



On Campus

February 27– March 13, 2003

CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS

Dancers from 22 colleges compete
More than 400 students from 22 colleges and universities throughout the Midwest, along with 50 students from Taiwan, will converge on campus March 13-16 when the Dance Program hosts the American College Dance Festival Association Great Lakes Regional Festival.

At least six free concerts are scheduled during the four-day festival, and the public is invited to attend all of the performances, to be held at the Wisconsin Union Theater.

Highlights include the World Dance Concert featuring local and international guest artists at 8 p.m., Friday, March 14, and the Gala Concert, the festival's grand finale, which will showcase the top adjudicated works, at 1:30 p.m., Sunday, March 16.

Information: Karen McShane-Hellenbrand, associate festival coordinator, 262-3679, or visit <http://www.education.wisc.edu/dance>.

Rap artist, activist to speak
Chuck D, rap and hip-hop artist and social activist, will be the next

Distinguished Lecture Series speaker at 7:30 p.m. on Monday, March 10, in the Wisconsin Union Theater. Free tickets will be available to students, faculty, staff and Wisconsin Union members on Tuesday, March 4, and to the general public on Thursday, March 6. Information: Ann Hanson, 262-2216; annthanson@hotmail.com

Swiss violinist leads students in 'Four Seasons'

Stefan Muhmenthaler, concertmaster of the Chamber Orchestra of Lausanne, leads Philomusica, a string ensemble at the School of Music, in a complete performance of Vivaldi's Four Seasons at 8 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 28, in Mills Hall. Admission is free.

Philomusica consists of about 16 musicians playing stringed instruments. For this performance, Muhmenthaler acts as conductor and violinist, and John Chappell Stowe presides at the harpsichord.

Brass quintet samples music from five centuries

The Guest Artist Series presents the Chestnut Brass Company at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 6, in Mills Hall. The ensemble will perform March, Op. 99, by Prokofiev; music from the 16th and 17th centuries by Daniel Speer, Matthew Locke and King Henry VIII, performed on reproductions of Renaissance cornetti and sackbuts; "Spring" from The Four Seasons, by Vivaldi, arranged by Arthur Frackenpohl; and early American brass band music from the 1830s and 1860s, using original keyed bugles and saxhorns. Admission is free.

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"Oxygen"

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"In London, they used mechanical mice, and it was really quite funny," he says. "The mice appealed greatly to young people. But it's important not to overdo the humor — they might think it was corny."

Appealing to the young is a key aspect of this production, sponsored in part as it is by the UW-Madison Wisconsin Initiative for Science Literacy. Its director, chemistry professor Bassam Shkhashiri, reviewed the scientific protocols of each experiment.

"I'm really happy to see that they are all scientifically accurate," he says. Credit that to prop master Brandon Ribordy, a first-year Master of Fine Arts student in set design. It has been his job to create the physical look of the experiments and to make sure they all work.

The third experiment requires a particu-



Visiting playwright Carl Djerassi, near left, examines a model of the set for the upcoming play "Oxygen," as Brian Proball, scene designer, listens for feedback.

'Oxygen' mixes elements of art, science

Barbara Wolff

The object of this afternoon will be to bring science to the stage in the UW-Madison production of "Oxygen."

Brian Proball, University Theatre scene designer and a master of fine arts candidate, will be in charge of the day's endeavor. His confederate is Carl Djerassi, one of the playwrights.

Together, they will formulate a master plan as to how best to represent the work on stage.

Djerassi made his name as a chemist and inventor of the oral contraceptive. However, he has devoted the last 15 years to literature. With Nobel laureate Roald Hoffmann, Djerassi has written this second installment of an intended trilogy exemplifying his "science-in-fiction" genre. Since it was published a spare two years ago, "Oxygen" has been produced around the world, and Djerassi is in Madison for a few days to lend his insight to "Oxygen" rehearsals here.

The drama takes place in the 18th and 21st centuries. The historical leg of this journey follows the original scientists — Joseph Priestley, Antoine Lavoisier and Karl Wilhelm Scheele — to Stockholm. Their goal is to determine which of them actually discovered oxygen. The same deliberation lingers for more than 200 years, as a present-day Nobel panel also convenes to award a "retro" prize to one of the scientists.

Right now, however, the attention of all

of the University Theatre crew is fixed not upon dramatic action, but instead upon experiments and a paint-spattered table loaded with scientific paraphernalia of a bygone era.

"Oxygen" features three experiments, each the product of one of the researchers.

One exercise shows that fire burns more intensely in the presence of oxygen. Another establishes that mice cannot live without it. This one delights Djerassi — he gleefully describes how it was done in an earlier production.

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Feminism crosses national, gender boundaries in lectures

Barbara Wolff

The international dimensions of feminism in the 21st century will be examined this spring in a series of lectures sponsored by the university's A. E. Havens Center. All lectures are free and open to the public.

Speakers will address:
■ how feminists from different cultures can form common agendas and work together cooperatively,
■ how entities such as the European Union and United Nations spur and obstruct women's international consciousness and collective action, and
■ how the language of international human rights might be used to make global gains for women.

"We are paying a lot more attention to the status of women around the world than we used to, and while we are seeing

distressing events like the Nigerian's accusation and conviction, we also are seeing encouraging responses to international pressure," says Myra Marx Ferree, one of the conference organizers and professor of sociology.

The next speaker is Amrita Basu, Amherst College, who will address "Women's Purity, Women's Violence: The Case of Hindu Nationalism" at 3:30 p.m., Tuesday, March 11, in 206 Ingraham. She will lecture on "Negotiating the Space Between the Local and the Global: Women's Movements Transnationally" at 3:30 p.m., Wednesday, March 12, in 8417 Social Science.

For more information about the Havens Center series, visit <http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/havenscenter/home.html> or contact Patrick Barnett, 262-1420, havensc@ssc.wisc.edu. ■

larly elaborate process involving the weight of a scientist's wife. Ribordy uses water that changes color to enhance the complicated-sounding process for the stage.

"The color change has nothing to do with any science," he confesses to Shkhashiri and Djerassi. "But it really looks interesting."

Djerassi and Hoffmann tell the "Oxygen" story largely through the scientists' wives and their roles as colleagues, collaborators, muses and experimental subjects. "Oxygen" director Norma Saldivar likes that approach.

"I'm impressed with the attention the wives receive in the scientific process," she says. Just as the actual scientific discovery oscillates between wives and husbands, the dramatic action moves fluidly between the 18th century and the present. Djerassi favors the use of slides to enhance the century shifts. However, it doesn't sound like

the University Theatre production will be using any projections. "Well, will you have steam, then?" he inquires, referring to a sauna scene.

At the mention of saunas, the talk swerves into costuming: "We've discovered, through research we did on 18th century paintings (at the Elvehjem Museum of Art) that Turkish wraps were very popular then. We thought we'd use those — you'll see them when we go to the costume shop," says Saldivar.

While Saldivar and Djerassi discuss the costumes, Proball deftly clears extraneous debris from a podium to make way for a cardboard model of the set. The actors will range over several levels, with a laboratory table front and center.

"We'll have invisible doors so that actors from one period will be able to vanish out of the action," he explains. "That will increase the fluid movement between the

two different centuries."

Djerassi studies the model for quite awhile. "This is a very, very ambitious set," he says at last. Proball is clearly pleased.

Such a rare opportunity for students to collaborate with a renowned playwright becomes a study not only in theater theory and practice, but also in communication, in the lucid organization and articulation of ideas, in the description of intent, and in the logic and conviction of a persuasive argument. Even the most casual observer can sense an expansion of perspective and the unfolding of new intellectual dimensions as the discussion goes on.

Proball sums up his experience: "With every production I carry something away as part of myself, and I'm changed. What's taken place on and behind the stage becomes part of me.

"In this case, I'll never look at science the same way again." ■

Dossier: Carl Djerassi

- Known round the world as the developer of the oral contraceptive.
- Awarded both the National Medal of Science (1973, for the birth control pill) and the National Medal of Technology (1991, for promoting new approaches to insect control).
- Earned his Ph.D. from UW in 1945.
- Awarded an honorary degree, one of 19 he holds, from UW-Madison in 1995.
- Teaches chemistry at Stanford University.
- Created the genre of "science-in-fiction," of which "Oxygen" is an example. The genre illustrates the human side of scientific endeavor and the scientists who practice it.
- Produced five novels ("Cantor's Dilemma," "NO," "Menachem's Seed," "The Bourbaki Gambit" and "Marx, Deceased"), short stories ("The Futurist and Other Stories"), an autobiography ("The Pill, Pygmy Chimps and Degas' Horse"), a memoir ("This Man's Pill: Reflections on the 50th Birthday of the Pill") and more.

- Wrote "Oxygen" as the second leg of a theatrical trilogy. The first, "An Immaculate Misconception: Sex in an Age of Mechanical Reproduction," debuted in 2000. At work on the third chapter, "Calculus."
- Founded the Djerassi Resident Artists Program, Woodside, Calif. More than 1,100 writers, visual artists, choreographers, musicians and performing artists have passed through the program since its inception in 1982.



Oxygen tickets, symposium, displays

Tickets

"Oxygen" by Carl Djerassi and Roald Hoffmann will be performed at 7:30 p.m., Friday and Saturday, March 28-29; and Thursday-Saturday, April 3-5 and 10-12 at Mitchell Theatre, Vilas Hall. Tickets, available at the Vilas Hall Box Office, are \$14; \$10 for UW-Madison students. Information: 265-4075.

Display

Historic chemistry books, original works of the three scientists and some of Djerassi's and Hoffmann's writings will be on view in the Memorial Library's Special Collections room through Wednesday, April 30. Information: Robin E. Rider, 262-2795 or rider@library.wisc.edu.

Symposium

The University Theatre production of "Oxygen" will be accompanied by a free public symposium on Saturday, March 29, dealing with the science and applications of the oxygen discovery, and the cultural climate in which it took place. For speakers, subjects and logistics, visit <http://www.scifun.org>.