

# 'SITE' comes to Seattle U

## Cabaret explores 'frontiers'

**William Tsang**  
Staff Writer

As the year comes to a close and the warmer weather begins to roll in, Seattle University's spring drama production is being set into motion.

The show's six plays share a common theme relating to some type of border or "frontier," whether it's a physical border or the border of human knowledge.

The "SITE (Seattle Indy Theatre Experiment) Specific Cabaret" will be composed of six short plays. Three were written by local playwrights Vince Delaney, Glenn Hergenbahn and Cheryl Slean, two by Seattle U students Riley Biehl and Ji Eun Kim—who have won a playwriting contest for the cabaret—and the final by Ki Gottberg, drama professor and the cabaret's producer.

The six plays all incorporate a different story, encompassing various emotions to enthrall the audience.

"The audience can expect to experience the full range of human emotions during this show—except maybe jealousy and anger,"

says Elizabeth Grant, sophomore drama major and one of the cabaret's actresses. "Some [of the plays] are hilarious, while others will make you cry or make you think. It depends on your constitution."

For audiences, the cabaret will be an exploration of a variety of complex emotions, looking at what it means to be a thinking, loving, active and imperfect human being in the world. The six individual plays all have their own unique style and storyline.

"Zero Footprint" is a piece about a man's attempt to understand the true nature of love and create the perfect strain of the human species.

"Beyond the Frontier" recollects a girl's journey into her subconscious to come to grips with a very dark secret. It is an exploration into the nature of guilt, self-deception, love and forgiveness.

"Wonders of the Swirling Night" talks about the separate but dangerously intertwined stories of the innocent love of a boy and a girl, the antics

of a metaphysical cat and mouse and the effects of a hypnotist's show.

"Miranda" portrays a hauntingly beautiful performance, written about a woman confined to a wheelchair, and the way in which she discovers the cruelties and joys of life.

The comedic story of "Sunday Drive" tells of a dysfunctional family and their ways of coping with each other and is played out during their drive to a police station one Sunday morning.

"The Eye is Burning" is an interpretive piece involving and exploring scientists, space, memory, fame, and the burning of the human emotions and attachments that keep people confined to the material world.

The production will run from May 7-17 and the shows will play Thursdays and Sundays at 7:30 p.m. as well Fridays and Saturdays at 7:30 and 10:30 p.m. Tickets are available for \$10, but seating is limited to 50 per performance.

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## Northwest playwrights contribute 'Specifics'

**Frances Dinger**  
Staff Writer

Ki Gottberg of Seattle University's theater program believes drama begins when the ritual nature of traditional theater is broken. The upcoming "SITE Specific Cabaret" certainly breaks the usual theater ritual in that, instead of manipulating a space based on a preconceived story, the story was formed by a given space and the theme of "frontier."

The set of the cabaret will take up almost all of the theater in the Lee Center.

Designed by Carol Wolfe Clay, the set of the cabaret will take up almost the entirety of the black box theater in the Lee Center for the Arts. The set is a surreal labyrinth of poles, cut through by a gravel path, a "safe space" consisting of an easy chair and blanket, several sets of stairs and a table with four chairs and an old-fashioned cane wheelchair, offering only 50 chairs to the audience.

Seattle University's first SITE (Seattle Indy Theatre Experiment) cabaret took place at four different locations on campus in September 2007 as the audience was ushered from one setting to the next throughout the night. Guest director Cheryl Slean has worked with Gottberg on SITE projects before, though the nature of SITE has evolved greatly since its inception.

"We had some run-ins with weather [at the first SITE performance], which is why we moved it inside this time," said Slean.

They found Seattle's climate to be a bit more unpredictable than Southern California where Slean and Gottberg worked together as emerging playwrights at other outdoor festivals. Despite the convenience of being able to control the environment, some of the playwrights spoke of having difficulties envisioning characters in such an abstract space.

Glenn Hergenbahn, who first worked with Gottberg at the "14-48" theater festival, regarded the set as a pretty strong starting point.

"I had never written for a set before ... but it had a certain mood to it and we knew our theme," Hergenbahn said.

Hergenbahn used the tone set by the space to create a play focused on the inward journey of

the characters, using the mind as a frontier as opposed to a more literal frontier, as his characters navigate through an imaginary world during a hypnosis session.

Conversely, Slean found it difficult at first to envision characters in such an abstract space.

"When I write for theater, I am abstracting a real place in my head," said Slean. "I've never been one of those people who write for the conceptual theater space. It's not my natural mode."

However, having worked with architectural and landscape site writing before, Slean was able to adapt.

"I didn't think about how am I going to use the table, how am I going to use the stairs," she said. "But it made sense that these things were inside the characters' heads."

Slean's play also focuses on the human mind as its setting in her main character's journey of self-discovery.

When asked about casting for multiple plays out of a single pool of actors, none of the directors noted any difficulties.

"Luckily, we all wrote different enough plays that there was really no trouble," said Hergenbahn. "We all required something different from our actors."

Despite having just over a month to prepare, the directors were able to successfully organize their casts with three two-to-three hour rehearsals every week without stepping on each other's toes.

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**Cheryl Slean**  
Playwright

All offering distinct writing and directing styles, each playwright used the set in innovative and unique ways, making all the works very distinct in an artistic opportunity unique for audience and artist alike.

"The fact that the turn around on this production is so quick is a wonderful reward," said Slean. "You will never see playwrights directing their own plays in commercial theater, so it's great to have the opportunity to do so."

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Garrett Mukai

The Spectator



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Though all of the "SITE Specific Cabaret's" plays tackle very different topics, their diverse aims are unified through a shared set. The plays also share many actors, who play multiple parts throughout the show.