

UC SANTA BARBARA

# THE *Current*

July 17, 2006

Eileen Conrad

## **UCSB Announces Winners of \$10,000 Competition for New Plays About Science and Technology**

Distinguished playwright Jamie Pachino has been awarded first prize in an international competition for plays about science and technology launched by the Professional Artists Lab and the California NanoSystems Institute (CNSI) at UC Santa Barbara.

Pachino will receive \$10,000 for her winning play, "Splitting Infinity," at an awards ceremony in Santa Barbara this fall that will include a staged reading of her drama by a cast of professional actors.

The prize money for the competition was donated.

Nearly 150 plays from a dozen countries were entered in UCSB's first Scientists, Technologists, and Artists Generating Exploration (*STAGE*) competition.

The novel competition evolved from a shared desire to make science more accessible to the public and the theatre more reflective of what is happening in the world, said Nancy Kawalek, director of the campus' Professional Artists Lab.

Pachino is an award-winning playwright and screenwriter with national and international credits.

"Splitting Infinity" is about a Nobel Prize-winning astrophysicist who pursues evidence of God through physics.

As she single-mindedly pursues her goal, she upsets the balance of her relationships with her oldest and closest friend, a rabbi, and her star post-doctoral student, the son of a Christian Scientist.

Pachino's works have been produced and commissioned by dozens of prestigious theaters. Her awards include the Kennedy Center Fund for New American Plays Award and Chicago's Jeff Award for Best New Work.

Her film work includes features for DreamWorks, Vanguard Films, and Lifetime Television, where her movie "Not Like Everyone Else" airs this month.

She resides in Los Angeles.

C. Michèle Kaplan received the Special Recognition award for her play, "Bot," about a teenage computer genius obsessed with how technology can blur the boundary between humans and machines.

Kaplan received an M.F.A. in playwriting from Yale School of Drama after moving to the U.S. from South Africa.

Her plays have been produced in both countries and have won numerous awards.

Two other playwrights singled out in the competition as finalists were Alex Lewin, an M.F.A. candidate in playwriting at UC San Diego, for his play "The Mark of Primeness," and Mark Steven Jensen, a Minneapolis-based playwright, for "On-line."

"The Mark of Primeness" is about a mathematician who has devoted her career to solving an age-old math problem.

She remains stymied until a brilliant student comes into her life and claims to have found the answer.

"On-line" is a story about a man who hangs dead from the ceiling of his small apartment while his computer program, Annabelle, attempts to maintain the façade that he is still alive.

"I am delighted by the overwhelming response we received to the first STAGE competition," said Kawalek.

"I'm particularly grateful to our esteemed panel of judges, and proud to have Jamie Pachino's 'Splitting Infinity' as the very first winner of STAGE.

The play deals with enormous questions about science and faith, and offers a unique window into the human side of science, in a profoundly moving way."

Scripts were judged by a panel consisting of two of UCSB's Nobel laureates, David Gross (2004, physics) and Alan Heeger (2000, chemistry); playwright and MacArthur Fellow Luis Alfaro; award-winning theatre, film, and television director Arvin Brown; Polly Carl, producing artistic director of the Minneapolis Playwrights' Center; award-winning playwright Barbara Lebow; Eduardo Machado, award-winning playwright and artistic director of New York's INTAR Theatre; and Kawalek.

"I feel truly honored that CNSI is involved in STAGE," said Evelyn Hu, director of the California NanoSystems Institute at UCSB.

"We all live with our assumptions about the world, safe within the way we have taught ourselves to comprehend what we see.

It's good to be challenged. And that's what 'Splitting Infinity' does; that sudden reillumination of your world and perspective is challenging and very important."

The Professional Artists Lab is a dynamic artistic laboratory in Film and Media Studies and Media Arts and Technology at UCSB, in which professional actors, directors, writers, and producers create and develop new works in film, theatre, television, radio, and multi-media performance.

Distinguished visiting artists also discuss their craft in classes and present workshops.

The California NanoSystems Institute (CNSI), one of the prestigious California Institutes for Science and Innovation, focuses on dramatic breakthroughs in materials, devices and resulting technologies, made possible by controlling form and function at the nanoscale.

These breakthroughs are being accomplished through the integration of many science and engineering disciplines, and will have broad applications for innovation in communication, biomedical, energy, and environmental technologies.

CNSI is a research partnership between UCSB and UCLA.

For more information about the winning plays visit [www.cnsi.ucsb.edu/stage/](http://www.cnsi.ucsb.edu/stage/)

The next round of the STAGE International Script Competition is now under way.

Visit [www.cnsi.ucsb.edu/stage/guidelines/guidelines.html](http://www.cnsi.ucsb.edu/stage/guidelines/guidelines.html) for details.

Related Links

[STAGE Winning Plays](#)

[Professional Artists Lab](#)

[California NanoSystems Institute](#)

---

## **About UC Santa Barbara**

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.