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## Backstage - Palomar show simulates 'Shock and Awe'

**PAM KRAGEN**  
Staff Writer

The war in Iraq inspired many Americans to protest, and many others to show their patriotism. The war inspired Palomar College theater professor Michael Mufson to create "Droppings," a multimedia theater piece, which will be performed on campus Monday night.

The 16-minute work ---- which combines music, dance, theater and projected imagery ---- will be presented at 9 p.m. Monday in the college's Performance Lab D-10. A discussion forum will be held immediately afterward.

"The idea for this performance came to me the day before we officially initiated hostilities," Mufson said. "I had read and heard about 'Shock and Awe,' and I was trying to imagine what it would be like to be sitting in the dark night with thousands of bombs dropping around you."

The project includes an electronic music score (featuring realistic bomb effects) by Rob Cruz and other students in professor Madelyn Byrne's electronic music class; choreography by students in Molly Faulkner's improvisational dance class; and live performance and projections by James Lewis of the college's audiovisual department.

"Whenever our country gets involved with conflict overseas, the events seem so remote, even with 24-hour embedded reporting," Mufson said. "The object of this performance is to bring the experience closer to home and use the theater's greatest tool ---- empathy ---- to understand the consequences of our actions from a different point of view."

Although "Droppings" will only be performed live once, there will be a live Webcast of the show at <http://mufson.son.ws>. Admission is free.

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Three North County high school students will present their own one-act plays beginning Saturday at North Coast Repertory Theatre in Solana Beach.

The program of one-acts, produced by the Theatre School@North Coast Rep, will be presented at 11 a.m. Saturday and 7 p.m. Monday and Tuesday. It's designed for audiences ages 11 and up.

Solana Beach resident Jackie Cuccaro, a junior at Torrey Pines High, directs her one-woman play "Portrait of a Young Girl." The play, told through journal entries, is about a young girl's struggle to find her own identity.

Also on the program is "Rain," a one-act play by Carmel Valley resident Chelsea Stone, a sophomore at Torrey Pines. The play explores changes in the friendships of a group of girls entering their senior year of high school. "Rain" will be directed by Del Mar resident Carina Kolodny, a freshman at San Dieguito Academy.

Closing the program is "Vermagods," an anti-war play by San Dieguito Academy freshman Nick England of Encinitas. The play centers on the futility of war and the frustration and weariness of its participants.

Students are directing all of the plays with assistance by Theatre School teacher Robert Dahey. The program is being presented with an intermission, and tickets are \$9 for adults and \$7 for children. Call (858) 481-1055 for details.

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It was only a matter of time.

Adult entertainment hits our own version of the Las Vegas strip this weekend when the Chippendale dancers hit the stage at Harrah's Rincon Casino in Valley Center.

The male strip revue (more notable for its fancy dance moves and costumes than its bare flesh) will play for four performances Friday and Saturday at the casino's showroom. Tickets are \$25. For details, see the theater listings in today's Calendar section.

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Speaking of adult entertainment, the bizarre Off-Broadway hit "Puppetry of the Penis" is coming to San Diego in June.

The show ---- which has sold out engagements in every city it has played since its debut last year ---- features two nude "puppeteers" manipulating their organs into some 40 different "genital origami" shapes such as "the Pelican," "the Eiffel Tower" and "the Loch Ness Monster." The action is narrated and broadcast on large screens so even those in the back row can get a good look.

The show opens June 17 at the Lyceum Theatre in San Diego for a limited engagement. Ticket information has not been released yet.

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As expected, Jack O'Brien, artistic director of the Old Globe Theatre in

San Diego, picked up his fifth Tony nomination Monday for directing Broadway's hottest musical, "Hairspray." The buoyant '60s musical ---- Broadway's biggest hit of 2002 ----- led all other nominees with a combined 13 nominations, including Best Musical.

O'Brien's past directing nominations were for "The Full Monty" and "The Invention of Love," both in 2001 (in the musical and play categories); "Two Shakespearean Actors" in 1992; and "Porgy and Bess" in 1977.

O'Brien is highly favored to win this year's award. He won the director's trophy for "Hairspray" last week from the Outer Critics Circle; he earned the Drama League Award for "Hairspray" on May 9; and last fall he earned Broadway's highest honor for a director, the Stage Directors and Choreographers Foundation's "Mr. Abbott" award (joining the company of fellow honorees Bob Fosse, Agnes De Mille, Tommy Tune, Harold Prince, Trevor Nunn and others).

O'Brien will vie for the Tony against film director Baz Luhrmann for "La Boheme," Twyla Tharp for "Movin' Out" and David Leveaux for "Nine." The awards will be handed out June 8 at Radio City Music Hall.

While O'Brien's fans feel he's long overdue for the trophy, the San Diego resident has long said that while a Tony would have made a big difference in his directing career in the '70s or '80s, it wouldn't now. He's already acknowledged as among the best Broadway musical and play directors in the country.

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Another hometown favorite also earned a Tony nomination Monday. San Diego's own Brian Stokes Mitchell, who grew up onstage at San Diego Junior Theatre in Balboa Park, earned a Tony nod for his performance of Dox Quixote in "Man of La Mancha." He's up against some pretty steep competition ---- Harvey Fierstein in "Hairspray" and "Nine" star Antonio Banderas (who won the Outer Critics Circle Award as best actor in a musical last week).

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"Trolls," the gay musical comedy at Sixth@Penn Theatre, has been such a smash for the Hillcrest theater that producer Dale Morris has extended it through Aug. 3. Originally scheduled to run through May 31, Morris is recasting several roles to accommodate the run through the summer.

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La Jolla Playhouse has scheduled the groundbreaking ceremony for its new theater complex on June 7.

After the ceremonial shovels are dug into the dirt at the southwest corner of the UC San Diego campus, Playhouse artistic director Des McAnuff will entertain the assembled patrons and dignitaries with a performance by his own Red Dirt Band.

The \$36 million theater complex, to be formally named the Joan and Irwin Jacobs Center for La Jolla Playhouse (thanks to the couple's \$5 million gift), will include a 450-seat flexible-seating theater, administrative offices, rehearsal rooms, wig, prop and dressing rooms, a theater library, sound studio and a restaurant/cabaret.

It is slated to open in October 2004.

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Women's Repertory Theatre will stage the San Diego premiere of Diana Son's Oboe Award-winning play "Stop Kiss" in a production opening Friday at the Lyceum Theatre in San Diego.

The lesbian-themed drama was originally scheduled as the season-closing production of North Coast Repertory Theatre's 2001 season, but it was canceled so that the Solana Beach theater company could extend its hit musical "Pageant."

Women's Rep snapped up the rights for "Stop Kiss."

"We thought this Obie Award-winning play was too important to allow to languish for another season," said Women's Rep spokesman Todd Blakesley.

The company has made a name for its women-centered productions, including its "Christmas Carol" update with a woman Scrooge and Shakespeare's "Othello" with an all-women cast.

For information, call (619) 544-1000.

Pam Kragen is the entertainment editor of the North County Times.

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