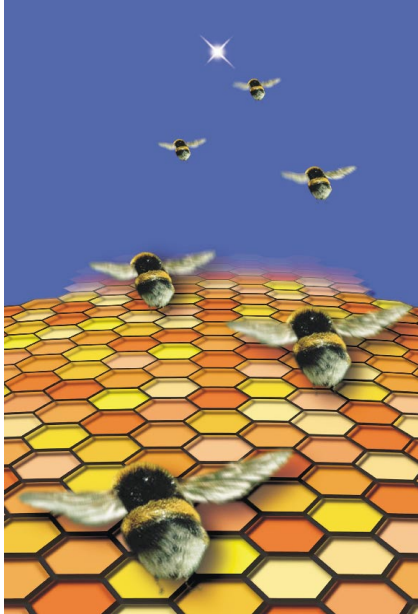




PLAYBILL FOR *HUMBLE BOY*, which is causing a buzz in London.

Calabi-Yau, which have all been inspired by the theory. "All these works really speak to the way these ideas about how the universe is structured strike a deep, resonant chord in the human spirit," says Greene. "Many, if not all of us, are searching in one way or another for the truth."

Humble Boy is sold out through the end of November. After that, it's expected to move to the center of London's theater district, the West End. Further details are available online at <http://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk>.

PAUL GUINNESSY

NEWS NOTES

Instrumentation fellowship. In what may be a first, a new fellowship at the University of California, Santa Cruz, is designed to support graduate work in astronomical instrument building.

In 1996, Sally Bachman Allen, reacting to an article in her local paper, sent a small sum to UCSC toward repairing the dome of the oldest telescope at Lick Observatory on Mt. Hamilton, some 30 kilometers east of San Jose. With her contribu-



LIICK OBSERVATORY/UCSC

tion, she included a note saying that her grandfather, Henry Bachmann, had been an instrument maker for the observatory in the early 20th century.

Enter university development officers. They did their homework, turning up, among other relics, a spectrograph built by Bachmann, photos, and even people who knew him or Allen's father, who grew up on the mountain. It wasn't hard to persuade Allen and her banker husband, C. Donald Allen Jr, to endow a chair for astronomical instrumentation. The Allens' \$350 000 gift includes an annual graduate fellowship. "I wanted to do something that would honor both my father and my grandfather, and hopefully attract graduate students who have talent but not necessarily funding," says Allen.

Lick director Joseph Miller is the first Bachmann Professor, and the first recipient of the chair's accompanying stipend is his student Andrew Sheinis, who has designed and built instruments for the Keck telescopes.

Astronomy award founded. Virginia Trimble is donating \$100 000 to fulfill a wish of the American Astronomical Society. The gift will establish the Joseph Weber Award for Astronomical Instrumentation, named in honor of Trimble's late husband, who was perhaps best known for his pioneering work on detectors for gravitational radiation. "Both astronomy and

physics tend not to recognize very well the absolutely essential people who can build things and make them work. . . . [Weber] unquestionably belonged to that small fraternity," says Trimble, an astronomer who splits her time between the University of California at Irvine and the University of Maryland, College Park. "Often the people who have used instruments to do the science get the recognition, and those who have built the hardware get overlooked," adds AAS executive officer Robert Milkey. "The recognition of those who have propelled astronomical observation through the development of innovative instrumentation is the goal of this award." The AAS has not yet determined the cash value of the annual award, for which the first winner will be announced next year.

New DTRA Director. Physicist Stephen Younger has left his position as senior associate laboratory director for national security at Los Alamos National Laboratory to become the new director of the Defense Threat Reduction Agency. DTRA is the agency charged with reducing the threat to the US from nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons of mass destruction. Younger was appointed by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld in early August and took over the leadership of DTRA on 1 September.

Younger, who holds a PhD in theoretical physics from the University of



Web Watch



<http://near.jhuapl.edu/ioc/20010731>

On 12 February, the NEAR spacecraft broke out of its orbit 5 km above the asteroid Eros to head on a collision course for the asteroid's surface. Throughout NEAR's descent, the spacecraft's Multi-Spectral Imager (MSI) took pictures of the approaching surface. The online movie **MSI Final Descent** captures this final phase of the NEAR mission.

<http://www.inquinamentoluminoso.it/dmsp>

Because of street lights and other forms of artificial light, about one fifth of Earth's population can't see the Milky Way unaided. The University of Padua's Pierantonio Cinzano and his collaborators reached this sobering conclusion by calculating, for any spot on the globe, the overhead brightness of the night sky due to artificial light. Their calculations, which are based on remotely sensed data, are available in the form of the online atlas **The Night Sky in the World**.



<http://hoaxbusters.ciac.org>

From the US Department of Energy's Computer Incident Advisory Center comes **Hoaxbusters**, a Web site devoted to combating the pernicious problem of hoax e-mail. Among the actual e-mails documented on the site is the chilling but false "Flesh Eating Bananas Hoax," which you can find under the Urban Myths category.



To suggest topics or sites for Web Watch, please e-mail us at ptwww@aip.org.

Compiled by CHARLES DAY