

# Los Angeles Times

## The Guide

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WITH THE KIDS

### 'You're Getting Warmer': A global warming musical for kids

By Brenda Rees  
Special to the Times

SOMETIMES, it takes a polar bear to make a musical work.

That's what director John-David Keller discovered when he commissioned playwright Richard Helleesen to write a new play for South Coast Repertory's Educational Touring Production.

"Our initial idea was a play about conserving energy, but then we started getting into global warming," says Keller. "We were debating what had more punch for kids -- but once Richard introduced the polar bear, well, things just took off."

Indeed, the arctic critter takes center stage in "You're Getting Warmer," a musical that describes, in toe-tapping terms, the reasons for, and the effects of, climate change to the SpongeBob set.

After the performances this Saturday at Orange County's Imagination Celebration (taking place at South Coast Rep), the production will hit the school circuit, playing to about 200 schools and an estimated 45,000 children. The production is also slated to play two shows a day at this summer's Orange County Fair in Costa Mesa.

In a nutshell, the play tells the story of a boy named Alex who discovers that Ursula, a smart and savvy polar bear, has taken refuge in his air-conditioned house because her home in the North Pole is too warm. Determined to have his house back in pre-bear order, Alex and Ursula set off to find out about global warming -- and ways people can use less energy and still be comfortable.

Along the way, Alex and Ursula learn about the greenhouse effect, alternative sources of energy and the differences between weather and climate. With a score of six songs from Michael Silversher -- including "Give Me Ice, Give Me Ice, Give Me Ice," sung by a hot and bothered Ursula -- the play strives to present complex science in easy-to-understand nuggets.

"The biggest challenge is to get the facts correct and yet not oversimplify and trivialize what they mean," says Helleesen. "Plus, you don't want to make everything appear hopeless and bleak."

In the end, boy and bear are at the North Pole, with Ursula showing the Alex the beauty of her home, and Alex resolving to use less energy.

"Kids today know this is a problem," says Keller, before citing numerous campaigns, books and magazines that deal with global warming. "We're presenting ways they can be empowered and take responsibility. We're giving them the chance to make a difference."

**'YOU'RE GETTING WARMER'**

**WHERE:** Nicolas Studio, South Coast Repertory, 655 Towne Center Drive, Costa Mesa

**WHEN:** 1 and 3 p.m. Sat.

**PRICE:** \$10

**INFO:** (714) 708-5555; [www.scr.org](http://www.scr.org)