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# Pulse *Excite*

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explores the world  
of exotic dancing.  
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Thursday, April 10, 2003

## 'Liberated' Iraq to cull benefits of McWorld legacy

**Joseph M. Bechard**  
Edge Culture Columnist

In about 220 short years, America became the first country to perfect civil society. Today marks a new era. Now, behind an entirely benevolent and altruistic leader, our country has hearkened to a higher mandate. We are going to impose "freedom" on any dunderheads who don't realize democracy is better than anything they've figured out in all the millennia they've been around.

I see big things in the future for Iraq. As soon as coalition forces liberate the country's people, we could really win them over with our rich and enlightened cultural heritage. Newly liberated Iraqi women will be aching to use their newfangled freedom to dress like hookers. We will deploy a crack team of cultural ambassadors — maybe Paula Abdul, Simon Cowell and Russell Crowe — to hand out Glamour magazines, Wonderbras, Old Navy Ultra Low-Rise Boot-Cut Jeans and pink thongs at MTV summer vacation in Umm Qasr. Sure, in America this type of culture causes 80 percent of women to be dissatisfied with their body images, but don't worry, only 4 to 13 percent will really suffer from serious eating disorders.

For the Iraqi boys, it's a steady diet of teenage angst and effrontery. Some of them will love the poetry and artistry of Insane Clown Posse, Mudvayne or Linkin Park. For the rest, it's hardcore rap. The United States may be one of the industrialized world's leaders in murder, suicide, rape, drug consumption and robbery, but it can't be a result of our culture. It's because we are so free.

Next will come the movie industry. Universal Studios will open an "Operation Iraqi Freedom" theme park with simulated Apache Helicopter air raids on Baghdad and tours of the locations where they shot recent hit movies glorifying the war. Not to be outdone, Disney will open Disney World Basra, an Aladdin-themed park intended to brighten the faces of sad Iraqi children — and plant consumerist notions of freedom in the budding young imaginations of a new demographic.

To further ease their suffering, we'll export our ridiculous pop culture, sports idolatry and video game worship to keep their minds off pressing issues like the environment, politics or art. America is the world's leading polluter. Its political system is suffocated by corruption, and its communities are losing touch with one another. But we don't care. Why should Iraq?

A democracy modeled after the United States would naturally support a free press owned by large corporations — so long as it doesn't report news that portrays its country, politicians or big business negatively.

And how could you represent our political culture as anything but fair? Under the iron fist of Saddam Hussein, Iraqi people had one choice on their presidential ballot. In America, we had several choices that didn't matter. If you're going to have a completely symbolic vote, it's good to have a few choices. That's freedom.

Speaking of choices, I'm sure the members of this new democracy will love all of the great ones on the \$1 value menus soon to light Iraqi nights. Our busy new friends will need plenty of fast meals. Snacking and poorly prepared meals will quickly increase the country's obesity levels. Before they know it, more than half of Iraq's population will be overweight and more than 20 percent will be considered obese, just like us well-fed Americans.

Yes, America is the world's moral and cultural leader. We should take it upon ourselves to impose our obviously superior political and cultural standards on the rest of the world. Because we know what's best for everyone.

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His views do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.



**Joseph  
Bechard**  
Cultural  
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### Pulse brief

#### Graduate dance student presents concert

Innovative choreography will interface with text, video and creative costuming on Friday and Saturday, when graduate dance student Corrie Cowart presents her master's of fine arts concert, "Connections." Both performances will take place at 8 p.m. in the M. Frances Dougherty Dance Theatre at Gerlinger Annex.

The student dancers have been rehearsing since fall, and Cowart said the concert consists of six pieces, some of which were years in the making. The selections include "Thimbleberry Sketches," a dance video Cowart directed in the Columbia River Gorge. The footage includes performers exploring movement in waterfalls, on cliff edges and in fields.

"It's filmed in the place where I grew up, so it's kind of nostalgic to me," Cowart said.

Cowart will also perform in two duets with husband and fellow graduate student Tim Cowart, including "Embrace," a work created by Seattle choreographer Wade Madsen.

"What She Said," "Wardrobe Wars" and a solo created for Tim Cowart are also part of the program — each displaying Corrie Cowart's original choreography.

In addition to Corrie Cowart's and Madsen's works, dancers in Eugene choreographer Alito Alessi's humorous "Hoop Dance" will cavort and fly across the stage.

"I'm a pretty playful person," Corrie Cowart said. "So, overall, there's a pretty playful sense about the concert."

Tickets are \$10 general admission and \$5 for students and senior citizens, and are available at the door 30 minutes prior to the performance.

— Jacquelyn Lewis



Husband and wife graduate dance students Tim and Corrie Cowart will perform six pieces in "Connections," Corrie Cowart's master's of fine arts concert.

Mark McCambridge Emerald

## Music festival promotes 'Hope'

The School of Music hosts the Music Today Festival, an event that encourages peace and prosperity in tumultuous times

**Andrew Shipley**  
Freelance Reporter

The School of Music will showcase musical styles ranging from West Coast choral groups singing for peace to the mellow chamber jazz of vibraphone and marimba duo Senior Mouse during the 2003 Music Today Festival.

The event will be a weeklong series of performances by local, regional and international artists. The biennial festival is produced by the School of Music and organized by Professor Robert Kyr. Performances of student work will include the premieres of multiple graduate composers in Friday's Oregon Composer's Forum, which kicks off the festival at 8 p.m. in Beall Concert Hall, as well as performances throughout Saturday by the UO Chamber Choir and University Singers.

The festival's theme is "Hope in a Time of War," and will address the turbulent state of current events. In addition to introducing the diversity of modern music, the festival will highlight the role that mu-

sic can play in promoting peace through this diversity.

School of Music Publicity Director Scott Parkhurst said audiences should not be put off by the event's contemporary theme.

"People are nervous about coming to contemporary music events," Parkhurst said. However, he added those fears are unfounded.

"A lot of contemporary music now is wonderfully creative and listenable," Parkhurst said.

Contemporary music is an extremely diverse genre, often referring more to style than the actual composition of the pieces performed. For example, the internationally renowned Santa Fe Guitar Quartet will perform a set on Monday, including pieces by Béla Bartok and Bach.

The schedule also includes the premieres of more than 20 original pieces, most of which are composed by University students. Friday's forum will be an opportunity for graduate students to take pieces labored tirelessly over in bedrooms and quiet practice rooms and introduce them to a live audience for the first time. Graduate student Erik Ferguson, who has performed more a dozen pieces, said he is looking

forward to the festival.

"I am really excited," he said.

The seven nights of performances by artists from multiple nationalities and continents are brought together largely due to the personal investment of Kyr. He introduced the first Music Today Festival soon after arriving at the University more than a decade ago.

"I wanted to bring music of our time to the region," Kyr said. "The goal is to create a festival that will be as diverse as possible. We wanted to feature especially our student composers, and the 100th Monkey (an ensemble group performing on Tuesday) is entirely student run. We also have two groups from outside the region, both of which are internationally renowned."

Kyr said this year's festival also has special meaning due to the tumultuous state of international affairs. Kyr, who Parkhurst said has "long been an activist for peace" said he wants to emphasize the festival's theme of hope in a time of war.

"These performances are meant to inspire and uplift," Kyr said.

The event will include a special performance by local and San Francisco University choirs drawing on more than 700

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