



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE 52ND STREET PROJECT

PROJECT UPDATE

FULL-COLOR ONLINE EDITION • VOL. 88 - OCTOBER, 2021 • GEORGE BABIAK, EDITOR

LIVE FROM NEW YORK... AGAIN!

PLAYMAKING PHOTOS BY GARRETT KIM



1



2

If you haven't heard the news on social media already, The 52nd Street Project presented two Playmaking shows this summer LIVE and IN-PERSON on our actual stage with a small, but real, audience. Yes, you read correctly: LIVE! This bold initiative began by bringing some lucky young people (all girls, by chance) into our space for Playmaking classes taught by **Kat Almirañez** and **Garrett Kim**. The nascent playwrights then wrote final plays for their happy actors which we did in two batches on August 13 and 20th. The shows, called *Walking On Sunshine: The Radiant Plays (Steps 1 and 2)*, were also live-streamed on YouTube with no less than 4 cameras capturing the action. Best of all, you can still see the show by clicking [THIS LINK!](#) Here's the rundown of the first crop of four plays.

1. **Evelyn Meyer's** *The Friendship* cast **Greg Hildreth** and **Grace Fojtik** as college students who get a second chance to perform a play about a spider in their college theater class. **Kaaron Briscoe** did double-duty as dramaturge and director.
2. **Vanessa Porras** and **José Duran** were lemonade entrepreneurs going through a friendship crisis in *Caring*, by **Payton Jones**. **Sophia Zukoski** and **Caylyn Wan-Creager** dramaturged, while **Alexandra O'Daly** directed the play (which had over 50 props!).
3. *The Forest*, by **Elisa Ramos**, was about a tree-loving French woman (**Arielle Goldman**) and her friendship (French-ship?) with an ambitious ice cream salesman (**Korey Jackson**). **Grace Fojtik** dramaturged and **Michael Propster** directed.
4. **Alex J. Gould** and **Madeline DeFreece** were the title characters in *The Dancing Lions*, written by **Gloria Sanchez** and dramaturged and directed by **Molly Carden**. There was quite a bit of line dancing... er, LION dancing. ♦



3



4

WALKING ON SUNSHINE: THE RADIANT PLAYS - STEP 2

On Friday, Aug. 20, just one week after Step 1, we presented three more plays by three MORE young playwrights in *Walking on Sunshine, Step 2*.

1. *Pass The Mic*, by **Brooke Pendleton**, was about a brother and sister (**José-Maria Aquila** and **Sarah Quigley**) who get jobs at the same radio station. **Kristina Nungaray** dramaturged while **Helen Cespedes** directed.

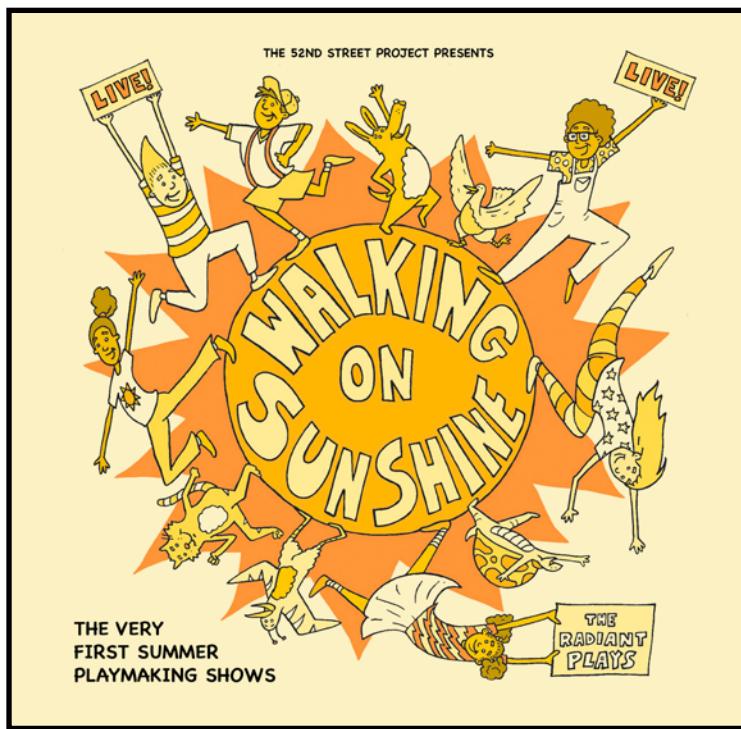
2. **Rebeca Vanterpool's** *The Incident* showed what life is like when you are a burrito (**Olivia Gilliatt**) or a green axolotl (**Marchànt Davis**). **Elli Stovall Brown** was the dramaturge, **Kerry Warren** directed. An axolotl, by the way, is a kind of salamander native to Mexico that looks like it is smiling.

3. *The Best Day In My Life*, by **Valerie Lugo-Rodriguez**, was about two tomboys (**Kate Abbruzzese** and **Angelica Toledo**) who iron out a lot of differences. **Ana Gonzalez-Soto** dramaturged and **Monica Labadia** directed.



Both of these Playmaking shows, the first non-virtual programming since January of 2020, were a rousing success for the audience, the playwrights, the performers, AND the tech team. Here's who helped us out behind the scenes:

ARTWORK BY PATRICK JONES



WALKING ON SUNSHINE: THE RADIANT PLAYS THE DESIGN AND TECH TEAM

Margaret Gleberman	Stage Manager
Avi A. Amon	Composer/Maestro, Step 1
Emily Gardner Xu Hall	Composer/Maestro, Step 2
Greg MacPherson	Lighting Designer, Step 1
Jade Barnett-Irons	Lighting Designer, Step 2
Michael Piatkowski	Costumes, Step 1
Jennifer Jones	Costumes, Step 2
Valentina Primrose	Costume Asst., Step 2
Alicia Moeller	Sound, Step 1
John Sheehy	Sound, Step 2
Evan Schultz, Ana Soto, Alex Torres	Crew
Ahmed Attia	Camera
Enrique Caballero	Camera, Step 1
Sofia Santoni	Camera, Step 2
George Babiak	Props, Slides, Video direction

[Click here to see the show on our YouTube channel!](#)

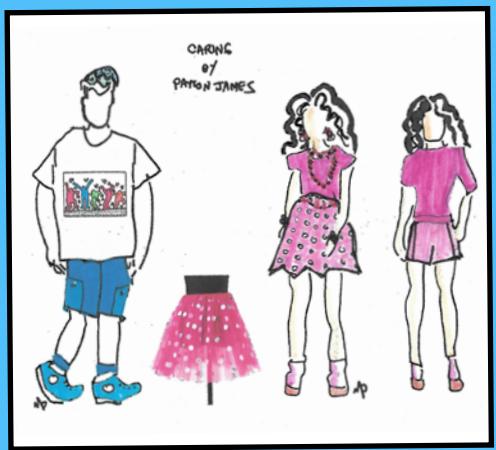
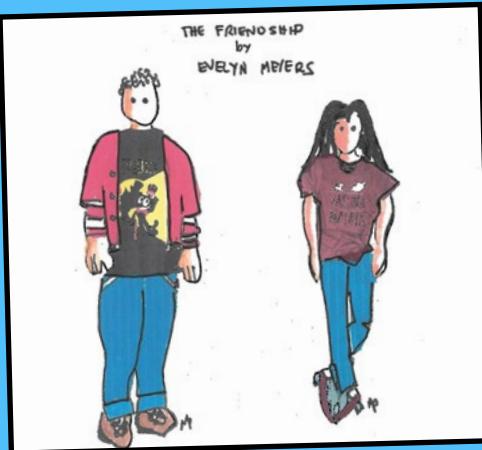
RENDERING US SPEECHLESS!



Michael Piatkowski has nearly 60 years of experience in the New York theater as a director, designer, producer, writer and

many other things. He has been one of our volunteer costume designers since our Teen Ensemble's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 2015. All our designers work extremely hard, but Michael goes the extra mile by creating full-color character renderings for the shows he does for us. Sadly, few get to see these lovely paintings. Time to change that!

Here are Michael's paintings for *Walking on Sunshine*, Step 1. You can see the final results on page 1 of this newsletter. We think he did a good job of realizing his visions. ♦



AWARDS FOR AVI AND EMILY

Are our composers talented, or what? Both **Avi A. Amon** and **Emily Gardner Xu Hall** (the composers of *Walking on Sunshine*) have been honored with awards from **The Dramatists Guild Foundation**.

Avi, the Project's resident Music Director, got the **Thom Thomas Award** and Emily, a relatively new volunteer with us, received the **Stephen Schwartz Award For Musical Theater**. The awards honor playwrights, composers, lyricists, and librettists who show promise in their writing and each come with a \$10,000 prize. Congratulations, you two! ♦



SUBSCRIBE TO "THE PROJCAST!"

Did you know that we have a podcast that features the writing and voices of our young members? Well, we do!

Just click on the above logo and start downloading these fascinating nuggets of information and entertainment! ♦

HIDDEN GEMS

THE BENEFIT REPORT



Nancy Giles, of CBS Sunday Morning and countless Project shows, introduced our Executive Director **Carol Ochs**.



Bonnie Milligan performed **Jessica Elie-Pierre's** *Stuck In a Trap*, a harrowing thriller of a song.



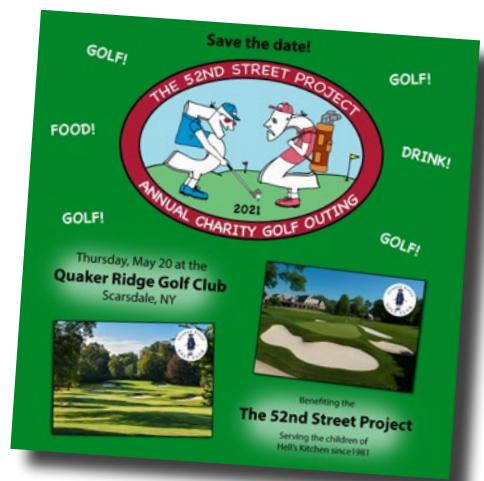
Heath Saunders sang *Hell's Kitchen*, a jaunty anthem for our neighborhood by **Amari DuBose**.

SCENES FROM A GOLF OUTING



Quaker Ridge is considered by some to be one of the top 100 courses in the world.

On May 20, A scant three days after the benefit above, we trundled out to the **Quaker Ridge Golf Club** in Scarsdale for the Project's **Annual Golf Outing**. Sure, lots of people played golf, but what we were really there to do was raise a little more money for The Project. Fortunately, it was a beautiful day for both golfing and fundraising and we succeeded in both. ♦



Proj actors team **Billy Crudup**, **John Ellison Conlee**, and **David Costabile** met their **Waterloo** (Waterloo sparkling water, that is).



Staffers **Kristina Nungaray**, **Ahmed Attia**, and **Carol Ochs** remained vigilant at the polo shirt table.



Isn't it strange that golf courses often have these barren and neglected patches amidst all the lush greenery?

WELCOME, BRI WEINTRAUB!

If you've been reading this newsletter carefully, you'll know that we've been stepping up live production of our shows. Also, with the return of Broadway and other theater, we've been renting to outside companies who need rehearsal space. At press time, the national touring company of *Pretty Woman* was in the **Five Angels Theater** and were to be followed by Broadway's *Jagged Little Pill*. (Historical note: *Hamilton* was first workshopped in our space before opening at the Public Theater).

With the increase in activity, we realized we really need a Production Manager, so we have hired **Brianna Weintraub**, better known as "Bri" (it rhymes with "glee"). Bri has been working in theater since she was in 2nd grade. She completed her MFA in Technical Production in spring of 2020 and has been working as the Production Manager and Lighting Supervisor at Sarah Lawrence College. Prior to moving to New York, Bri worked in dance, concert production, events, and theatre, and is excited to come back to her ultimate goal of creating theatre while working with young people. ♦



Hi, P.U. Readers! I'm Ahmed, and I'm in charge of this box now! The following foundations, corporations, and government agencies recently made generous grants to The 52nd Street Project. We are grateful to them for their support as well as to the many individuals who help sustain the Project's programs. ♦

Seller-Lehrer Family Foundation.....	\$50,000
The Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation	\$30,000
The Shubert Foundation.....	\$20,000
Consolidated Edison	\$10,000
Tiger Baron Foundation	\$5,000
Signature Bank	\$5,000
The Henlopen Foundation	\$5,000
Carol M. & Stephen E. Canter Family Foundation.....	\$5,000

(Gifts received April 6, 2021 – September 21, 2021)



The Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation

THE SHUBERT FOUNDATION INC.

TIGER BARON FOUNDATION

conEdison

Signature
SIGNATURE BANK



WANT TO DONATE TO THE 52ND STREET PROJECT?

It's as easy as 5 + 2!

Just visit www.52project.org and click the "You Can Help" box.



NICE TURNOUT FOR THE SCHOLARSHIP PARTY

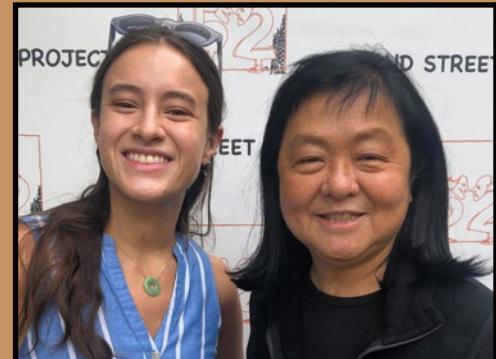
On August 3rd, we held our annual Scholarship Party in the P.S. 111 schoolyard right across the street. It's one of our most beloved events, since we get to say hello to some grown-up old friends AND we get to give them some money to help cover their college expenses. There were **29** recipients this year. Here's who came to pick up their checks in person and enjoy a cupcake and some Waterloo sparkling water. ♦



"Jaiva" the duo more commonly known as Jayleen Velez and Daiva Deupree.



Here are Rebecca Gomez and Josh Gomez with their mom in between them.



They're not in college, but staffer Caylyn and her mom Tracy had a good time anyway.



Sibling Pals! Arianna Casiano came with her big bro Joseph Cruz.



Associate Artistic Director Kat Almirañez and Karen Tineo got to reconnect.



More sibling pals! Chyanne Peña and Chayse Peña.



Wilhelmina Ohene Kari-Kari always has a warm smile when she's around the Project.



Music and film auteurs Faisal Afridi and Enrique Caballero.



Here's Kat again, with Beyoncé Thomas, our summer receptionist (still in high school).



Artistic Director Natalie Hirsch and Education Director Johanna Vidal presided.

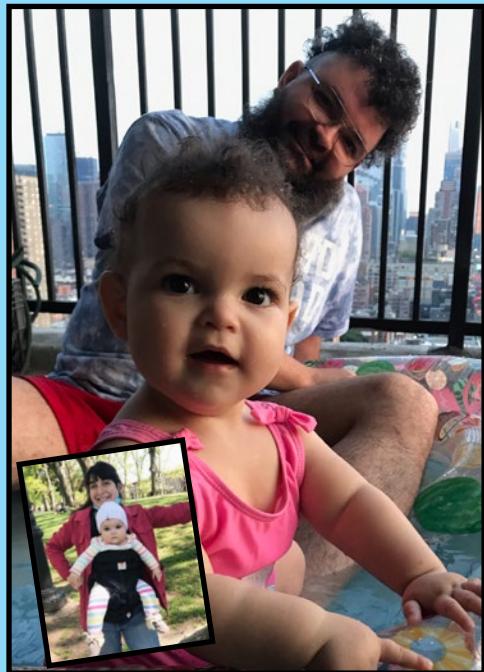


Karin Schall blessed the group with an original sidewalk chalk inscription.



And Board Co-chair Louis Friedman truly enjoys handing out the checks.

MEGABITS • MEGABITS • MEGABITS



To our surprise, member/vol **Jed Clarke** and **Alena** had a baby named **Keziah** over a year ago on July 12. Many famous people were born on that date, including **Julius Caesar**, **Milton Berle**, and **George Babiak**.

Vol **Charlie O'Rourke** and his wife **Annie** have a baby! **Jack O'Rourke** arrived on July 8 at Mt. Sinai West (just down the street from us). Grandpa **Kevin O'Rourke** (a long-time actor volunteer) is also excited about Jack.

Over the years, **Craig Cox** and his brother **Jeff** have written a number of hilarious Project plays. On July 28th, Craig and his girlfriend **Raven Hardison** brought **Ellis Abeo Cox** into the world.



Actor/writer **Dylan Dawson** is a dad, too! He and vol **Heather Robb** (they had a wonderful pandemic wedding) had **Lowen Robb Dawson** on Sept. 10 in Pasadena, CA.

Shane West was an intern with us a while back. He and **Anna-Kaye West** just had their third child, **Koryn**, seen here entertaining her two older brothers.

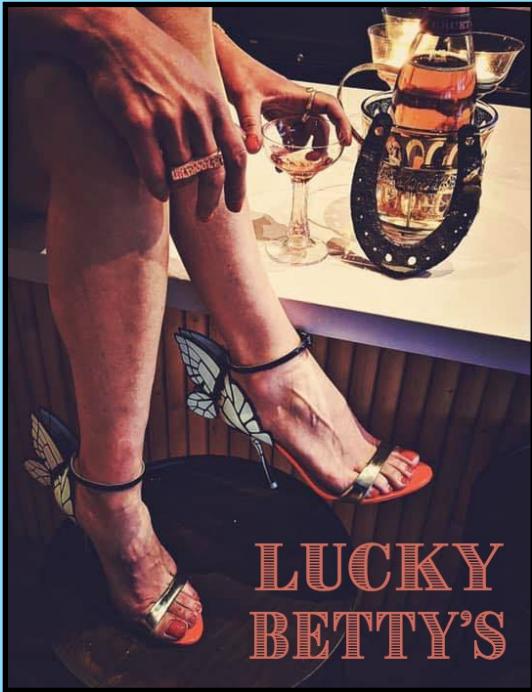
Julia Lawler, another one of our old-time interns, and their partner **Austin Blanch** welcomed **Lucy Lawler Blanch** on July 14th, 2021. Lucy was born in Minneapolis.

It's raining babies at the Cooper's!

Project alum and Broadway star **Lilli Cooper** and **Paul McLoughlin** gave birth to **Bodie Cooper McLoughlin** on September 7. Here are Paul and Lilli with Bodie and Lilli's folks **Chuck Cooper** (also a Broadway star) and **Tisa Farley**.

Not to be outdone, on Sept. 19, Lilli's brother **Alex Cooper** and his wife **Michelle** produced **Sir Quinton Charles Cooper** who will be known as Quinn.



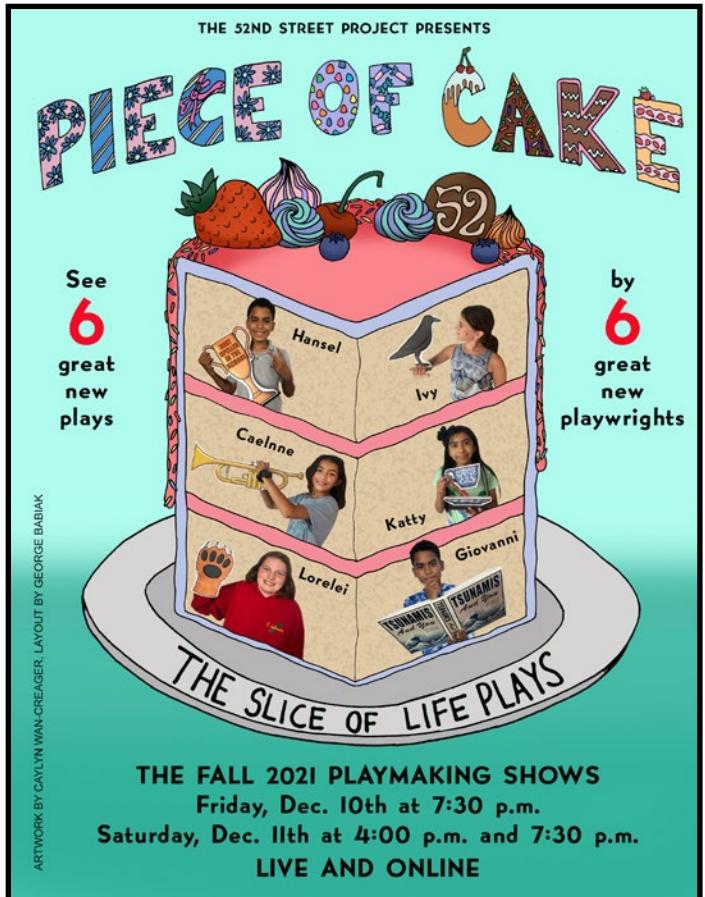


Our good friend and veteran volunteer Daiva Deupree is opening a bar! It's called **Lucky Betty's** and is located in **Camden, Maine**. By the time you read this, it will be open for business, so put down this newsletter and head up to Camden right now, 'cause it's bound to be a swell hang-out. Good luck, Daiva and Betty!



Kristina Nungaray is our Marketing and Events Manager. We knew she was very athletic when she signed on, but she has definitely stepped it up during the pandemic. Last year, she ran her first marathon. Then, on Sept. 11, she and her training partner **Jules Bursee** competed in the **Hartford Women's Triathlon** in Farmington, CT. What is impressive is that Kristina **learned how to ride a bike the morning of the race!** Jules had only learned to swim a few weeks before. The Triathlon went so well that Kristina has registered for 5 more next year!

COMING SHOWS - CLICK THE IMAGES FOR INFO AND RESERVATIONS!



FLYER BAR PROFILE



JENNI SWAN

What she does for us- Jenni Swan's first service to us was as a stage manager in 2005. She did not SM again until 2018, but then racked up seven more shows in rapid succession. She has also been on our **Big Kids Fundraising Committee** and is a dedicated donor and audience member.

Occupation- Executive Assistant

Why she does what she does- "Just a geek for details and logistics, and helping others."

Hobbies- "Theater, travel, reading, writing."

Last book read- "Radium Girls by Kate Moore."

Most recent accomplishment- "I rediscovered the New York Public Library and have read a dozen books in the last few weeks."

Best Project Memory- "My first show with them as an SM was back in Oct 2005. I was absolutely in awe of this wonderful group of people and the work they do, and although it took me several years to work on another show, I always knew I would return."

Credo- "As of the pandemic, 'We'll see.'"

Advice to kids- "Let yourself fully embrace what you love and enjoy. Who cares if someone else doesn't think it's cool? You do!"

Place of birth- "Milwaukee, Wisconsin."

Habitat- "The forests and mountain hiking trails of New Zealand."

Favorite thing about the Project- "THE PEOPLE. No question."

On Flyer Bars- "They are magically delicious and should be consumed liberally. But not in the theater, only in the lobby and outside." ♦

SNAPZ! BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE 52ND STREET PROJECT



As we were putting this newsletter together in September of 2021, we welcomed a new **Artmaking** group into the Clubhouse. 5 young members (**Adolfo, Doris, Faith, Sophia, Xavier**) and 1 teen counselor (**Melanie**) sat at nicely distanced tables and began the six-week class by writing haikus and creating visual art that expressed the meaning of the written words. Staff members **Caylyn Wan-Creager** and **George Babiak** are running the course. ♦