

GraceNEWS

Summer 2008

Vol. 5

Welcome to GraceNEWS

"Summertime. And the livin' is... BUSY." It's only natural to think things might ease up a bit when the Graces don't have a show on the boards, but we are ALWAYS in production. Something big is brewing this summer. The company is busy laying the groundwork for our fifth year - a year of development that will create and strengthen the foundation of 3Graces' future. 3Graces wrapped up our 2nd Class Citizens Season proving we're a 1st Class Company to keep an eye on - out of the over 450 plays submitted to the Samuel French Short Play Festival, 2 of the 40 chosen to compete were from 3Graces' *Spring Shorts 2*. When the company gave The Feminist Press and Gloria Jacobs our Amazing Grace award this winter, 3Graces discovered a phenomenal mentor and friend. We launched our new touring initiative *Plays2Go* at All Souls Family Fun Day. And 3Graces has commissioned our very first musical that will take the company and you from the blank page to the *MainStage*. So yeah. We're a little busy. And we're very, very excited. So pull up a lawn chair, crack open an icy one, grab this issue of *GraceNEWS* and catch some of the fireworks. — Chelsea, Annie, Elizabeth & Kelli Lynn, Executive Committee

Spring Shorts 2

3Graces kicked-off Spring with its short play festival *Spring Shorts 2*, which ran April 2-13 at the Turtle's Shell Theatre. Showcasing the talents of 8 playwrights and over 25 actors, directors and designers, SS2 provided audiences with an evening of enlightening entertainment that ranged from darkly sardonic to teen drama to romantic comedy! While there was truly something for everyone to enjoy, each of the plays asked the questions "Where do we place value and what/ who do we hold dear?"

One play, *Good Morning, Lady* by Steve Wisniewski, revealed the burgeoning relationship and cultural divide between a New York business woman and her coffee cart vendor. Many audience members shared their own vendor stories with us after the show remarking upon how relatable Wisniewski's play was. Another short, *Big Girl* by Andrew Biss, brilliantly performed by 3G's own Kelli Lynn Harrison and expertly directed by Kathleen Bishop, was a show stopper that pushed audiences to reexamine their own personal prejudices when an overweight woman assesses her latest self-help book. A third play, Rich Espey's *Bang Day*, proved to be a unique coming of age story in which a young Creationist chooses to embrace the "Big Bang" instead.

Two of the Spring Shorts 2 plays, *Yog Sothoth* by Lia Romeo and *Falutin* by C.S. Hanson, competed in the Samuel French short play festival this July and all of the plays are available as part of 3Graces' latest initiative *Plays2Go*.

— Elizabeth Bunnell

Graces Want Super-Powers

Dorothy Abrahams: Interdimensional travel

Margot Avery: Cellular regeneration - like Claire on *Heroes*

Suzanne Barbetta: Shapeshifter - morph my body into anything

Kathleen Bishop: Teleportation - always on time, no more airlines!

Elizabeth Bunnell: Time traveling - take everyone to ancient Persia for *BeautyQueen*

Cherelle Cargill: Clone myself - be in many places at the same time

Patrick T. Cecala II: Stop or freeze time

Kelli Lynn Harrison: Telekinesis - I'm fundamentally lazy

Annie McGovern: Finder of lost things from socks to people

Chelsea Silverman: World communicator - able to speak every language and dialect fluently

"As a playwright, working with 3Graces Theater Co. has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my career. I'm so grateful to have had the opportunity of working with them, of getting to know them a little better, and most of all, for the results."

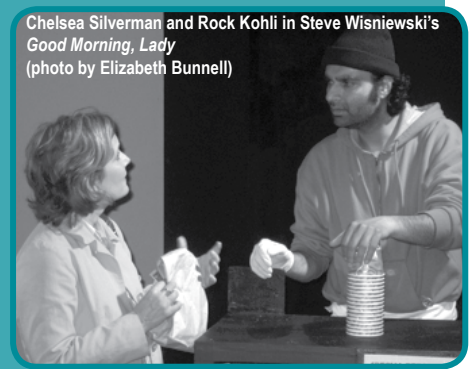
-- Andrew Biss, Playwright



Uys Du Buisson, Lucy Walters and Jenny Greer in Rich Espey's *Bang Day* (photo by Rick Berube)

"3Graces is everything a playwright could ask for in a theatre company: There's a respect for the writing and support, support, support! And, true to their namesakes, the Graces are lovely and inspiring. I'm grateful."

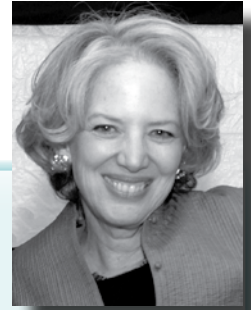
--C.S. Hanson, Playwright



Chelsea Silverman and Rock Kohli in Steve Wisniewski's *Good Morning, Lady* (photo by Elizabeth Bunnell)

Friends of 3Graces

*3Graces' Literary Manager, Suzanne Barbetta, speaks with Gloria Jacobs,
Executive Director of The Feminist Press at CUNY*



SB: How did The Feminist Press start?

GJ: We like to say that The Feminist Press started in Florence Howe's mailbox. It was 1970 and Florence, the founder of the Press, was teaching literature at Goucher College. She began talking with colleagues and students about the need for materials for the new women's studies courses. Florence went off on vacation and said if the group would make some donations to help fund the cost of printing up some materials she would take charge of doing it. She came back from vacation and her mailbox was stuffed with checks, and that was it. The Feminist Press was born.

SB: What inspired your commitment to women and women's stories?

GJ: My mother is certainly an inspiration for my involvement with women's issues. I saw my mother's strength and ability to cope at a time when women were still considered fragile in many ways. She was a single mother raising three children on her own; she didn't finish high school, and always had very low-paying jobs, but took for granted that she would find a way to send all three of us to college. In the 60s and early 70s the struggle for civil rights and then war in Vietnam drew many of us into political activity, and from there activism around women's issues seemed both obvious and inevitable. I don't think I planned to always work in women's organizations, but over the years I've discovered that I'm happiest working with women – I think a combination of nature and nurture has made us more egalitarian and less competitive, and I like that kind of environment. When I saw that The Feminist Press was looking for a new Executive Director, I jumped at the opportunity.

SB: How does Feminist Press find emerging writers?

GJ: Finding good writers is not easy! As an editor I realize that part of the problem is that I'm looking for work that specifically fits our mission and editorial needs. Finding the right mix of fiction and nonfiction, young and older writers, out-of-print and new work, U.S. and international is a challenge. One solution, which we've instituted this year, is to create an advisory board that represents the diversity we're looking for in writers; they will recommend writers that they know of, review manuscripts for us, and generally help us expand our reach. But we also encourage writers to send us proposals. The guidelines are on our website: www.feministpress.org, and we review every proposal that we get.

SB: What are the current challenges your organization is facing?

GJ: We are the oldest continuing feminist publisher in the world. Our greatest challenge after 38 years is surviving the current economy and the enormous technological shifts that are going on. Book publishing is at the beginning of this enormous shift, with ebook readers just coming on the market. But the changes will happen quickly and when the recession is over, we will not be able to go back to the world of book publishing as it existed even a year ago.

SB: What new initiatives and projects are you excited about?

GJ: We have a project funded by The National Science Foundation and individual contributions. The goal of the project is to encourage women to enter and remain in scientific fields and we're doing it through books that are interesting, lively, and good literature as opposed to books that are "worthy." We will also be publishing a new book of essays for Black Women's Studies in 2009, titled *Still Brave*. And we're working on pamphlets aimed at young immigrant women in the City University system, to help them understand how to become political activists and use the skills they are gaining while attending college.

SB: Can you see our organizations working together on any projects?

GJ: I love the way our mission statements reflect each other and sort of dance along the same edge! All of us who are promoting women's voices need to work with each other, as a way to magnify our efforts. I can imagine lots of ways we can do that: we could work with you to turn some of our books into plays. It would be exciting for us to see some of our books brought to life in that way, and we could bring out our audience of readers as well as your audience of theatergoers, mixing media as well as people!

Gloria Jacobs is Executive Director of The Feminist Press at CUNY, the oldest continuing feminist publisher in the world that publishes works by and about women. A journalist, editor, and author, Ms. Jacobs was for many years the Executive Editor of Ms. magazine. At 3Graces' Annual Benefit this year, we honored Ms. Jacobs and The Feminist Press with a 2008 Amazing Grace award for their sustained commitment to ensuring women's presence as writers and thinkers in the world of ideas and for bringing new, empowered voices of women to the general public through their books. To read Suzanne and Ms. Jacobs' e-discussion in its entirety, please visit www.ThreeGracesTheater.org. To learn more about The Feminist Press, please visit www.FeministPress.org.

3Graces' 1st Play Commission!

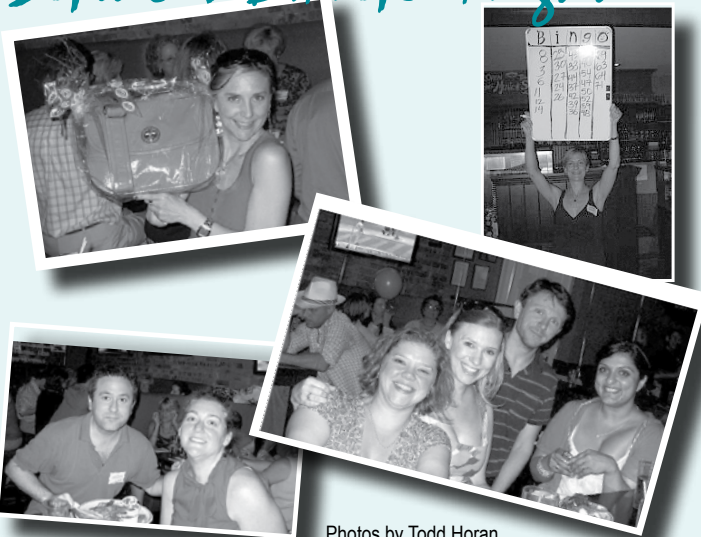
It has always been one of 3Graces' most fervent dreams to commission playwrights to write new plays that stage women's socially relevant stories and then work with the playwright through the **GraceNotes** development process to ready the piece for a **MainStage** production. In January 2008, 3Graces took the first step in making that dream a reality and awarded the **2008 Robin and Terrye Bellas New Play Commission** to playwright Sharyn Rothstein and composer Kris Kukul, who are writing for 3Graces a new musical about the Bible's Queen Esther, *BeautyQueen*. The project will use this famous ancient story to examine our modern ideas about women and girls, gender roles and sexuality, as well as society's obsession with teenage celebrities. A joyous, rollicking musical, *BeautyQueen* will draw from all aspects

of modern culture – including television, movies, internet and technology – and combine them with musical influences as far reaching as ancient Middle Eastern music and contemporary bubblegum pop star sounds. The next step towards realizing this dream occurred on April 6 at the Turtle's Shell Theater, when director Tracy Bersley staged 14 actors and 3 singers in a special reading of the first half of the play in a **NewPlaysOutLoud** evening, funded in part by a grant from the NYC Dept. of Cultural Affairs. Sharyn, Kris, Tracy and 3Graces will continue to workshop and develop the project throughout this next year as part of 3Graces' **GraceNotes** programming, leading up to an anticipated **MainStage World Premiere** in Fall 2009. Stay tuned for more information about our next steps and our upcoming workshop performances. In the **GraceNotes'** spirit of artists and audience experiencing new work together, 3Graces invites you to join us every step of the way. – Kelli Lynn Harrison



Kally Duling and Richard Ferrone in the NewPlaysOutLoud presentation of Rothstein & Kukul's *BeautyQueen* (photo by Elizabeth Bunnell)

3Graces BINGO Night



Photos by Todd Horan

It was seven o'clock on the evening of June 9, when the sun was setting on Manhattan's skyline. Meanwhile, the 3Graces Theater Co. was gearing up for one of our most exciting events this year, the first ever BINGO Night at Dalton's Bar and Grill, located in the heart of Hell's Kitchen.

Comedienne, and **2008 Amazing Grace**, Cate Smit emceed the rough and rowdy games of BINGO for our Grace supporters. Before we knew it, even the bar patrons and employees were in on the action! The winners had a variety of prizes to pick from, ranging from movie packs, and Nike gift certificates, to a designer leather biker jacket.

A good time was had by all; and as always, the Graces thank all who could attend. If you were not able to grace us with your presence, it is OK. BINGO will return in the fall, with new twists and prizes. Hope to see you there.

– Patrick T. Cecala II

Company Member Spotlight

3Graces would like to congratulate our first Literary Manager, Suzanne Barbetta.



We have all enjoyed Suzanne on the stage in *A Piece of My Heart*, *The Lower East Side Project*, *Nickel and Dime*, *Dream of a Common Language*, and both *Spring Shorts 1* and *2*. But what many of you may not know is that Suzanne is also taking on the arduous, but exciting, challenge of bringing the

page to the stage as 3Graces' Literary Manager.

Suzanne - our ever efficient Grace - read over 400 scripts and set up a detailed tracking system that provided information about the subject of each play, casting requirements and provided a reason why the piece would (or would not) work for our ensemble. Never one to leave any loose ends, Suzanne devised for us a well-oiled system for filing all scripts submitted to 3Graces.

As 3Graces continues to grow and develop, having someone as organized and thorough as Suzanne at the helm of our literary management department will allow us to capitalize on our efforts to contact and develop relationships with new and emerging playwrights. We are delighted (and relieved) to have Suzanne step into this important role as we launch into this thrilling time of development of both the Company and new work. It's an exciting time to be a Grace!!

--Cherelle Cargill Chéry

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Our first experience with **Plays2Go** was well received and great fun! We are looking forward to the next opportunity. The brainchild of Co-Artistic Directors Elizabeth Bunnell and Annie McGovern **Plays2Go** is a new initiative bringing theater to non-traditional venues like schools, churches, and the workplace. If you can't go to the theater, **3Graces** will take the theater to you! If you are interested in bringing **Plays2Go** to your event, email **3Graces** at info@threegraces theater.org.

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We began by bringing the city in with *Good Morning Lady's* friendly vendor and warty Professional "Lady," then *Big Girl* took the (tiny) stage to sighs, gasps and laughter, *Kog Sothob* followed adding its dark humor, and all too soon we ended with *Fabrin's* romantic antics.

Saturday May 17th found the Graces at All Souls Chapel on Lexington Avenue presenting our first of what we hope will be many **Plays2Go**. As part of All Souls Family Fun Day, four of our hit one-acts from this season's *Spring Shorts 2* were presented in the small chapel.

Can't make it to the theater?
3Graces will take the theater to you!

presenting
Plays2Go
Quality theater in non-traditional venues

Let 3Graces help you plan a fantastic out-of-the-box event for your next school, church or workplace presentation. We have a menu of over a dozen 10-20 minute socially relevant plays with humor and heart that can be mixed and matched into the 20-90 minute program of your choosing.

Email or call for more information:
info@ThreeGracesTheater.org - 212.631.8742

3Graces on the Go