookworm Krystal Lucas
Mina, 14 years-old influencer Jessica Kahler
Mom Lori Newsom
Movie Go-er #1 Jai-Lyzz R.

"Happiness" lyrics by Victoria V.

LIFE'S HARD, GET OVER IT

Written by Isabella A., age 10; Dramaturg/Director: Ashley Marie Ortiz

Melisa Catherina Katie Jr the III, a sassy billionaire peacock Leta Levy
Jade, a childish rat stuffie Naomi Lorrain
Backstage Person Stuffie Lori Newsom
Jade's Parents Jai-Lyzz R. & Kaytie G.

"I Don't Believe You" lyrics by Isabella A.

GHOST ARRIVAL

Written by Liam C., age 10; Dramaturg/Director: Nico Grelli

Connie, aka, Ghosty, a ghost Princess Jacob
Soulvester, aka Knighty, a knight turned ghost Stephen Stocking
Banker Jai-Lyzz R.

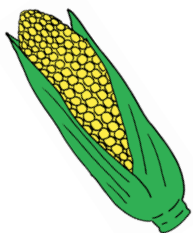
"Cheese" lyrics by Liam C.

FRENEMIES WITH BENEFITS

Written by Theo B., age 10; Dramaturg/Director: Jose-Maria Aguila

Marya, (muh-RYE-uh), 27 year old CEO from Vermont Sophie von Haselberg
Leo, 32 year-old CEO from Hawaii Sharmarke Yusuf
Newscaster Jose-Maria Aguila
Eating Trees Owen Kalmbach & Jai-Lyzz R.
Jaguar Kaytie G.

"You Bring Me Down" lyrics by Theo B.



2

UP THE ANTE - Plays That Go All In, ACT 2

BEST RESTAURANT IN TOWN (ONLY ONE)

Written by Berniece W., age 10; Dramaturg/Director: Evan Isabella

Sarah, 42 year-old fashion designer Bree Elrod
Ralf, 92 year-old cook Ryan Spahn
Sarah's Friends Jai-Lyzz R. & Lori Newsom

"I Thought I Knew" lyrics by Berniece W.

ERICK'S DAY OUT

Written by Maddox S., age 11; Dramaturg/Director: Kyle Cameron

Erick, 50-year old vulture Echaka Agba
Kevin, 102-year old small dragon Belén Moyano
Family Backstage Crew
Mom Lori Newsom

"Why You Should Be Vegan" lyrics by Maddox S.

THE DEEP, DEEP OCEAN

Written by Matthew G., age 10

Dramaturg: Ahmed Attia

Director: James Yaegashi

Max, killer whale (orca) basketball player Stephen O'Reilly
Jason, tiger gamer Raúl Castillo
NBA Boss Lori Newsom
Delivery Person Jenna Lizasuain

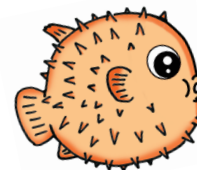
"The Beef" lyrics by Matthew G.

SLEEPOVER GONE WRONG

Written by Valentina V., age 10; Dramaturg/Director: Danaya Esperanza

Luke, 24 year-old Jose Duran
Lily, 21 year-old Kendal Hartse
Bella, Luke and Lily's friend Jai-Lyzz R.
Murderer Owen Kalmbach

"Getting Cash" lyrics by Valentina V.



3

“UP THE ANTE” Production Staff

Composer/Music Director

James Powers

Set Designer

Burke Brown

Lighting Designer

Greg MacPherson

Costume Designers

Lara de Bruijn

Sound Designer

Chyanne Peña

Stage Manager

Aaron Conover

Projection Designs

Diego Caoili and

The Project Projection Archive

Prop Design and Construction

Diego Caoili & Charlie Zuckerman

Backstage Crew

Kaytie G., Owen Kalmbach, Jenna Lizasuain, Lori Newsom, & Jai-Lyzz R.

House Management

Carol Ochs & John Sheehy

Flyer/Program Design

Diego Caoili & Caylyn Wan-Creager

Livestream Team

Director: Diego Caoili

Camera Ops: Naseem A. & Aiden V.

Interns

Owen Kalmbach & Jenna Lizasuain

Writing-Weekend Chef

John Sheehy

Teen Counselor

Jai-Lyzz R.

The 52nd Street Project Staff

Kat Almirañez, Associate Artistic Director

Avi A. Amon, Musical Director

Ahmed Attia, Director of Development*

Liz Bell, Clinical Consultant

Diego Caoili, Production Manager

Natalie Hirsch, Artistic Director

Garrett Kim, Program Director

Carol Ochs, Executive Director

John Sheehy, Director of Institutional Advancement

Ana Soto-Gonzalez, Marketing and Events Manager

Liz Sweeney, Director of Education

Caylyn Wan-Creager, Education Associate

Bri Weintraub, Director of Design and Production

Chyanne Peña, Operations Manager*

Charlie Zuckerman, Education Assistant

Iris A. Brown, Graphic Design Consultant

*Project Alumni

See the rest of the program!

Scan the QR code at right to see the full program, which includes **biographies and photos of the directors, the performers, and the designers!**



The 52nd Street Project is a non-profit organization that brings young people from the Hell's Kitchen neighborhood together with professional theater artists to create original theater. **UP THE ANTE** is a production of our Playmaking program. Young people participated in a playwriting course taught by **Kat Almirañez** and adapted for the Project by **Daniel Judah Sklar** from his book *Playmaking: Children Writing and Performing Their Own Plays*. At the end of the course, each young person was matched with two actors and a dramaturg/director who guided him or her through the writing of a play during a weekend retreat in the country.

The 52nd Street Project Board of Directors

Lisa Benavides-Nelson

Rachel Chanoff

Billy Crudup

Cathy Dantchik, co-chair

Carolyn DeSena

Louis P. Friedman, co-chair

Robert Goldberg

Annie Hausmann

Natalie Hirsch

Korey Jackson

Valerie Kay

Micah Kroeze

Noël Mihalow

Carol Ochs

Margaret Odette

Willie Reale, founder

Shirley Rumierk, alumni member

José Soto, Jr., alumni member

Wendy vanden Heuvel

Alexandra Vassilaros

Mark Whately

Special Thanks

The in-class volunteers: Terra Chaney, Lola Ingram, Princess Jacob, Lizzy Jarrett, Melia Jost, John Manolis, Isaiah Stavchansky, & Noelle Wilson. And to our production photographer, Carin VanDerDonk.



The Playmaking Program is made possible with public funds from The New York State Council on the Arts, with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York Legislature, and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. The 52nd Street Project is a member of Art/NY and Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national organization for the American theatre.

Want to make a donation to The 52nd Street Project?
Just visit www.52project.org and click “Support Us.”

Or make a gift via  @Fifty-Two-Project

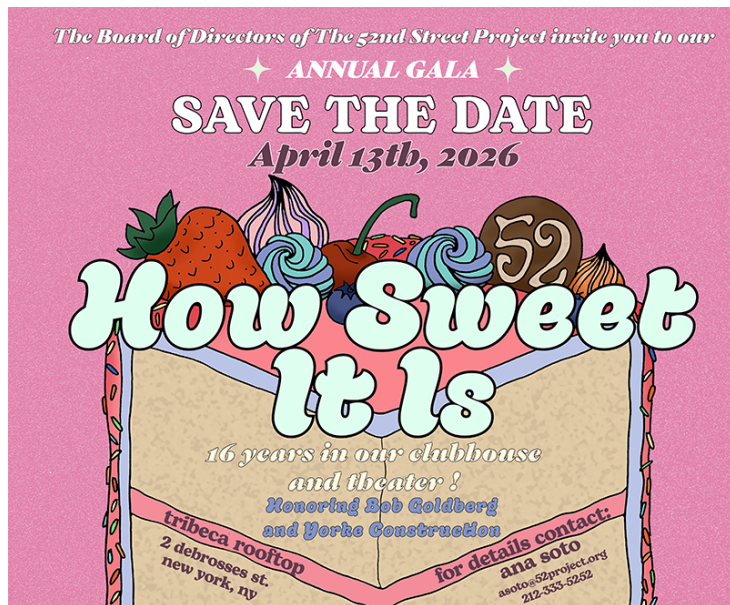
COOL STUFF ON SALE IN THE LOBBY!

Flyer Bars	\$ 2 . 5 0
Boxed Water	\$ 2 . 5 0
Vassilaros & Sons Coffee	\$ 2 . 5 0

Project Gear

Ear-Things™ (New!)	\$ 1 0 . 0 0
Mugs	\$ 1 0 . 0 0
Thermal Mugs	\$ 1 5 . 0 0
WABWAGA T-shirts	\$ 1 5 . 0 0
Sweatshirts	\$ 3 5 . 0 0
Adidas Quarter-Zip Athletic Shirts	\$ 4 0 . 0 0

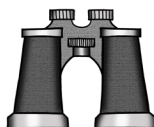
WHAT'S COMING UP?



BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR INTERNS!

If you know of any college or graduate students who might enjoy working and playing with us for a semester, please have them contact Caylyn Wan-Creager (creager@52project.org). We are currently looking for interns for the Spring of 2026.

Thanks!



BIOGRAPHIES



Echaka Agba (*Erick*, in *ERICK'S DAY OUT*, by Maddox) is an on stage/screen performer and filmmaker as well as teaching artist now based in New York and Chicago. At the Project she was a member of the cast and crew of *SKELETON IN THE CLOSET*, *The Secretive Plays*, *Playback 2024* and performed with Eliza in the *Place Play OFF THE MAP*, July 2024. She has performed on various stages in Chicago including Steppenwolf Theater Company, Goodman Theater, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, and Writers Theater. She received a teaching fellowship at Acting Studio Chicago where she is a member teacher today.



Jose-Maria Aguila (*Dramaturg/Director*, *FRENEMIES WITH BENEFITS* by Theo) a Mexican born Actor, writer, and fight choreographer. NYU Graduate Acting MFA, and has studied at the British American Drama Academy, Oxford University and the National Theater Conservatory. He has been a Project volunteer since 2015. During this time Jose-Maria has been an In-Class Volunteer, Actor, Lead Instructor (Stage Combat), Guitarist, Fight Director, Writer, Smart Partner, Dramaturg, Director, and Teaching Artist. The 52nd St. Project has been a fundamental part of his journey as an actor in New York City and he hopes to continue to share his love for theater-making and mentorship with the all the amazing staff, volunteers, and project members for many more years to come. WABWAGA. "Enseñales quien eres."



Isabella A. (Playmaker, *LIFE'S HARD*, *GET OVER IT*) joined the Project in the winter of 2026. This is her Playmaking debut. She can be heard on the PROJcast episode 62. "On The Up & Up, The Playmakers of UP THE ANTE."



Ahmed Attia (*Dramaturg*, *THE DEEP, DEEP OCEAN*, by Matthew) is a former Project kid and a graduate of Lehman College where he earned his BA in History and in Theatre. Prior to re-joining the Project, Ahmed was a part of the Whitney Museum's membership team for 2 years, joining them when they moved to their new location downtown. He was also an Educator at the New York Historical Society, where he enjoyed guiding kids of all ages through the museum's exhibitions. More than anything, Ahmed loves tennis, despite a woeful record playing for the Lehman College tennis team (a record Ahmed refuses to speak about or acknowledge).



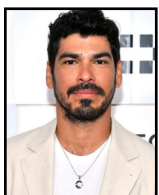
Theo B. (Playmaker, *FRENEMIES WITH BENEFITS*) joined the Project in the winter of 2026. This is his Playmaking debut. He can be heard on the PROJcast episode 62. "On The Up & Up, The Playmakers of UP THE ANTE."



Kyle Cameron (*Dramaturg / Director, ERICK'S DAY OUT*, by Maddox) has performed over a dozen times on the Five Angels stage, playing everything from a singing worm to a magic wolf, a scheming ping pong player, a few rappers and a whole lot of mechanics. This is his first time directing a Playmaking play, and he's thrilled to help bring this exciting and heartfelt story to life.

After over ten years volunteering here at the project, he couldn't

be happier to call the Clubhouse home.

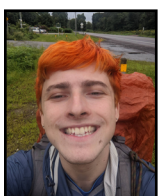


Raúl Castillo (*Jason*, in *THE DEEP, DEEP OCEAN* by Matthew) is an actor across the film, television, and theater mediums. He lives in Brooklyn and loves volunteering with The 52nd Street Project. He is super proud of his playwright, Matthew, and of all the playwrights in tonight's lineup. You can currently see Raúl in HBO's *TASK*.

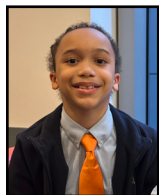


Chyanne Pena (*Sound Designer*; she/her) is a former Project kid and a graduate from The University of San Francisco. Before coming to The 52nd Street Project, she earned her BA in English and minored in Psychology. During her time away she tutored at San Francisco Day School, interned at the African-American Shakespeare Company and worked at a crepe shop. Outside of school and working with young people she enjoys lounging in

Central Park, trying new restaurants, discovering musical artists, and reading a novel.



Aaron Conover (*Stage Manager*) is a freelance lighting designer and digital performance technician based in New York City. Previously at The 52nd Street Project, he was the Lighting Designer for *RAISE YOUR VOICE*, Songmaking Concert 2025; and for *TUNE IN*, Songmaking Concert 2023! His designs also graced the Five Angels stage during *PENNY FOR YOUR THOUGHTS*, the 2022 Playmaking production.



Liam C. (Playmaker, *GHOST ARRIVAL*) joined the Project in the winter of 2026. This is his Playmaking debut. He can be heard on the PROJcast episode 62. "On The Up & Up, The Playmakers of UP THE ANTE."



Lara de Bruijn (*Costume Designer*) is so excited to be working on this set of plays! She has been working with The 52nd Street Project since 2009. In that time, she has designed for One-on-Ones, Playmaking, Playback, and Teen Ensemble. She was first drawn to the Project for its commitment to supporting theatre for, and by, young people. Over the years, she has been delighted and awed by wildly creative characters and stories written. Nothing brings

her more joy than being able to be a part of bringing it all to life!



José Duran (*Luke*, in *SLEEPOVER GONE WRONG*, by Valentina) is an actor and filmmaker who was born in Santa Cruz, Bolivia and grew up in Miami. In 2015 he moved to New York City to study acting at the William Esper Studio. As an actor he's appeared on NBC's "The Blacklist" and starred in "Tu Me Manques", Bolivia's entry for Best International Feature at the 92nd Academy Awards. Through his production company,

Luminous Path Films, he's worked on several short films and documentaries which have screened at film festivals around the world. His most recent project, "Coney Island Baby", premiered at the Chinese Theatre last year and won the Audience Award and Jury Award at the FilmGate Miami Film Festival. He's been volunteering at The 52nd Street Project since 2017.



Bree Elrod (*Sarah*, in *BEST RESTAURANT IN TOWN (ONLY ONE)*, by Berniece) is thrilled to be back at the Project. She started as an intern and has now acted in several Project plays, including *CLASSY*, with her brother Carson. Off Broadway: *Coriolanus* (The Public Theater) *My Name is Rachel Corrie* (Minetta Lane, dir. Alan Rickman) Regional: *A School For Wives* (Red Bank) *Curious Incident* (Portland Center Stage) *Constellations* (KCREP) *Rock N Roll(A.C.T./*

Huntington), *Angels in America* (Boston TheatreWorks), *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (Old Globe, Critics Circle Award) Film / TV: *Red Rocket* (dir. Sean Baker, Cannes Official Selection), *O'Dessa*, *Sometimes I Think About Dying* (Sundance) MFA: NYU Grad Acting



Danaya Esperanza (*Dramaturg/Director, SLEEPOVER GONE WRONG*, by Valentina) The 52nd Street Project: *UOF, The 2 Best Friends, The Last Rangers, Connect The Dots, Friendship Never Ends*. TRAINING: The Juilliard School.

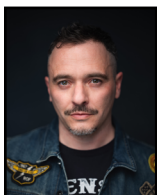


Kaytie Gil (*Crew*) joined the Project in the fall of 2018 with her playwriting debut *The 2 Best Friends*, dramaturged & directed by Danaya Esperanza with RJ Brown and Sol Crespo, as a part of HEAD IN THE CLOUDS, *The Ambitious Plays*. She made her acting debut in Alicia Moeller's *Rita and Starbot*, directed by and co-starring Payton Ashbrook as a part of WATCH THIS, *Ten Time Pieces*, the Block Island 2019 One-on-Ones. Kaytie wrote *Please Stop Polluting, People*, dramaturged & directed by

Rachel Pickup, performed by David Starry & Kathy Staats for a zoom Playmaking presentation in May, 2020. Kaytie battled Evan Schultz in *Crumbs vs. Rachel*, as a part of KNUCKLE SANDWICH, the 2022 Stage Combat show. She wrote and performed her own piece, "*Not Compatible*," for FLYING SOLO, April 2023. She was a member of the crew for A BREATH OF FRESH AIR, *The Breezy Plays*, spring Playmaking 2024. As a member of the current Teen Ensemble, she helped devise and was seen in MORE THAN WORDS. She can be heard on the PROJcast, "Teens Use Their MORE THAN WORDS," and "Teens WRITING ON THE WALL."



Tasha Gordon-Solmon (*Dramaturg/Director, CRAZY TWIN DREAM* by Victoria; she/her) is extremely thrilled to be back at The 52nd Street Project! Her credits include four Playmaking shows as dramaturg/director: *THE HAUNTED MANSION* by Siara, *LIARS IN THE FAMILY* by Sasha, *TWO LOVERS AND A CURSE* by Ginaija, and *FATE CAN BE STRANGE* by Liesl. She has written two One-on-One plays, one each for project stars Leah and Jasmine, and has been a classroom volunteer and performer for the Replay class. Tasha spent seven years as a Smart Partner to Leah, during which time they published their extensive research on neighborhood ice cream shops in *Fivey*. Most Important Being: Jackson.



Nico Grelli (*Dramaturg/Director, GHOST ARRIVAL*, by Liam; they/them) is a filmmaker, screenwriter, theatremaker, and actor. As an actor, Nico has been nominated for a Jeff Award, and is the recipient of a New York Innovative Theatre Award. Nico has also been a teaching artist for many years, and working with The 52nd St. Project on various shows, classes, and programs for the past decade has been one of their great joys in life. Nico also loves to

skate, is the parent of a beautiful Rottweiler Doberman, is a not terrible musician, and makes a mean bowl of pasta. More at www.nicgrelli.com.



Kendal Hartse (*Lily*, in *SLEEPOVER GONE WRONG*, by Valentina) Kendal loves The 52nd Street Project and couldn't be happier to be here tonight! Credits include Broadway/National Tours: *The Band's Visit* (Iris), *Summer*, *Cinderella*, *On a Clear Day...*, *Cabaret*. Select Regional/NYC: *Annie* (Miss Hannigan), *Once* (Reza), *Hedwig and The Angry Inch* (Yitzhak), *Pericles* (Thaisa), *Taming of the Shrew* (Lucentio), *Cabaret* (Sally Bowles).

Kendal has developed work with Vineyard Theatre, Roundabout Theatre Company, New York Stage and Film, and Center Theatre Group. She has a BFA from The Boston Conservatory and was a student of Michael Howard.



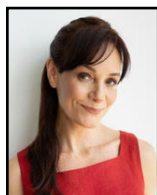
Evan Isabella (*Dramaturg/Director, BEST RESTAURANT IN TOWN (ONLY ONE)*, by Berniece) is so happy to be back at the Project. She has volunteered with the Project since 2019 as Intern, Sound Designer, Performer, and Stage Crew and has treasured every second of it! Evan is currently pursuing a professional performance and directing career. She is Assistant Director for Pivot Theatre Company's youth performing arts in NJ. She

graduated Muhlenberg College, with a major in Theatre. Most recently at the Project, Evan sang the duet "*Open Up To Me*" with Belén Moyano, lyrics by Zion and music by Kennen Butler, as a part of RAISE YOUR VOICE, Songmaking Concert 2025.



Princess Jacob (*Connie aka Ghosty*, in *GHOST ARRIVAL*, by Liam) is a NYC-based actor. She began her journey at The 52nd Street Project in 2020, volunteering in a summer virtual Wordplay program. Princess is thrilled to be back for Replay, her debut in-person project, and is grateful for the opportunity to work with and read new plays written by Project Members! Heartfelt thanks to The 52nd Street team for having me on board! You can stay up

to date with her work at www.princessdjacob.com.



Jessica Kahler (*Mina*, in *CRAZY TWIN DREAMS*, by Victoria) is thrilled to be making her debut at The 52nd Street Project Playmaking! It's been her great joy to collaborate with the magic of this intergenerational community of artists. As an actor/writer Jessica is most passionate about the development of new work, and so being amongst this company of artists is like living a dream. Jessica is a graduate of Emerson College's BFA program

where she studied with Kristin Linklater. Outside of acting, she loves to dance, roller skate, and cook for friends.



Owen Kalmbach (*Crew*) is an education intern at the Project and a sophomore at Columbia University studying cognitive science and philosophy. He joined the Project to blend his love of theatre with his passion for working with young people (but mostly to hone his ping-pong skills). As a former young person, he's grateful for the chance to help bring each of their wonderfully unique ideas to life through the performing arts. He sends a special thanks to Molly Coogan for her mentorship this past year, and to the entire Project staff for an incredible learning opportunity.



Leta Levy (*Melisa Catherine Katie Jr the III, in LIFE'S HARD, GET OVER IT* by Isabella) is a proud native New Yorker, actor, acting & public speaking coach, and activist. NY theater credits include: *The Weasel Festival* (The Public Theater); *Outer Banks* (Signature Theatre); *48 Hour Forum* (Noor Theatre); *The Animals* (JACK); *The Place We Built* (The Flea, dir. Danya Taymor); and *The People Speak* (Lincoln Center). She's also a long time volunteer at The 52nd Street Project. BA:

Brown University, MFA: Brooklyn College, Graduate Acting. IG: @LetaHLevy www.LetaLevy.com



Jenna Lizasuain (*Crew*) This is my second show with The 52nd Street Project, and I am beyond excited to be a part of it! It has been amazing to see all of the ways the Project encourages individuality and growth and how each member is able to come up with unique ideas that they feel proud of. I cannot wait to see the stories each group came up with and all of the creative ways they incorporate the methods of Playmaking into their stories and their individual characters.



Naomi Lorrain (*Jade, in LIFE'S HARD, GET OVER IT, by Isabella*) is an actor/playwright. She has been a volunteer with the Project for nearly a decade! She started in 2016 with Fall Playmaking, INFINITY & BEYOND, The Ultimate Plays; as an Actor in THE HIKE, by Jade. Then, One-on-One, Block Island, STUFF & NONSENSE, Plays from the Prop Closet; TWO SISTERS, by Elizabeth Irwin, as an Actor with Morgan in 2017. In 2018, she wrote #SHELFIES for the Two-on-Two, CURRENT MOOD, The Relatable Plays,

for Kiara & Jayla. And in 2019, WIN Playmaking, as an Actor in THE BELLA & DAISY STORY, by Violet; THE ELEMENTS, by Jaiden; and LEGO WORLD & POWER WORLD, by Jojo. She wrote *salty*, for the Teen Ensemble One-Act Festival in 2025. She has also been Kylee Chester's SmartPartner since 2017! NYU: MFA; YALE: BA. Performances dedicated to Nehemiah Lucca.



Krystel Lucas received her MFA from NYU's Grad Acting Program after attending the American Musical and Dramatic Academy and attaining her BA from UNC-Asheville. She is a freelance actor, director, executive coach, and teaching artist. She is a proud volunteer at The 52nd Street Project and a long-serving chair of NYU's Grad Acting Alumni Association.



Valentina L. (Playmaker, *SLEEPOVER GONE WRONG*) joined the Project in the winter of 2026. This is her Playmaking debut. She can be heard on the PROJcast episode 62. "On The Up & Up, The Playmakers of UP THE ANTE."



Greg MacPherson (*Lighting Designer*) is a member of Ensemble Studio Theatre where he designed the annual Marathon of One-Act Plays from 1985 through 2003 and again in 2010, 11, 13, 15, 17 and 19. Other designs include *KILLER JOE* at Soho Rep, *THE HOTEL PLAY* at LaMama ETC, *THE PITCHFORK DISNEY* at Here and *EASTER* for Naked Angels. He recently designed *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Cinderella* for Ballet Memphis, *THE CRADLE WILL ROCK* as a benefit for The Acting Company, *MEET ME AT THE PLAZA* for Shuffles, and *HALCYON DAYS* at ART NY. Greg has designed for The 52nd Street Project since 1986 and taught lighting design at Sarah Lawrence College from 1990 through 2022.



Belén Moyano (*Kevin, in ERICK'S DAY OUT, by Maddox*) is super excited to return to The 52nd Street Project! She last performed the duet "Open Up To Me" with Evan Isabella, lyrics by Zion, music by Kennen Butler, in the fall 2025 Songmaking concert RAISE YOUR VOICE. Previously, she directed and co-starred as Sharon in *GET DOWN*, by May Truehaft-Ali, for Mia, as a part of ONE OF A KIND, *The Quirky Plays*, the 2025 One-on-Ones; she appeared live in 2024's Songmaking Concert: MUSIC TO MY EARS, performing "An Actual Emotional Song" by Grace & Sarah Slipp; and in 2019's TAKE IT FROM THE TOP, performing "Spirit Skeleton" by Antonella & Lydia Breckon. The song still lives rent free in her mind, especially after reprising the song in the 2020 Virtual Gala: GAME CHANGERS. In the 2021 Virtual Gala: HIDDEN GEMS, she sang "I Don't Want You to Go, You Can Go," by Jai-Lyzz & Julio Vaquero Ramos.



Lori Newsom (*Crew*) This is Lori’s first show with The 52nd Street Project, and she is so thrilled to be joining the team! She is very passionate about working with youth theaters around the city, having most recently stage managed the Creative Arts Team at CUNY’s spring YT production. She came across the Project when performing her senior showcase with the Boston Conservatory in 2025, and is so proud to be back to return and create new art.

Thank you Charlie!



Stephen O’Reilly (*Max*, in *THE DEEP, DEEP OCEAN*, by Matthew) is thrilled to be back at the Project. Favorite roles on the 52nd Street stage include a bazooka wielding Texan, an Alien’s best friend, a sort-of-German soccer coach and a guy who gets left in a sewer. Big thanks to Matthew for writing a killer play.



Ashley Marie Ortiz (*Dramaturg/Director*, *LIFE’S HARD, GET OVER IT*, by Isabella) is a NYC based Actor and is beyond thrilled to be returning to The 52nd St. Project, where her credits include: *WHADDAYA NEED?, Plays Made to Order; HEADS OR TAILS, The Chancy Plays; DANCEMAKING 2013; MAKE A BRAVE SHOW, The Courageous Plays; BE AGGRESSIVE, The Competitive Plays; GOOD VIBRATIONS, Plays with Sound Foundations;*

AGAINST THE GRAIN, Plays That Fight Back; STEP ON IT, Dancemaking 2019; Pandemic Playmaking 2020; SMOKE & MIRRORS, The Tricky Plays; and PIECE OF CAKE, The Slice of Life Plays. Additional credits: Las Borinqueñas (Ensemble Studio Theatre); the beautiful land i seek (la linda tierra que buscó yo) (Faultline Theatre). TV: Daredevil: Born Again; Law and Order SVU; FBI.



James Powers (*Composer/Music Director*) is a composer, lyricist, Hamilton T-shirt seller, DnD player, rule follower (sometimes...), and performer who tells audacious and emotional stories about what it means to be human. His work has been performed at Theatre Untitled, Hamlet Isn’t Dead, and the Broke People Play Festival at NYU. At the Project, he previously collaborated with LJ

in 2024.



Jai-Lyzz Rodriguez (*Crew*) joined the Project in the winter of 2019 with her debut play *The Secret*, with dramaturg/director George Babiak, starring Sam Dash, Angel Desai, & John Sheehy, as part of *OUT OF THE BLUE, The Unpredictable Plays*. Jai-Lyzz made her acting debut in *Quitting Time*, a one-on-one written by, directed by, and co-starring Anne Troup, as a part of *WATCH THIS, Ten Time Pieces*, the Block Island 2019 shows. She performed spoken

word pieces in *Wordplay 2019* with the guidance of Jen Anaya and they teamed up again for *FLYING SOLO* in 2023. Her zoom play *Untitled* with Daiva Deupree and Matt Wilkas was a part of *Pandemic Playmaking #2* in May 2020. Jai-Lyzz collaborated with composer Julio Vaquero Ramos for the *Songmaking* concert in 2021, their songs were performed by Jen Anaya, & Ronald Peet. For the *Hidden Gems* on-line gala, their song “I Don’t Want You To Go, You Can Go,” was performed by Belen Moyano. She battled Krisin Louie in their stage combat scene “*Not So Fast*”, as a part of *THE THRILL OF THE FIGHT*. Jai-Lyzz can be heard on the *PROJcast* Episode 36, “*Radiologues*.”



Maddox S. (*Playmaker, ERICK’S DAY OUT*) joined the Project in the winter of 2026. This is his *Playmaking* debut. He can be heard on the *PROJcast* episode 62. “*On The Up & Up, The Playmakers of UP THE ANTE*.”



Ryan Spahn (*Ralf*, in *BEST RESTAURANT IN TOWN (ONLY ONE)*, by Berniece) I’m super excited to be back at The Project working on Berniece’s funny, smart play. What a talent! I’ve seen lots of shows here, but I’m still kind of new. Before the pandemic I helped Logan write his play *CATS AND WATER DON’T MIX*. Now I get to act IRL with star Bree Elrod and director Evan Isabella—plus legends Kat and Natalie. MVP: Berniece!



Stephen Stocking (*Soulvester*, in *GHOST ARRIVAL*, by Liam) The 52nd Street Project is one of Stephen’s absolute favorite places to make theatre. He has appeared in a whole bunch of Project shows, as an actor, director, and composer/musician. Some favorite roles at the Project include a 10-year-old Québécois business tycoon who runs a factory making military-grade exploding skunks, a middle schooler who is bad at basketball (and friendship), and a

cyborg kid making his way through a post-apocalyptic city (and also friendship). Most recently he directed Ishi’s play *WISHES*, as a part of *TO THE MOON, Plays That Blast Off*, *Playmaking 2024*, and played guitar for the *RAISE YOUR VOICE*, *Songmaking* concert in Nov. 2025. Outside of the Project, Stephen has appeared on Broadway in *Death of a Salesman*, on TV in *The Good Fight*, and in many other projects.



Victoria V. (Playmaker, *CRAZY TWIN DREAMS*) joined the Project in the winter of 2026. This is her Playmaking debut. She can be heard on the PROJcast episode 62. "On The Up & Up, The Playmakers of UP THE ANTE."



Sophie von Haselberg (*Marya*, in *FRENEMIES WITH BENEFITS*, by Theo) is thrilled to be back with The 52nd Street Project in this very special group of playwrights and this awesome play! A couple of years ago, she had the distinct pleasure of working with the writers for the Playmaking class, and then got to play a human who snuck into the Butterfly-only Coffee Shop, by Cateleya. She still has the song "CONSEQUENCES" from that

play stuck in her head.



Berniece W. (Playmaker, *BEST RESTAURANT IN TOWN (ONLY ONE)*) joined the Project in the winter of 2026. This is her Playmaking debut. She can be heard on the PROJcast episode 62. "On The Up & Up, The Playmakers of UP THE ANTE."



James Yaegashi (Director, *THE DEEP, DEEP OCEAN*, by Matthew) James has been a volunteer at the Project as an actor and director for 20+ years.



Sharmarke Yusuf (*Leo*, in *FRENEMIES WITH BENEFITS*, by Theo) is an actor, poet, playwright, and filmmaker. He graduated from the Boston Conservatory at Berklee with a BFA in Contemporary Theater. His work seeks to inspire people to find freedom and expand consciousness. Off-Broadway: *The Tragedy of Keyshawn*, *Last Prince of East Flatbush* (The Public Theater, s/r). Regional: *K-I-S-S-I-N-G* (The Huntington, Elliot Norton Award

Nomination for Outstanding Leading Performance), *BLKS* (SpeakEasy Stage Company, Elliot Norton Award Winner for Outstanding Performance by an Actor). TV: *Castle Rock* (Netflix/Hulu). Instagram: @sharmarke_y

