

Anti-war soldiers host rocking event at Hell's Kitchen



IRAQ VETS AGAINST THE WAR

By Clare Jensen
Tacoma Weekly

Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) is hosting a concert Feb. 21 to show active duty soldiers that they aren't alone in their frustration with the war in Iraq.

The aptly named "Soldier, You Are Not Alone" concert aims to get area active duty soldiers, veterans, students and the public together to start a discussion, and hopefully become actively involved in the IVAW's first mission: immediate withdrawal from Iraq.

"One of the things that had an impact in ending the Vietnam War was the soldiers that didn't want to fight it anymore," said Tom McCarthy of the Peace Action Coalition of Tacoma and a supporter of IVAW. "Almost everyone in Pierce County is connected to the military in some way, and I guess the idea is that the peace movement is starting to think about how we can make that connection...stronger. One of the ways we can do that is by supporting veterans and reaching out to soldiers."

And that is exactly what IVAW is trying to do this upcoming week, the finale of which will be a five-act concert at Hell's Kitchen.

Seattle IVAW chapter President Chanan Suarezdiaz said that anyone can come to the event, but the target audience for the show is military (active duty soldiers get in free with military identification). He also said he hopes students will attend.

"Getting active duty people, veterans, together with students, it's a powerful combination. There's a lot of ideas, a lot of activism," he said. "They are critical in the 'ending the war' movement."

The concert will showcase two politically conscious hip-hop and folk artists, Son of Nun and Ryan Harvey, who have toured nationally in support of IVAW in the past.

Three Puget Sound area bands - Saints of Everyday Failures, Eastern Sunz and Ancient Head (fronted by an IVAW member) - will also be taking the stage in support of IVAW's efforts.

"Other chapters of IVAW have been [hosting concerts] nationally, but there hasn't been a strong effort in the Fort Lewis area," Suarezdiaz said. "A lot of G.I.s go to Hell's Kitchen. We've been getting a lot of support from them; people [at Hell's Kitchen] say this is an important event and there's a lot of soldiers who would relate to it."

In addition to the concert event Feb. 21, IVAW is also organizing a march in line with the war's fifth anniversary, March 22, outside Fort Lewis (President George W. Bush launched the invasion of Iraq March 19, 2003). The family friendly event, which will rally support from soldiers, veterans and their families, will focus on the truths of the war and G.I. rights.

"Military people have a huge...voice in this movement we're building. Talking about their experience in the military, their participation in Iraq and in Afghanistan...is critical," Suarezdiaz said.

For more information about IVAW, visit www.ivaw.org. You can also visit www.givioce.com, which is a resource for soldiers and their families, and will soon host a G.I. operated radio show.

"Soldier, You Are Not Alone" is 7-11 p.m. Feb 21 at Hell's Kitchen, 3829 Sixth Ave. The show is all-ages, \$8; service members with I.D. get in free.

Festival of Northwest Plays features the cream of the crop



PHOTO BY ROSS MULHAUSEN/COURTESY OF UNIVERSITY OF PUGET SOUND

REUNITED. Many Puget Sound artists from the Northwest Playwrights Alliance's Double Shot Festival held this past spring will come together again to participate in the Festival of Northwest Plays.

By Matt Nagle
Tacoma Weekly

The best of the best among Northwest playwrights will be featured in the upcoming Festival of Northwest Plays Feb. 21-March 2. Co-sponsored by the Northwest Playwrights Alliance (NPA), the Broadway Center for the Performing Arts and University of Puget Sound (UPS), the fest includes three new full-length plays and three evenings of 10-minute plays written by outstanding writers from Olympia to Bellingham. All plays will be staged at Theater on the Square.

More than 150 volunteers amass to put on the festival that highlights works of local playwrights. Having a venue to get their work "out there" is a real boon to these often-struggling artists. "If you're a playwright it's pretty tough to get your plays produced," said the festival's Executive Producer Bryan Willis, an NPA playwright in residence. "Tacoma is so vibrant with its museums and revival of architecture, but theater is lagging. It's a hard time for theater. I think the audience is there, so we're hoping to help build on that."

He said that some plays will be staged for the first time at the festival and hopefully they will be staged again at some point as full-fledged theater productions. "The (Northwest) Playwright's Alliance is all about helping playwrights develop their plays and find homes for them," Willis said, either through publication or a fully produced tour. He said

that in the last four years three-fourths of the plays staged during the Festival of Northwest Plays have gone on to be published or staged or both, which is a very high ratio according to Willis. "We're really proud of that."

Square. Written by Tacoma resident C. Rosalind Bell and directed by Geoff Proehl, a professor of theater at University of Puget Sound (UPS), "Monologues" was staged this past November for six performances at UPS, five of which sold out. It



PHOTO BY KURT WALLS

REMEMBERING NEW ORLEANS. Grace Livingston portrays Elaine Madonna Bergeron in C. Rosalind Bell's "The New Orleans Monologues," directed by Geoff Proehl. This photograph is from the first full production of the play at the University of Puget Sound in November 2007. The play is being remounted for the Festival of Northwest Plays.

Something new this year will be an informal evening of prose and poetry at Tully's coffee shop at 9th and Broadway, just across the street from Theater on the Square. Seven featured artists will read their own work starting at 6 p.m. Feb. 23. Admission is free.

Following this, one of the festival's three full-length plays, "The New Orleans Monologues," will be staged at Theater on the

received rave reviews.

"The New Orleans Monologues" is told through the voices of 14 fictional people who survive Hurricane Katrina yet deal with the issues of race, poverty and class that came out of the tragedy. The play features the notable acting talents of Grace Livingston, UPS associate professor of African-American studies, who plays Elaine Madonna Bergeron with zest and gusto.



PHOTO BY HIROKI MOMOSE

TATER TOT TERROR. (From left) Kosuke Shiozawa, Kimiko Hakomori and Yusuke Takami in "Tater Tot Terror" by Nadescha Bunje, one of the 10-minute plays to be staged at the festival.

Son of Nun
Ryan Harvey
SAINTS OF EVERDAY FAILURES
ANCIENT HEAD
EASTERN SUNZ

SOLDIER, YOU ARE NOT ALONE
Thurs. Feb 21 @ Hells Kitchen
7 - 11 P.M.
\$8 at the door. All Ages Show.
Service Members w/Military I.D. get in free.

3829 6th ave
tacoma WA 98406

Two more compelling full-length plays are on the bill for the festival. Brent Hartinger's "The Geography Club" has garnered much acclaim from readers of all ages, and now comes to life as the first local production of the nationally known writer's full-length plays. The author of several very successful novels for teens and young adults, Hartinger's "The Geography Club" has been optioned for a New York production. Also a screenwriter, Hartinger has three feature films in the works including a big-screen version of "The Geography Club."

The play tells the story of 16-year-old Russel Middlebrook, who thinks he is the only gay kid at his high school but comes to learn that he has many allies there including the school's baseball star. Russel and his friends learn plenty about the treacherous social terrain of high school and the even more dangerous landscape of the human heart.

The third full-length play featured at the fest will be "In The Sawtooths" by award-winning playwright Dano Madden. A coming-of-age buddy play set among the Idaho mountain range and wilderness area called the Sawtooths, the play was recently voted "Best Full-Length Play in the U.S." by the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival.

Rounding out the festival will be more than 30 10-minute plays, all of which have either received readings or have been published during the past four years with NPA. Some interesting examples:

- "Poor Shem" by Gregory Hirschak. Office routine stops cold when co-worker Shem is killed in the Xerox machine. Do we call a rabbi or use the bypass tray?
- "Mammals" by Ryan Dowler (voted best 10-minute play in America by the Kennedy Center in 2006). Two college students make a video unlike anything you have ever seen.
- "Chat Room" by Jon Haller. When a meeting of an AOL suicide club goes awry, Gilda and Probhu learn important lessons about feet, turtles and new beginnings.
- "A Shoe Story" by Arlitia Jones. The deep meaning of life is unveiled in a fight over shoes.

Tickets to Festival of Northwest Plays are \$12 general and \$9 students/seniors/military, available at any Ticket Window outlet or call (206) 325-6500 or visit www.ticketwindowonline.com. Buy an NPA pass for \$50 and see every show by emailing willis@olynet.com.

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