

# San Diego Reader Theater Reviews

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*A vendor sells buttons that say "Defeat time."*

Review by Jeff Smith

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**Wireless City**, by Peter Gach and Michael A. Mufson

**Palomar College Performing Arts Department and Eveoke Dance Theatre at the ReinCarnation Project**, 333 Tenth Avenue, downtown

**Directed by Michael A. Mufson**; cast: Noelle, Peter Benelli, Jennifer Mandala, Irving Martinez, Lance Rogers, Melissa Francisco, Peter Gach, Madelyn Byrne, Christopher Hall, Ian S. McAlpine, Tori Johnson, Tony Bevacqua, Mary Stanley, Corinne Troussier, V. Heather Badillo, Cha Cha Cholaki, Anthony G. Rosa, Muff Brown, Jeremiah Williams, Charlene Penner; lighting design, Chris Borreson; musical director, Gach; video projections, Kitty Meek; flash movies, Corrine Troussier, Michael A. Mufson; structured improv choreographer, Deven P.

Brawley

**Playing through February 18**; Friday and Saturday at 8:00 p.m.

Sunday

at 7:00 p.m. Monday (pay what you can) at 8:00 p.m. For information call

619-238-1153.

In Garbage Town -- surrounded by unraveled spools of videotape, chains of soda cans, and a fortress of used video display terminals -- a bald, white-faced being slowly sheds a cocoon of aluminum foil.

A vendor sells buttons that say "Defeat time." A huge wall projection vows that when things speed up, "the time between SALIENT EVENTS grows smaller."

While his wife June pleads, on his message machine, for him to come home, Andre Jonz, founder and CEO of Wireless City Corporation, promises that "The Great Convergence" of humans and machines is at hand. People will spill their souls into the Skynet ("where you're always connected"), shed human fallibility, and create an "era of perfection." Once a series of downloadings occur, people will become pure machines, and productivity, the god of Wireless City's techno-fascist state, will remain at 100 percent.

Michael Mufson and Peter Gach's *Wireless City*, performed by Eveoke Dance Theatre and Palomar College, is a "sensurround music/theater /performance carnival." You aren't a traditional audience member. You can move about -- the more the better -- and become a citizen, bombarded by hype for a dehumanized, wireless future. Strobes flicker, sights and sounds slam. It's like being in eight MTV videos at once, or at technology's ultimate trade show.

Things move so quickly you can't take them all in (so quickly, in fact, that Ed Decker will review the music in next week's *Reader*). For the first half-hour, you become de-centered. No matter what you watch, something draws your attention from across the room: what's up with that three-foot-high, talking mound of blankets? Or the ever-present slogans, like "regular high maintenance is a small price to pay for a computer-engineered brain." Or the woman, halfway up a wall and tied to tubes, barking orders: is she in control or getting crucified?

There are so many stimuli -- the list of credits for download sequences, video work, flash movies, etc., is extensive -- that at times the production almost defeats its purpose. Effects bleed into each other and create a drone. The second half, as the Great Ascension draws nigh, is more linear yet also nudges toward the repetitive.

Better excess than timidity, though. And the entire company sustains flat-out intensity for 70 minutes -- doing, in effect, a dance of denial. Down with the human, up with the machine. Movements shift from writhing lifelike contortions to mechanical, slot-A-to- tab-B efficiency, as if shedding the former like Aluminum Man's cocoon.

The overall effect, because of the bombardment (and possibly the drone as well), resembles aversion therapy or homeopathy (cure the disease with the disease). In the end you want to scream -- at least I did -- "Luddites unite: we have nothing to lose but our perfections!"