

## Entertainment: Theater

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### Palomar's 'Chalk Circle' an audacious, thrilling spectacle

By: TRACY CUMMINGS - For the North County Times

Palomar College's production of Bertolt Brecht's "The Caucasian Chalk Circle" is an audacious spectacle. The play is a demanding one. Palomar steps up to the challenge and stages it with videos, masks and brilliant music.

The story asks a fundamental question: How will you raise a child? This question has complex implications, and "Chalk Circle" holds none of them back. Brecht believed audiences must feel complicit in his plays. Shock and surprise are essential.

Director Michael Mufson takes Brecht's beliefs to heart. Projected images of war and nature assault the audience. Some actors carry huge poles with masks and streamers; others hide behind metal masks. Kenjii Imaizumi's costumes emphasize class divisions. With David Boyd's multilevel, modular set, actors create shocking sounds. They run amid the audience.

Through it all, Rob Cruz's and T.J. Gobel's hard-hitting music adds a riveting bass line. The effect makes us feel the chaos of war and the profound

importance of the play's central question.

In the play, a woman gives birth to a child during a battle. We immediately segue into the story of a land torn by revolution. The female leader of the

country forgets her baby during the coup. A third woman, Grusha, forsakes safety and her fiance to rescue it. Her journey is grueling. When the female leader finally sues for the return of her baby, we meet the unscrupulous judge who will decide which mother will keep the child. The surprise ending to this King Solomon dilemma is truly



#### **"The Caucasian Chalk Circle"**

**When: 8 p.m. March 11-13;  
2 p.m. March 14**

**Where: Howard Brubeck Theatre, Palomar College, 1140 W. Mission Road, San Marcos**

**Tickets: \$12, general; \$10, seniors; \$8, students  
Info: (760) 744-1150, Ext. 2453.**



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heartwrenching.

Brecht's politics make each actor stand on equal ground, but Tracy Meeker's role (Grusha) is pivotal. Meeker transforms herself from a chilly peasant into an impassioned mother. Grusha's fiance, David Serpa, has a commanding presence. Most impressive, however, is Tom Zohar, who embodies the role of the hilarious, corrupt judge fabulously. Finally, Fredi Towbin, who plays several parts, steals scenes with her great naturalism.

Violence and sexual content will keep younger audiences away from the play, and its length ---- almost three hours with an intermission ---- is famous for trying audiences. Fortunately, Mufson's direction makes the play constantly captivating.

Besides, this all-important question demands we sit and feel its importance. How can we bring children into this wretched world?

Palomar College's production of "The Caucasian Chalk Circle" takes us to a place where hope barely exists and the pain of being human is acute. What stirs the most is that, despite Brecht's stunning vision of evil, redemption is possible.



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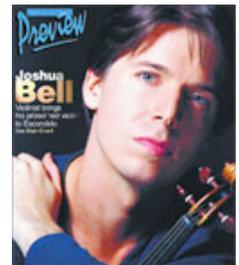
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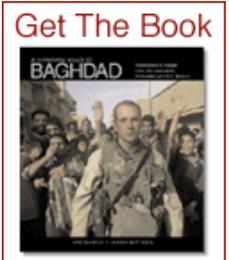
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