

# activate

INDEPENDENT

STUDENT NEWSPAPER

## ARTS AND CULTURE

GARY GORDON  
REZA DE WET  
PLAYGROUND  
RMR

## FESTIVAL PULLOUT





by Lois Moodley

Garry Gordon's festival production "Lake... beneath the surface" is a intertextual response to the Reza de Wet production "On the Lake" and promises to be one of the highlights of this year's Standard Bank National Arts Festival. Both the productions are based on Chekov's *Seagull* but transcend the boundaries of this play, becoming complicated, yet satisfying theatre experiences. "Lake... beneath the surface" is choreographed by Gary Gordon and Juanita Finestone, and was co-scripted by Reza de Wet and Gary Gordon. The play takes the audience on a magical journey into the world of dream and fantasy.

"I've heard their prattling, laughing, crying ... oh and their tempers and sneezes. The strange thing though, is that they think no-one hears. But the

lake soaks it all in ... some even say it's magic... and moves along... and carries it all..." These are a few lines from this enchanting performance. Cast in the play are five extremely talented actors. They are Floyed de Vaal, Juanita Finestone, Gary Gordon, Helen Seaman and Acty Tang.

According to Prof Gordon "the lake is a magical lake and it is in fact the imagination of Anton Chekov - watch the characters drifting until they surface to the edges of the lake" "Lake... beneath the surface" responds to Reza de Wet's play on numerous levels, one of which is the male/female cast juxtaposing, and another being the use of exactly the same stage for the two productions. Chinese screens will be used, amongs other things, to suggest the effect of water, transforming the stage into a magical space where anything can hap-

pen.

Gary Gordon is head of the Rhodes Drama Department. He founded and is the artistic director of the First Physical Theater Company and has choreographed thirty woks for the company including five full-length dance plays. In 1989 he won the Standard Bank young artist award for dance, and in 1995 he won the FNB Vita choreographer of the year for "Shattered Windows" and many more. More recently however, he was awarded with the FNB Vita special award for choreography, the Rhodes University Vice-Chancellors award for distinguished teaching and the Eastern Cape premier's Award for Choreographic Excellence.

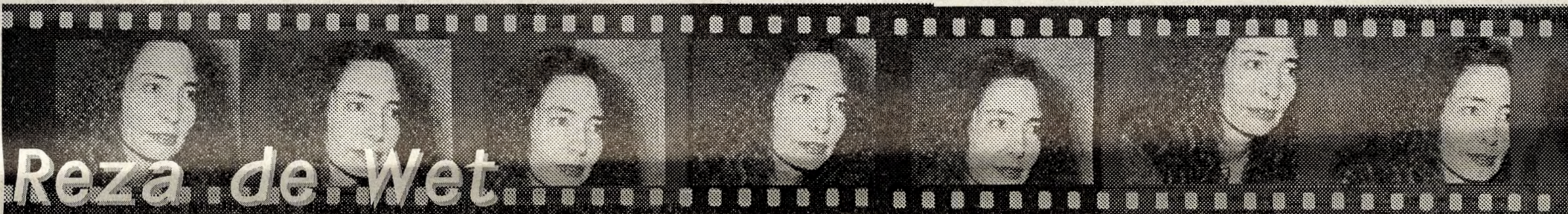
The First Physical Theatre Company is initiating five projects at this year's Festival. Included in the

pic courtesy First Physical Theatre Company

program is the award — winning "Bessie's Head" that was also scripted by de Wet. Also present will be a group of female performers from the Mimino Festival. Prof. Gordon explains that the First Physical Theatre is growing and that embracing other forms of dance is all part of the creative process of the company. This year will also see the launch of the First Physical Theatre CD-rom. With this they hope to illustrate how flexible the company can be.

When asked about the National Arts festival and the lack of sponsorship, Prof. Gordon replied that the festival is of great significance to the Arts and it would be a monumental loss if it ceased to exist. He went on to say that it would be a loss not only on a national scale but on an international scale as well.

# Still waters run deep



by Lara Buxbaum

Reza de Wet's plays are always looked forward to as one of the highlights of the Grahamstown Festival. One of the reasons is that we can proudly claim her as one of our own local talents, shining in the face of the invading "big city" talents. Reza is a lecturer at the Rhodes Drama Department, much liked by all, and extremely difficult to get hold of: On many occasions I was told I had just missed her, and she was least seen careening off somewhere in a big hat and yellow convertible. This could, however be a slight exaggeration on the part of the Drama Department secretaries, but nevertheless.

Reza's new play has aroused a great deal of interest, and this is the reason I was trying to get hold of her, and have had so many long conversations with her answering machine message. The play is in essence a female re-interpretation of Chekov's symbolist master-

piece "The Seagull." The play's protagonist is Nina, who Reza calls "the projected dream of the male character." In "On the Lake" this role is inverted. The play is aesthetically pleasing, taking the form of Nina's own dream. In "The Seagull" Nina is struggling to be an actor, and this play portrays her some time later, trying to transform her own experience. She finally succeeds in gaining control of her life as an artist, which in the Chekov version eludes her. She achieves this through the medium of the imagination.

I've neglected to mention the extreme stance Reza has taken by having an all female cast. "It's difficult to describe why I chose to have an all female cast. It gives it a kind of dreamy quality, a more feminine sensibility." The recurring water images, and in fact the whole idea of the lake, are also inspired Chekov inspired. Reza sees the lake as a magical element in "The Seagull". It is a metaphor for

the depth of the human experience hidden below the surface. It reflects people, places and lives. The plot revolves around Constantine's - Nina's long-time admirer - failed play, performed in the opening scenes of "The Seagull". After his death the play is staged in Nina's dream. Nina is actually conceiving the play, an independent, creative art form.

The two actresses recruited for this magical performance, Gretha Fox and Annelisa Weiland, are both trained in the art of mime, a fact vital for this physically demanding production. The set design is by Roux Engelbrecht. Not enough that this play is a feminist rework of Chekov, Gary Gordon has co-scripted with Reza a response to her play - using an all male cast. Sounds very interesting. Be sure to catch both these experimental pieces premiering at the Fest on June 28, 29, 30, and July the first.

pic courtesy First Physical Theatre Company

## Doing it for the kids during Festival

by Fiona Milligan

Education methods in South Africa are changing. Cultural and artistic aspects are slowly being faded out of Model C schools' curriculums and children may soon be starved of these vital educational components. Could this eventually cause arts and culture to become a dying sphere of life in our country?

The Grahamstown Children's Art Festival, growing in size and popularity each estival year, aims to excite South Africa's children about the rich variety of arts and culture available to them and inherent in them. Thriving in its eleventh year, the festival is based at St. Andrew's Preparatory School and attracts a growing number of children aged between 4 and 13.

Lin Andrew, coordinator of

the packed programme, has a personal aim for the festival of educating children from all backgrounds in arts and culture. She is kept busy all year in doing admin, advertising, bookings, phoning sponsors and overseeing a dedicated seventy-strong staff which includes many Rhodes students working as group leaders.

The glowing and smiling faces which Lin passionately describes are a result of the full arts experience provided for the children. Workshops, which are run by talented staff members from St. Andrews as well as trained arts professionals, ensure that the children leave with a finished product that they are proud of. Astoundingly professional — looking crafts include frames decorated with shells and pasta,

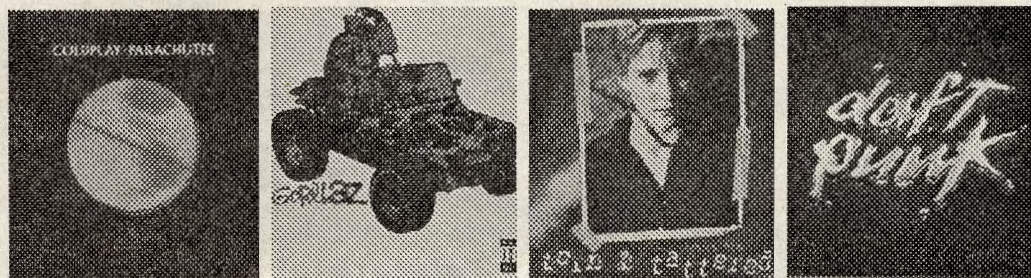
candles moulded into face shapes, beaded keyrings, and straw baskets, which are only a few examples of the stunning array of crafts produced.

Children are also escorted to several theatrical productions and are entertained at the school by dance and drama experts.

A new innovation this year is a tour to the Shamwari Game Reserve's cultural village which explores Xhosa, Zulu and Shona culture.

The childrens' festival's dedication and enthusiasm is clearly evident in the impeccable quality of the programme. It is definitely making a difference in many childrens' lives who return home, Lin says, excited to share their experiences with others.

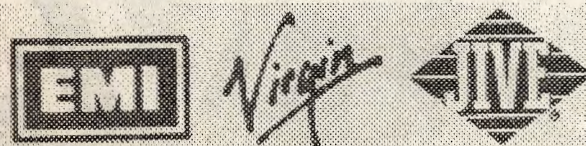
Viva arts and culture!



## Gimme, gimme, gimme what I want

If you are interested in writing and going to be at Festival this year, this is for you! All you need to do to win a CD, compliments of Virgin/ EMI, is write either a short story or journalistic report on your unique experience of Festival. E-mail your contributions to [christel@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:christel@tiscali.co.uk)

telledutoit@hotmail.com by 5 July and say which CD you would prefer: Gorillas, Henry Ate, Coldplay or Daft Punk. Best contributions stand a chance to win the selected CD of their choice. So get writing and send us your contributions!







# a state of mind Festival line up

RMR will be broadcasting live from the village green for the duration of festival, here's the festival breakdown.

**6-9am**  
The Breakfast Show Heavily news focussed. Up-to the minute Festival events, crossovers to ticket offices, monument officials, trading officers. Also showcases Festival comedy. Live comedy acts and pre-recorded soundbites from the previous evenings' interviews with comedians.

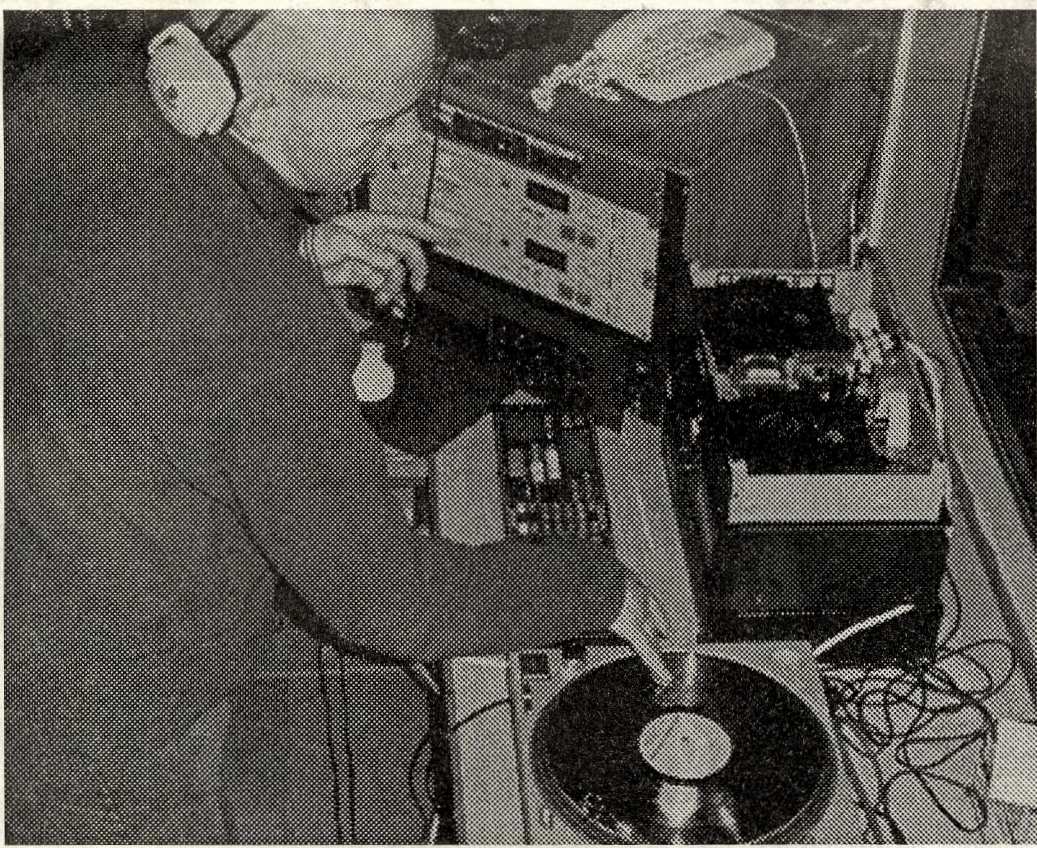
**9-12**  
Focusses on the Village Green. Reviews what is on offer stall-wise. Showcases Winter School events and Festival cinema. Interviews with lecturers (winterschool) and directors/actors (cinema)

**12-3pm**  
Highlights the main Festival. Showcases theatre and dance. Interviews, pre-recorded soundbites from performances causing high interest.

**3-6pm**  
Highlights the fringe Festival. Showcases the jazz Festival, and all live music events at the Festival. Features live interviews and performances from musicians and artists.

**6-9pm**  
The best of Festival nightlife. Includes crossovers to night venues, guest dj's mixing on air.

**9-12pm**  
Late night festival music show.



## Laughing it off at the Playground



Laugh it Off is in the process of putting on one of the most exciting and innovative events to ever hit the Grahamstown Festival. Called The PlayGround, this venue will play host to some of the best South African musicians, comedians and DJ's in the country.

About The Laugh It Off PlayGround:  
Laugh it Off's objective is to add a young, funky twist to the existing Festival atmosphere. To this end, a disused warehouse has been re-invented, revamped and renamed: The PlayGround.

Situated ideally in the heart of Grahamstown, the PlayGround will be the focus of good quality, well-priced diverse entertainment that will catapult the Festival into the 21st Century.

From June 28th - July 7th, Laugh It Off will play host to the following major events:

On Friday 29th June one of the most exciting HipHop DJ' in the country today, Ready D of Brassie Vannie Kaap (BVK) will be headlining the opening evening of the PlayGround. With Max Normal, another name synonymous with Scratching and Slamming Beats.

This evening will set the tone for an electric eclectic mix of hysterical comedy, internationally-acclaimed music and some of the greatest DJ's around.

Saturday 30th June sees the PlayGround play host to one of the most dynamic diverse and sought-after comedy line-ups ever to be appear on one bill: John Vlismas, Dave Levinsohn (the M-Web Guy), Bevan Cullinan (Norman E Campbell of "The Toasty Show") and Cokey Falko (M-Net's "Big City") are just some of the comedians com-

mitted to making this one of the most talked about events at this year's Festival.

On Wednesday 4th July, Cape Town's newest sensation Semisane, fresh from their sell-out Germany Tour, will ignite the night of original South African music at the PlayGround. With support band Flow, themselves making waves along the coast, Semisane will show their talent that had International Acts, Savage Garden and Westlife choosing them as support for their recent South Africa tours. The Springbok Nude Girls front men, Arno Carstens and Theo Craus will also be performing as Crous & Carstens, and will be the only chance to see these phenomenal artists in action.

Finally on Friday 6th July, International and National House DJ's, Christos and Da Vinci of "DJ's At Work" will send the crowds into overdrive with their infectious mix of cheeky uplifting and bass-pumping hard house. Both DJ's are known as two of the hardest-working DJ's in the business and it's easy to see why. With residences all over the country and overseas, the PlayGround is proud to bring this exclusive event to the Festival. And with Ibiza Legend Dino TopHat, arriving straight from his residency at the World's Clubbing Capital, fans of Progressive House will not be disappointed.

In addition to all of this year, 206 DJ's will provide the latest in two-step and UK Garage well into the early hours of the morning.

Add to this the eclectic mix of fire-eaters, jugglers and performance artists Grahamstown usually attracts, you have the ingredients for an unforgettable Festival!

## The wonder of words

A section of the Grahamstown festival that is probably less well known is the Word Festival, running this year for the third time as a subdivision of the Winter School.

The Word Festival aims to expose the energy behind the creative forces of Arts, Crafts and Culture, and activities range from poetry readings to book launches, as well as CD and book sales. There is also a Readers' and Writers' café where you can meet up with your favorite poet or artist over a cup of coffee or a beer. Artists

featured at this year's festival include Marguerite Poland, author of Three Rivers, and Arthur Maimane, author of Sophiatown: Legend and Reality. Word Festival extends further than only literature though with speakers ranging from topics as diverse as CD Rom Launces 9 (from Firt Physical theatre) to dance-incamera productions and a very exiting multi-art performance of "Die HA!Man" by Francios le Roux.

An exiting sidebar to the Word Festival is KOOK!, the Afrikaans literary contribution.

Whereas the Word Festival runs throughout the Festival, KOOK! is a once-off event where local and national Afrikaans artists are featured in an intimate environment. Apart from everything else though, KOOK! has the major drawing card of offering free wine!

So when you get tired of the constant partying at festival and feel the need for some intellectual stimulation, treat yourself to some chill-out time at the Word Festival. After all, "It is the world of words, which creates the world of things."





# Culture Vulture

Christelle du Toit, Acting Arts & Culture Editor

## For the cinemagraphically inclined

Here's a little test. Which one of the following movies/films did you prefer?: a) Dude where's my car? or, b) All about my mother. If you're asking yourself whether a film such as the Oscar winning Pedro Almadovar picture "All about my mother" even exists, then the Standard Bank National Arts Film Festival probably isn't for you.

This year's film festival includes a score of pictures hailing from Europe, South-Africa, the Netherlands, America and even Australia. One thing you won't find here though (except for the odd exception) is your typical Hollywood-style movie. This is deep stuff, with most off the films being shown falling into that lesser known "art" category. The only "commercial" films that will be shown includes the mediocre thriller "The Cell" (with Jennifer Lopez and Vince Vaughn), and also premieres of "The Heartbreakers" (with Sigourney Weaver and Jennifer Love-Hewitt) and finally the new Kevin Costner film "Three Thousand Miles to Graceland".

Looking at what you really should see: there is a screening of "The Exorcist: The Director's Cut", William Friedkin's exorcise (excuse the pun) in horror, and still hailed as the scariest film of all time. Re-released last year it still made a ton of money at the box-office, showing just how popular this film really is. Other highlights of the festival include "Requiem for a Dream", Darren Oronofski's Oscar nominated film which parallels the lives of four people in search of a better life, including Ellen Burstyn who got an Oscar nomination for her portrayal of a woman addicted to drugs. Also look out for "Doberman", a violent French thriller about a ruthless gang and a cop who wants to track them down, and featuring some of the best filmed action scenes in recent memory.

There are also numerous all-time classics being shown including "Alphaville", "La Dolce Vita" and "The Passion of Joan Arc" to name but a few. Then there are the two Oriental films, "Hero" and "Wing Chun", which will be shown based on the response that "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon"

received from western audiences. Couple this with numerous South-African films as well as an exhibition of the films of South-African born director Ian Kerkhof, and you know the festival will offer you an insight into filmmaking you never even knew existed.

And this is not all. There will also be screenings of various films by director Lars von Trier — "Breaking the Waves", "Dancer in the Dark" — who uses the "Dogma" concept to make his films. According to Dogma rules a filmmaker can't use lightning, editing or even a soundtrack for his films, which inevitable stretches the talents of a filmmaker. Expect to see some interesting works here.

It looks like it's going to be a great festival for the film buff or ardent film enthusiast. If you're more of a Freddie Prince Jr. type person then don't even bother, except if you have realised your mistakes and you're trying to correct them. For those of you lucky enough to make it, prepare for some serious film going.



## On the fringe...

After two years' absence from live performance at the Standard Bank National Arts Festival, the First Physical Theatre Company is making a substantial comeback this year. The production of Reza de Wet's new play, "On The Lake", and Gary Gordon and Juanita Finestone's physical theatre response, "Lake ... beneath the surface", both with premiere's on Thursday 28 June, is just the start!

On Tuesday 3 July, New Voices 2001 - Ground Clues, opens at the City Hall. The company's New Voices programme has a history of first-time presentations of young, cutting edge choreographers who began their professional

careers on this platform. PJ Sabbagha and Sarah Tudge were two of the first young choreographers to stage New Voices work - they now head up their own companies, Johannesburg's Forgotten Angle Theatre Collaborative and Cape Town's Heel Arts Collective respectively.

On Wednesday 4 July, the company ventures in to new territory with the presentation of the first Mmino Fest - a celebration of traditional Xhosa music. Featuring the internationally acclaimed Ngqoko Women's Ensemble, Mmino Fest promises to provide an atmosphere of hauntingly beautiful sounds under the trees at ILAM (International Library of African

Music).

Another new venture forms part of the company's Technology and Merchandise programme: the launch of Physical Intelligence - the CD-Rom - will take place at WordFest on Thursday 5 July. The first in a two part series, this multi-media journey into the repertoire of First Physical promises to be an exciting, stimulating and informative resource for artists, educators, learners and the general public.

The CD-Rom includes over twenty minutes of video clips, hundreds of visual images, imaginative animations, inspiring descriptions of company works, background information, sound clips and the original previously

unpublished scripts that have been written for the company over the years including texts by Reza de Wet, Andrew Buckland and Gary Gordon.

And finally on Friday 6 July, also at WordFest, the Bessie's Head video which premiered last year will have one big-screen showing. One of the first dance-in-camera productions produced in South Africa, this adaptation of the award-winning danceplay of the same name was conceived and choreographed by Gary Gordon, directed by veteran television director, Allen Auld, and scripted by Reza de Wet.

Visit [www.ru.ac.za/firstphysical](http://www.ru.ac.za/firstphysical) for further information or e-mail [First.Physical@ru.ac.za](mailto:First.Physical@ru.ac.za).

Wel, dit blyk dat die Afrikaanse eksperiment in Activate hoogs geslaagd was - baie dankie aan almal wat baie positiewe terugvoer gegee het oor my kolom in die vorige uitgawe van Activate, dit gee my hoop om te sien dat daar toe inderdaad soveel Afrikaanssprekendes op kampus is as wat ek gedink het!

Hierdie kwartaal het heeltamam te vinnig verbygevlug na my sin - ek kan nie glo dis weer eksamentyd nie! Mens sou hoop dat ek na drie jaar by Rhodes gewoon sou wees aan die ongelooflike spanning wat elke keer voor eksamentyd op my gelaai word, maar nee, ek leer steeds nie. Ten minste het ons die Kunstefees om na uit te sien!

In hierdie uitgawe het ons probeer om julle 'n idee te gee van wat interessant gaan wees by hierdie jaar se Fees, maar hou ingedagte dat ons beperkte spasie het en ongelukkig nie alles hier kon weergee nie. Fringe is elke jaar 'n deel van Kunstefees wat nie gemis moet word nie, en ongelukkig kon ons nie veel publiseer daaroor nie synde dat die inligting nog nie beskikbaar was nie. Ondersteun egter asseblief hierdie kunstenaars aangesien dit altyd 'n opdraend stryd is om genoeg kaartjieverkope te kry om te oorleef.

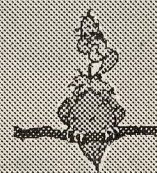
Aan die van julle wat nog probeer besluit of julle die Fees moet bywoon al dan nie - **DOEN DIT!** Nie net is vanjaar die laaste jaar wat Standard Bank die Fees ten volle borg nie, maar die 'n belewenis

wat almal op een of ander stadium moet meemaak. Dis ongelooflik om te sien hoe daar stadig maar seker nuwe lewe in moeë

Grahamstad ingeblaas word met mense van reg oor die wêreld wat saamkom om die Kunste te vier. Clichés soos om op die Village Green rond to loop, Keiser Kartoffles te koop wat drup van olie, en skelm 'n Hei Voetsiek! te lees, is wat van hierdie kunstefees 'n Kunstefees maak.

Die kunste is Suid Afrika is egter in 'n kritiese posisie en benodig soveel ondersteuning moontlik. Die logiesste voorbeelde om hier te gebruik is natuurlik die NSO en die Staatsteater wat gesluit het, maar finansiële probleme het al alle lae van die kunstewereld geïnfilteer. Gary Gordon (wie se Kunstefees toeneelstuk ons in hierdie uitgawe bespeel) het my onlangs vertel dat die Nasionale Kuns Raad gekniehalter word deur die feit dat die regering nie meer geld beskikbaar stel vir die ondersteuning op langer termyn van onafhanklike uitvoerende kuns maatskappye nie. Daar is, om die waarheid te sê, 'n e-mail wat op die oomblik die ronde doen hieroor, so as jy dit dalk ontvang, voeg asseblief jou stem by die koor van bekommerde kuns ondersteuners. Of dit aan die einde van die dag egter 'n effek gaan hê, is natuurlik 'n ander vraag...

Geniet dus hierdie spesiale Kuns En Kultuur Kunstefees uitgawe en alle sterkte met die eksamens - sien julle op die Village Green!



## Poetry Corner

Thank you very much to everyone who has sent us their poetry - your input has been greatly appreciated! Unfortunately, we can only publish one poem per edition, but all submitted poetry will be kept on file for possible publication at a later date. So hang in there and keep writing - we would love to hear from you! All poetry can be sent to Arts and Culture, c/o Activate, or it can be mailed to christelldutoit@hotmail.com

## Venerable Voice

I felt safe to fly once through a tumult of insecurity. But the ground has friends and the ground has friends.

How vulnerable Eagles babe, how insidious Mother Earth! Hilarious: our ridiculous trust, as we continue living in mirth.

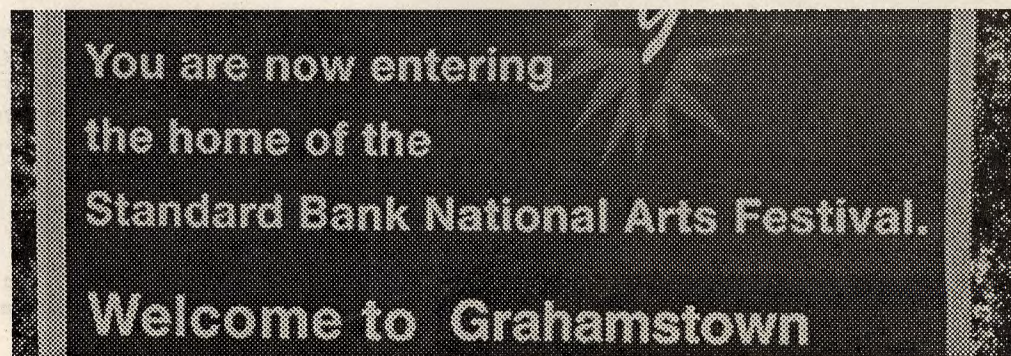
Dismiss pride, eliminate condescendence,

for there's always space in the fire: ashes to ashes mire to mire.

What elevated melancholy comes across thy face? Thou art profoundly joyous, yet sadness infiltrates.

Find me seasons on sale so I have liberty of choice: the road I walk on - the road of my voice.

Marli Burger



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