

RHODES UNIVERSITY
Where leaders learn

The Rhodes University Community Newsletter

Rhodos

Festival Edition

June 2011



A
collaboration
of excellence

Wreckage

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Rhodos: Festival Edition

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A Taste for the macabre

Drama Masters student Debbie Robertson is making her debut as a director with psychological thriller/drama *Taste*, which is part of the Student Theatre programme. Her work is enigmatically described in the Festival programme: "Like any stylish fine dining, the main course is far more succulent than the starter, and for dessert? You never know what might be cooking."



Inspired by thoughts around food in our society, Robertson first thought of the idea for the play while writing down some ideas in her journal during her Honours year. She then found some interesting links between what people consider a delicacy and others taboo. "This made me think of how we all have a different moral compass, yet how we often indulge in sex, food, wine or even in the negative way we treat people. So the overriding question I asked myself was: how much of people's true selves will be revealed if society's rules or boundaries were taken away?"

The play was devised and workshopped with the entire cast of seven, using the Peter Greenaway film *The Cook, the Wife, the Thief and her Lover* as well as Roald Dahl's short stories *Taste* and *Poison* as inspirational springboards. It centres around a group of friends who go away for the weekend and "play games with each other, but by their own rules". She said this reveals what often lies hidden behind the reasons for honesty, revenge, sex and betrayal.

Robertson said it had been challenging yet satisfying that they all worked on the text and characters together. "It has allowed the actors to really engage with their characters, because the character was devised by the actor from the very beginning." This was done by listening to music, writing character sketches, brainstorming and improvisations. "This does mean, however, that there are often changes to the script, but everyone is really understanding of that," she added.

In one exercise the cast mimed to music and in another they asked each other questions 'in character'. "Therefore what emerges becomes the character they instinctively want to portray. Some of the dynamics between the different characters evolved from this excavation," said Robertson.

Transcending space and pushing limitations

"Transmit, transform and transport" is how the media release describes *inTranceit*. And these words encapsulate exactly what these three performances are all about. Three Masters students: Gavin Krastin (Choreography), Jen Schneeberger (Contemporary Performance) and Nadine Joseph (Choreography) are presenting some innovative site-specific physical theatre pieces on the Fringe this year.

Krastin's piece is entitled *sub-* and will be performed in over ten spaces at Nombulelo Secondary School. The impulse driving the piece sprang from "feeling disenchanted with being sedentary, sitting in a darkened theatre, where the audience doesn't always engage, like watching TV". In *sub-* the audience is involved in the progression of the dramatic action. Because some of the events occur simultaneously, the narrative is not linear - "a de-hierarchisation" - better described as "moving from side to side" rather than from beginning to end.

Schneeberger chose Jean Anouilh's translation of *Antigone* to present a series of installations and vocal performances

through which two guides lead the audience. Employing the techniques of Meredith Monk, she describes it as "exploring an aural landscape, revealing the semiotic that exists in language". As she emphasises, this is not simple dialogue, "it's where words come apart, where the human voice growls, chatters and screams as easily as it speaks".

Joseph has entitled her performance *dis.clo.sure* as it deals with the loss of women's voices in a post apocalyptic world. "It tells the story of a woman who will become a prisoner of war if no one does anything to help her." Exploring issues around rape and sexual violence, Joseph employed the Stanislavski technique of memory recall to draw on experiences from her own life as well as from the cast's lives.

For the first time this year, the pieces will be examined as part of the practical research component of the Masters degree, with the dissertation component forming part of the research framework. Joseph says it has been important to them to showcase what they have been producing as a Department. "For all of us this is a crystallisation of what we've been doing over the years," adds Schneeberger.

Joseph agrees: "By opening up the performance in a different way, it allows other voices to be heard. We're evoking change, pushing ourselves."

"It's not just theatre, it's an experience," Schneeberger concludes.



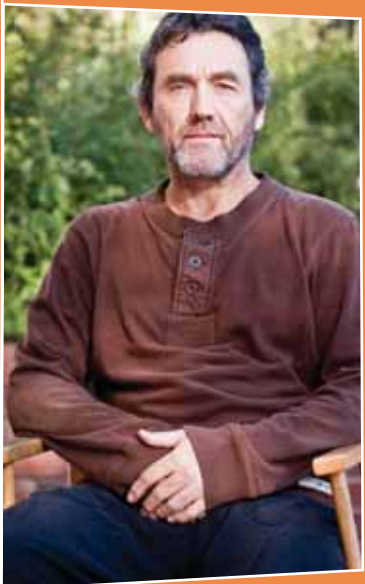
Rhodes students showcase talent at National Arts Festival



Fine Art Head of Department,
Professor Dominic Thorburn



Music and Musicology
Head of Department,
Dr Jeff Brukman



Drama Head of Department,
Professor Andrew Buckland

The National Arts Festival is Grahamstown's great mid-year extravaganza - an unmatched opportunity for artists to showcase their talents. Rhodes University plays a central role in the *Fest*, as it is affectionately known, with the Departments of Drama, Music and Fine Art spearheading the University's contribution. This year, that contribution will be larger than ever before.

Prof Andrew Buckland, 2010 *Fleur de Cap* nominee and Head of the Drama Department, has seen numerous Festivals, and could be forgiven for feeling slightly jaded. This year, however, he is full of enthusiasm over an innovation that will, see the Drama Masters by Coursework students presenting their practical pieces on the Fringe. In line with a world-wide shift towards Practice-as-Research - a paradigm which views creative performance as a valid research output - the emphasis has been shifted towards the practical section of the MA course and the presentation of the practical has moved to the middle of the second year of study. This, says Buckland, allows students to substantially improve their production values, and gives external examiners the opportunity to view the productions with an audience present.

Joseph and Jen Schneeberger present their Masters pieces under the title *inTranceit*, which is described in the Festival programme as "an evocative collection of site-specific work". Schneeberger's take on contemporary performance sees her using the text of *Antigone* to explore vocal performance; choreographers Krastin and Joseph present *sub-* and *dis.clo.sure* respectively. With the theme of Transmit, Transform and Transport linking the productions, audiences will gather at the Rhodes Theatre and be transported to the various venues as part of the performance. "It's not your typical fare," says Buckland.

Rhodes University is also presenting *Taste* on the Student Theatre programme. Directed by first year Masters student Deborah Robertson, it is described as "thrilling, comic and delicious."

The Festival is an organisational hub for the Drama Department, acting as a crucible for Drama students and, in addition, allowing them to observe a great variety of live theatre not otherwise available in Grahamstown. In addition, Buckland describes the advantages to current students of viewing alumni on stage, and realising that the honing of one's craft is

not something that ends with graduation.

Dr Jeffrey Brukman, Head of the Music Department, explains that as the National Arts Festival falls in University vacation time, it is generally only postgraduate students who are able to perform. This year, BMus fourth year student Mia Pistorius is doing a series of five solo recitals and piano duo Jacque du Plessis (MMus student) and Andrew Duncan (BMus fourth year) present *Four Hands*. The venue for both these shows is the Beethoven Room in the Music Department (Beethoven House). Acclaimed pianist and Senior Lecturer in the Music Department, Catherine Foxcroft, will be performing with the Grahamstown Sextet on the Arena programme.

The Masters in Fine Arts (MFA) students are also in the spotlight for Festival 2011. The Fine Arts Department is holding its inaugural postgraduate exhibition, which is entitled *Wet Paint* in an allusion to the largely exploratory nature of the mid-degree works on display. Head of Department, Prof Dominic Thorburn, says MFA students are invited to showcase an aspect of their work-in-progress towards their final presentation. It is hoped that this exhibition will serve as a mid-degree touchstone for students engaged in the two-year long course, he says. Thorburn and Senior Lecturer Maureen de Jager will co-curate the exhibition, the venue for which is the Alumni Gallery in the Albany Museum, and MFA students will take turns to act as guides to the artworks.

The annual Student Exhibition, which showcases undergraduate work in the airy space of the Fine Arts Department building on Somerset Street, will again comprise high calibre work in a variety of media, both traditional and contemporary. This Exhibition has built up a considerable following, and is a valuable marketing tool for the Rhodes School of Fine Art, both during the Main Festival and the Schools Festival that follows it.



Jen Schneeberger - *Antigone*



Theatre in motion

Tshini Kwedini premieres at Fest



Rhodes alumnus Richard Antrobus, who created and performed in the critically acclaimed *Stilted* at last year's Festival, will be premiering his new show *Tshini Kwedini* this year.

Antrobus, who completed his BA (Hons) in Drama at Rhodes University in 2004, said he is excited about being involved in the directing role, alongside another Rhodes alumnus, Tristan Jacobs.

"Although I've been in a lot of performances, I'm new to directing. It's always a bigger job than you

anticipate, because it involves so many areas," he said. Co-director Jacobs, who graduated from Rhodes with a BA (Hons) in Drama in 2009, has been continuously involved in Rhodes-affiliated productions since and while he has also never directed before either, he said he's up for the challenge. Being an experienced performer, Jacobs said he "knows what it's like to be a performer being directed, so in my capacity as co-director now I try and imagine switching the roles around."

Describing the play as a "simple and enjoyable, heart-warming tale of overcoming obstacles and finding one's destiny", Antrobus said the show is filled with humour and celebration. Using members of his community circus skills development initiative, *OddBody Theatre Collaborative*, Antrobus said the show provides a visual spectacle with circus elements of song, dance, clowning, music, stilts, juggling, acrobatics, and other circus tricks. "The show is a family event that has something in it for everyone," he said.

The two describe Grahamstown as a good training base for aspiring theatre-makers as it provides access to venues, and various sources of expertise. Antrobus and Jacobs say they are learning to deal with the complex dynamics involved in theatre production. "Theatre contributes hugely to a cultural festival, which otherwise risks the danger of falling into the trap of simply becoming a bazaar. It is intangible and watching it is an experience that you can only take away with you in your hearts and memories. It is food for the soul," said Antrobus.

Antrobus will also be involved in a further two productions involving old Rhodians: *Beelzebub*, directed by Rhodes alumna Brink Scholtz, and *3 Acts of Love*, directed by Bauke Snyman, which features Rhodes alumni Sheena Stannard and Sarah Seymour.

Flicker

Celebrated Rhodes alumna and award-winning physical theatre practitioner and choreographer Athena Mazarakis returns to the National Arts Festival this year.

Directed once again by Gerard Bester, Mazarakis and Craig Morris play a couple desperately clinging to the way of life they know in *Flicker*, described as an "edgy physical theatre work." Mazarakis' trademark exploration of the interaction between the human body and the digital arts is taken a step further with the electronic presence of theatre great Andrew Buckland woven into the production. The Festival programme describes *Flicker* as combining "innovative digital art with a compelling physical language to tell a surreal tale of great urgency".

Within the world created by the actors, time is running out, and the protagonists' smallest actions impact visibly on the world around them, accelerating its "literal dissolving and disappearance beneath their feet".

Buckland explains the apparent contradiction of having a theatrical presence, while not being actually present, as speaking to the idea of performance. The show, he says, "is concerned with the act of performance, the performer's attitude to performance and the relationship the actors have with both themselves and the audience."

Mazarakis and Morris, who are rehearsing in Johannesburg, have incorporated Buckland into the production in the form of digital inserts, which he has been recording over the past month in response to their questions sent to him via the internet.

Buckland calls Mazarakis "an extraordinary artiste". She won the Silver 2010 Standard Bank Ovation Award in the Physical Theatre category for *e/ev(i)ate 2* and, along with the team of Morris and Bester, was responsible for the award-winning production *Attachments No 1-7*.

Flicker "takes the idea that every little thing you do really does make a difference", a message becoming ever more urgent as the threats to our planet increase in severity with every day that goes by.

The Butcher Brothers

Festival favourite, and 2010 Standard Bank Ovation winner, *The Butcher Brothers* returns to Grahamstown this year, with five performances at The Hangar. It's an example of the close ties and support network that Rhodes University gives its alumni. Many of the cast and crew - including Stage Manager Wesley Deintjie (Rhodes 2003) - are old Rhodians, while director Sylvaine Strike studied in Cape Town.

Set in a family butchery in 1950's South Africa, Jaques de Silva (Rhodes 2004) and Mongi Mthombeni (Rhodes 1999) play eponymous characters; Mthombeni filling the role of a prematurely retired ballroom dancer with a dependence on alcohol, and De Silva playing Boy, the loyal worker who in fact keeps the butchery going. Incredibly for a play which relies on the emotional currency of the players, both actors are masked throughout, a feat which de Silva and Mthombeni, both of whom have previously worked with Eastern Cape Drama Company Ubom!, manage with consummate skill. The comfortable, well-worn routines that exist between the two are shattered with the unexpected arrival of a baby, and their lives take on what has been described as a "strange and rather dark route."

The mask-work was first conceived of and brought to the stage by Strike and Assistant Director Daniel Buckland (Rhodes 2003), and is presented in association with the Dark Laugh Theatre Company.

In a review by Robyn Sassen in the Artslink.co.za publication, the choreographic and sound-based syncopations are highly praised, with the interweaving of tango music and the sound effects for the knives and meat chunks being described by her as "beautiful, lending the work the kind of spontaneous madness evoked by William Kentridge in his animated dance work with kitchen appurtenances."

Sassen sums up *The Butcher Boys* by saying "A fresh-faced play with no words, much blood and quite a lot of heart (both) warms and darkens the cockles."

A collaboration of excellence



What started as whispers in the Drama Department corridors between two major companies' artistic directors has now finally materialised. Ubom! Eastern Cape Drama Company and First Physical Theatre Company will collaborate for the first time during the 2011 National Arts Festival.

"There is great excitement all round. Both companies are well known for their excellence in producing thrilling works of theatre, yet primarily in separate genres," said Ms Sarah Roberson, Ubom! Projects and Marketing Manager. Commenting on behalf of both companies she said they now had a chance to "merge our skills and feed off each other".

"It's an exciting learning process, and chance for thoughtful exchange; both in conceptual work and in the physical presentation of the production."

More good news for the collaboration is that the production was accepted to premiere on the Arena platform and both companies were elated. "It's a real honour to already be accepted on the Arena in only its second year running," said Roberson.

"The National Arts Festival promotes it as a bridge between the Fringe and Main programmes, and so we're confident that with the exposure and prestige the Arena will garner, acceptance to the Main programme won't be far off. This year, though, we're just really excited to bring such an excellent production to this platform and prove the Eastern Cape matches up with the 'big-city' companies."

After a successful National Arts Festival in 2010, the two companies are looking forward to once again electrifying their audiences. Ubom! Eastern Cape Drama Company and First Physical Theatre each scooped an inaugural Standard Bank Ovation Award last year. Festinos can expect more breathtaking production from the collaboration.

This year, the two companies are bringing festinos *Wreckage*. It is described as hilarious, deeply moving and "the meeting of worlds that unsettles, stuns, and delights".

Wreckage cast member and Drama Head of Department, Prof Andrew Buckland, is an experienced, immensely talented and versatile performer. He has been involved in theatre since the 1980s.

Roberson said the directing and choreographic team, Brink Scholtz and Athina Vahla, had created a theatrical world that "draws audience members into an experience they won't easily forget".

"Sensational singing, daring dance, captivating performances, an impressive set design by Barati Montshiwa, and lighting design by Guy Nelson, combining to present two centuries of Eastern Cape (hi)stories promises this production will be an epic, enlivening event," she added.

Wreckage was inspired by the stories of shipwrecks along the Eastern Cape coastline during the 18th and 19th centuries. The Eastern Cape coastline is the last resting place of many ships from Europe that brought settlers, soldiers, merchants, fortune seekers and missionaries to the Eastern Cape shores, said Prof Buckland. "Many of their crew and passengers cast ashore in very unfamiliar, often hostile environments. The encounters between these castaways and the indigenous people of the Eastern Cape have spawned stories, fables, myths and 'histories' for hundreds of years and provide a rich source for theatrical adventure," added Buckland.

The title was chosen to symbolise "the age of wrecks and the evocative imagery which comes from thinking about total destruction". "More specifically, the impetus came from *The Sunburnt Queen* by author Hazel Crampton, leading to the idea of the shipwreck, which became a gateway to explore on a more universal level the notion of collision and clashing, and what that means to us all," he added.

Ubom! Eastern Cape Drama Company and First Physical Theatre Company are both associated with Rhodes University. Their main aim is to give back to the Grahamstown community and surrounding areas through arts.

Finding a single language

Writer/director Brink Scholtz has been exceedingly busy since she left Grahamstown at the end of last year.

Scholtz studied Psychology and Drama at Rhodes and spent five years working for Ubom! Eastern Cape Drama Company, initially as a performer and then as resident director, after which she left Grahamstown to become an independent director.

But she is back with three productions at the 2011 National Arts Festival: *Beelzebub* (with mime artist and legendary stiltwalker Richard Antrobus); *Loss and Having* with Nicola Elliot and Sonja Smit (in which she also performs), and *Wreckage* with acclaimed visual and performance artist, Athina Valha.

"A common element in all these pieces is that I have collaborated with very interesting choreographers," says Scholtz. "I deliberately feel like I don't want to play it safe. It's quite scary, quite thrilling."

It was a very busy 2010, as a winner of the *Writing Beyond the Fringe* programme, she travelled to Belgium and the Netherlands on an exchange tour to attend the Passaporta Literature Festival. She then spent some time in Cape Town directing two plays: *Die Sendeling* and *Spyt*. Her mother, the novelist Ingrid Winterbach, wrote the latter. Both plays were staged at the KKNK, Aardklop Festival and Stellenbosch University's Woordfees earlier this year. Scholtz says it was wonderful working with her mother. "She's not into fixed meaning, so she was quite delighted by new possibilities for staging and interpretation."

The script for *Wreckage* was devised by Brink, choreographer Athina Valha and the cast, including Andrew Buckland, who also performs in the play. "It was tricky to negotiate our way through the story as the performers speak different languages, both linguistically and culturally and in terms of their craft. Because the play deals with cultural collision - the European survivors of shipwrecks along the Eastern Cape coast - it was interesting to recognise these parallels within ourselves."

As a director she likes to spend time getting to know the cast and how they tell stories, almost like learning to speak a different language. "I am the one scripting the narrative, constantly using the stories of the cast, drawing on the way they tell stories." She says working with different choreographers was a bit like bringing two different worlds together. "It was tricky because the fields overlap but the methodologies are different. It's not a question of writing the script and then choreographing bits of it. It's about finding a single language," she says.

With the physical theatre work *Loss and Having*, Scholtz teamed up with two of her close friends, Nicola Elliott and Sonja Smit in a double bill of what she describes as the "archival, museum pieces". Smit's piece, entitled *How Sonja Smit explains soccer to a dead dog* is "a very odd response to the Fifa Soccer World Cup" and was performed at Spier Contemporary last year. The Dance Umbrella 2011 commissioned Elliott's *Proximity Loss and Having*, where it was warmly received. Scholtz co-directed both pieces and will be performing in *Loss and Having*.

For *Beelzebub*, Scholtz was the writer and director along with jazz artist and choreographer Levern Botha. Featuring Richard Antrobus (whose background is dance and mime) and Noluvuyo Shwempe, who trained with Janet Buckland's Amaphiko dance group, again the focus was on bringing different stories together as the script was strongly devised by the cast.

come from two very text-based productions (*Spyt* and *Die Sendeling*) it was a kind of opening up to finding the language in a different way. The first way in is always language - I'm quite verbal by nature. So it was trying to find how language can become a physical thing too, how it can become an image - the immediacy of action and image," she concludes.



On Cue

What would the National Arts Festival be without *Cue* newspaper, available from a friendly vendor every morning and helping thousands of festival-goers plan their day? Now in its 25th year, *Cue* is an institution, and the longest running independent festival newspaper in the world.

Produced from the dynamic Africa Media Matrix Building, on the Rhodes University campus, *Cue* is, however, no longer simply a newspaper. The undertaking has grown from humble beginnings to become CueMedia, under the chairmanship of Brian Garman. CueMedia incorporates not only the familiar tabloid-style paper but also CueOnline, established as new media began to make its presence felt in South Africa, and which draws in and creates a virtual home for CueTV, CueRadio, and CuePix. In fact, the Africa Media Matrix transforms for the duration of the Arts Festival into a fully fledged news agency, staffed predominantly by the Journalism and Media Studies students. This provides an unparalleled opportunity for them to gain hands-on experience.

Traversing the world of theatre and music

music

Aerial artist, composer and choreographer are just three ways to describe Shaun Acker. While studying towards his Bachelor of Music degree and Masters in Drama at Rhodes University, Acker explored many intriguing artistic avenues. He won the Sanlam Prize for Best Actor for his portrayal of Mr O in *Die Bannelinge* and performed at the Circus Hippodrome at Gold Reef City, where he won the award for Most Promising Circus Artist in 2004.

At this year's National Arts Festival, he will feature as "a ghost musician" in the cabaret clown noir spectacle *Kardiávale*, directed by Emilie Starke. Presented by a conspiracy of clowns -- a production company that won a Standard Bank Ovation Award in 2010 -- the play also features fellow Rhodes Drama alumnus, Rob Murray.

"Since *Kardiávale* is a cabaret, my role is to accompany the action on stage, be it ambient or song accompaniment. Between me and another musician, Natalie Mason, we perform a combination of instruments, vocals and props. I perform piano, keyboard, saxophone, clarinet, percussion and props while Natalie performs viola, piano and percussion. We also chip in as the voices of a few offstage characters," says Acker.

Lately, he has been playing the saxophone with Windworx, a non-profit orchestra comprised of over 30 wind and brass instruments. Theatre-wise, he has collaborated with City Varsity's *The Domain* (to be seen on the student theatre programme) as well as with Brink Scholtz and Ingrid Winterbach for *Spyt*, which was performed at the Stellenbosch University Woordfees and KKNK earlier this year.

As a composer, Acker has created music for many productions, including Reza de Wet's musical play, *Heathcliff Goes Home*. This year he composed for *made in order to fly*, a physical theatre piece choreographed by Nicola Elliott. He describes the process as "creating a nondescript soundscape which draws on, and amalgamates, subtle electronica, industrial sound, environmental sound, and human breath".

Acker learnt the solo trapeze while he and his family were touring with Boswell-Wilkie and Brian's Circus and has trained with world-renowned aerialists Tsogt Bayasgalan and Stanley Bower. He says he is delighted to see no less than three aerial performances on the Festival programme and hopes that this will help in opening a more permanent platform for contemporary aerial dance performance in South Africa.

Excited to be returning to Grahamstown for the Festival, he says the six years he spent with the Rhodes Drama department taught him "how to recognise excellence in innovative contemporary trends" which makes him "rarely satisfied with anything I see- and I'm not shy about saying that." He says the most valuable thing he has learnt is that if you are creating or performing work, is to rigorously question and pull apart your production. "Productions that are the most arresting are ones where attention has been paid to the barely perceptible performance details. That's what delineates intelligent theatre from mindless entertainment," he concludes.



Five Men

Loraine Beaton, an Honours student in the Rhodes Drama Department, will be featuring *Five Men*, a show designed to challenge our conceptions of love and relationships.

"I wanted to make something that deals with romantic relationships and how we get involved in them so recklessly," she said.

Beaton, who holds an undergraduate degree in fine art from Pretoria University and has a background in English and Philosophy, said the play gives a preview into "how guys think" and the perpetual struggle to find the 'ONE'. "We all want to be with the right one, and for it never to end, but yet we get involved in relationships we know we shouldn't and we know we're going to get damaged. This play looks at those complexities," she said.

Beaton moved to Rhodes at the beginning of the year after signing up for the Honours degree in Drama, and said she has found the experience of directing theatre under supervision to be challenging and invigorating. Having written *Five Men* two years ago without any formal theatrical training, she said looking back she feels she could have done some things differently, but feels this is all part of the challenge of maturing as an artist.

With her background in Fine Art, Philosophy and English, she said she is better equipped to produce quality work. "My background has taught me how to think like an artist, and theatre is the way I'm doing it. The point is I want to make good theatre," she said.



Mail and Guardian 200 Young South Africans 2011 - Drama and Music Department Alumni



Wayne Thornley - Director

Thornley never imagined his first involvement in a major motion picture would be as the director of a full-length animated movie. But sure enough, in 2012, when *Zambezia* (Triggerfish Studios) hits movie theatres, Thornley will get to see his name lead hundreds of producers, animators and CGI characters on the credit roll.

It's a big deal for someone who fell into animation after seven years of slogging it out as an actor and director on live-action films. Luckily, 33-year-old Thornley is in love with the freedom of the animation process. "I want wind, I get wind," he says. "I want a talking elephant, I get a talking elephant. It's amazing."

adventure story is racing against two other CGI animated features currently in production to be the first to come out of South Africa. Overseas, the film has been eliciting gasps from production studios when they learn how small Thornley's budget was. All thanks, he says, to the incredible family of producers and animators he has been working with. — Eric Axelrod.

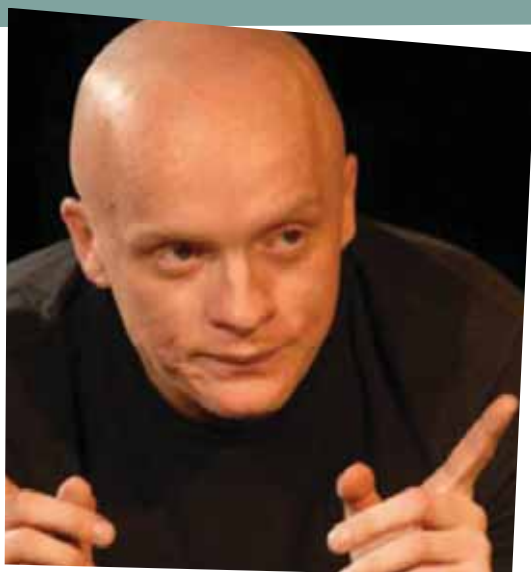
Rob van Vuuren - Comedian, actor, writer, director

Who says men can't multitask? Not Rob van Vuuren. The blonde-moustached godfather of all things zef may be better known as Corne's sidekick Twakkie, but Van Vuuren isn't just a comedian. He's also an actor, playwright, director ... and a ballroom dancer.

Since he graduated with Honours in Drama from Rhodes University in 1997 Van Vuuren has been a regular on the nation's TV screens, not only as Twakkie in SABC 2's *The Most Amazing Show*, but, as a presenter of SA's *Got Talent* and *Crazy Games*. In 2008 he donned top hat and tails to win the celebrity dance competition *Strictly Come Dancing*. This year he bagged the inaugural Comic's Choice breakthrough act award.

But Van Vuuren believes the best is yet to come, otherwise "there would be no reason to keep going".

His most valuable lesson in life? He channels his inner Twakkie and answers: "Don't be kak!" — Aphiwe Deklerk.



James Cairns - Writer, director, performer

"When you need to make a strategic decision, ask yourself: 'what would China do?'"

It's pointless taking James Cairns seriously. He's old-school comedy; the kind that turns a stepladder, some clever "toons" and a few lighting effects into an alternative reality filled with characters you want to either hug or hit. Either way, you have to care because his genius is always tangible, even if his props aren't.

On stage Cairns is a physical theatre practitioner par excellence, morphing between characters like a man possessed. Offstage this writer, director, television actor and comedian is as skilled and sharp as a Swiss Army knife. His plays, *Rat* and *Brother Number*, received standing ovations; his one-man tours de force, *The Sitting Man* and *Dirt*, beat Andrew Buckland to win the 2010 Naledi award for Best Performance in a One-Person Show. That's the league he's in. And he's only just beginning to climb the imaginary ladder. — Cat Pritchard.

Bongani Ndodana-Breen

Bongani Ndodana-Breen shatters any conception that the world of classical music is a stuffy, Eurocentric anomaly in modern South Africa.

In 1998 he became the youngest classical composer to win a *Standard Bank Young Artist Award* for Music. He is also the only composer from Africa to have been featured in a concert comprised entirely of his own works in the prestigious Composer Portraits series at the Miller Theatre in New York.

Like many South African classical artists Ndodana-Breen has found more fame and fortune abroad than at home, but his latest work, *Winnie: The Opera*, which premiered in South Africa in April, looks set to change that.

Ndodana-Breen is inspired by his heritage, and traditional Xhosa music feeds into much of what he does as a contemporary classical musician. He hopes to continue in this vein, writing more "operas and other works that continue to give a South African voice in classical music". — Lisa van Wyk.



alumni

Source: Mail and Guardian newspaper

For Future Generations



Rhodes University's International Library of African Music (ILAM), which has the largest archive of African music in sub-Saharan Africa, will feature prominently on the "must do" list of many National Arts Festival music enthusiasts.

For Future Generations, an exhibition showcasing ILAM founder Hugh Tracey's work in recording and documenting the indigenous music of sub-Saharan Africa, will be on display for the duration of the Festival at the Albany History Museum, where it opened very successfully during the recent SciFest 2011.

This exhibition represents the outreach and education component of a Rand Merchant Bank Expressions Programme that funded ILAM's two-year cataloguing and digitising project. The project's aim is to bring the heritage of African music, painstakingly preserved by Hugh Tracey, to a wider audience.

In the opening ceremony of the exhibition, speakers extolled Hugh Tracey's consummate skill as a researcher, and praised both his dedication and that of his son, Emeritus Professor Andrew Tracey, to collecting and preserving African music. *For Future Generations* displays a selection of 20 African instruments from the Tracey collection, held by ILAM, as well as showcasing Hugh Tracey's print publications and audio recordings. There is video footage of "mine-dancing", Shona music and story-telling and Chopi xylophone orchestras. The footage also includes a 1939 Hugh Tracey film of Zulu bow music projected onto a big screen. Andrew Tracey's film from the 1970's, *System of the Mbira* is also shown. Display cabinets feature artefacts from field research while photographs taken during field excursions bring Hugh Tracey's work to vibrant life.

A handsome exhibit catalogue features a highly scientific and never-before published 1932 report on the music of the Shona written by Hugh Tracey for the Carnegie Foundation. Also included in the catalogue is a 20-item CD featuring a field recording of each instrument displayed in the exhibition. *For Future Generations* will be at the Albany History Museum until 30 July 2011.

Festinos will be able to take advantage of two scheduled 'walkabouts' at the Museum on the first and last Sundays of the Festival. ILAM is also holding a free Sundowner concert at the Monument from 5pm - 6pm on Sunday July 3, and free daily lunch-hour concerts from 1pm - 2pm at the ILAM Amphitheatre throughout the Festival. All this is being done in collaboration with the South African Post Office, which is launching a series of 10 commemorative stamps featuring African instruments at the Sundowner Concert on July 3.

ILAM will also host early evening performances of *A Kalimba Encantadora*, directed by Andrew Tracey and featuring Decio Gioielli from Brazil, Geoffrey and Andrew Tracey, Chris Carver and Elijah Madiba from African Musical Instruments and ILAM. It is described on the National Arts Festival Programme as "an hour of musical indulgence".



Fest showcases Rhodes Fine Art students' work

Rhodes University Fine Art Masters students will, for the first time, exhibit their work at the National Arts Festival.

Billed in the programme as a "dynamic and insightful mid-stream 'show and tell'" the exhibition entitled *Wet Paint* will be in the Rhodes Alumni Gallery (Albany Museum) and consists of photographs, graphics, sculpture, drawing, paintings installation and digital arts.

Wet Paint will run concurrently with the undergraduates' exhibition in the Rhodes School of Art Gallery, which has become an annual feature on the Festival programme.

This is a great opportunity for both postgraduate and undergraduate students to showcase their work to festinos and the local community.

"*Wet Paint* is a show of Masters of Fine Art (MFA) work-in-progress," says masters student, Mark Wilby. "So while there is some obligation to participate, the exhibition is a great opportunity to test current, developing material before a critical audience. This is, of course, intimidating, but it's also very useful to get a sense of public response at this stage," he adds. "More often than not, the work one sees in a gallery represents an intended punctuation, an exclamation mark perhaps, or a neat summation of ideas."

Wilby will be exhibiting pieces of work that are more like "excerpts" from an ongoing narrative, "one that begins elsewhere, and might continue, somehow, onward while taking a momentary turn through the gallery".



Constrained? | Oil on canvas
Lindi Lombard, third year student.

A little water clears us of this deed | Mixed Media and plastic bags
Francois Knoetze, third year student.



showcase

Wet paint logo used to advertise the postgraduate exhibition.



fine
art

Fine Art Masters student,
Mark Farmer
| Oil on canvas

In my work, I focus on adolescent teens at Kingswood College High School, where I am currently employed as a student assistant. Regulations in regard to uniforms and in regard to the arrangement of each learner's belongings insist on the sublimation/sacrificing of an individual identity in favour of an institutional one. Thus tiny departures from those norms, slight transgressions, might be understood as small rebellions which the boarder stages against disciplinary structures and the conformity demanded of him or her. I am particularly interested in these transgressions. I have produced a series of paintings where the head is cropped and my focus is on the tie as an item of clothing used to suggest containment, bodily discipline and conformity but against which the individual wearer seems sometimes to stage his own small rebellion by tying the garment in an unconventional way or perhaps leaving it untied.

The undergraduate exhibition includes the work of Lindi Lombard. She explains that her painting of a dog entitled *Constrained?* had come about "through a process of doing other small works" during which she recognised that she was "painting and dealing with many forms of constraints" during her third-year project.

"My dog at this time had a form of cancer and was licking herself and causing her condition to worsen. For her protection we placed a cone on her, which prevented her from licking the cancerous growth. The image of our dog at the time with the cone placed on her head was to me a very powerful one that embodied the idea of constraints, which then moved me to paint the image of our dog."

"The message behind the painting *Constrained?* is to question and to become aware of constraints that are placed on us by other people to protect us - but that



"Rather like picking up a book in the middle. And that's not to say they're unfinished, just that they are not an end in themselves. I find this useful because it introduces dialogue and unpredictability into the vocabulary of the work," explained Wilby.

also limits us in the process - or the constraints we place on ourselves to protect others," added Lombard.

Lombard is extremely proud and excited to have her work exhibited during the National Arts Festival. "It's the first time my work has been exhibited during Festival, so it really means a lot to me personally. It also means getting your work out there for people to see and that is always exciting," she said.

Head of the Fine Art Department, Professor Dominic Thorburn said the Department had a "long history of affording students the opportunity to acquire skills in professional practice and curation while also gaining valuable exposure for their work within a national arena".

Dixie's art moves abroad

Ms Christine Dixie, practicing artist and a lecturer in the Rhodes University Department of Fine Art, recently scored a dramatic coup for both herself and South African art in general when a number of her artworks were acquired by the National Museum of African Art in Washington DC.

One of the 19 museums collectively known as the Smithsonian Institution, the National Museum of African Art contains the largest publicly held collection of contemporary African art in the United States.

Among the artworks bought by the Smithsonian Institute is her installation *The Binding*, exhibited previously at the National Arts Festival here in Grahamstown and at the AOP (Art on Paper) Gallery in Braamfontein, Johannesburg. *The Binding* is Dixie's clear-eyed yet wistful look into the liminal space occupied by a boy child growing out of the realm of the mother and entering that of the father. The theme of sacrifice is dominant with, she explains, the Old Testament story of Isaac and Abraham being much in her mind as she created the piece. Prints of her then six-year-old son are shown at life size; he is asleep, bar the central picture, where his eyes are open and look directly at the viewer.

The child is mirrored on a series of white beds, covered by an altar cloth. These are placed below each etched and calligraphed print and separated by ephemeral curtains hung from the ceiling. A 'shadow' image of the child appears on each table, created from tightly interlaced toy soldiers, carefully coated in lead by Dixie and cut and glued together into the shape of the sleeping child above. The use of soldiers, some of whom lost body parts in the artistic process, refers again to the sacrifice required to enter into the masculine world. In the story of Isaac and Abraham, Abraham was asked to sacrifice his son to God's will; he binds the boy and is about to carry out this command when God intervenes. In this way, both Isaac and Abraham are identified, through sacrifice, as belonging to their patrilineal line; the message is that it is through sacrifice that a boy child becomes a man, joining his father's world.

The Smithsonian Institute has stated that selected works by Dixie will be on display in the National Museum of African Art's 2013 exhibition, and in their exhibition and publication *Earth Matters: Land as Material and Metaphor in the Arts of Africa*. These works include *Hide, Even in the Long Descent I-V* and, possibly, *Unravel*. Space and design permitting, plans are underway for including *The Binding*, and possibly one or two of her other works, in a planned 2014 exhibition and concurrent publication on African women artists.



An artistic balancing act

talent

Award-winning artist Nyaniso

Lindi's brilliant work will be on display at this year's National Arts Festival - and yet it will not be immediately obvious.

In fact, the support staff member in the Fine Arts Department has worked long hours to frame many of the works on display in the Fine Art undergraduate's exhibition.

And this somehow is the story of Lindi's life - an uneasy balancing act between heady fame as winner of the Gerald Sekoto Award for most promising artist and the reality of working as a studio attendant cleaning up after students and helping them to produce their work.

It's not that he resents helping other young artists - in fact he loves imparting skills and having others benefit from his experience - but it does make it harder for people to look up to him and see him as an artist role model.

His greatest wish is that Grahamstown's township children should be inspired and assisted by the National Arts Festival to practice art and develop their talents within their own environment and on an ongoing basis. Because, he says, "art is what saved me (from a life of despair and crime)". He is grateful to the people who mentored and encouraged him and says more of this is needed.

He points out that Nombulelo Secondary School - where he spent his high school days - is still the only school in Grahamstown East to offer Art as a subject and even there the facilities have not been upgraded or developed for many years.

On the positive side, Lindi has had some wonderful opportunities to develop as an artist. He was first invited to come and work at Rhodes by Prof Dominic Thorburn who wanted him to assist the Master Printer Tim Foulds to create graphic editions of the works of Egazini artists. He later also made a significant contribution to the NAF exhibition by

well-known artist Vusi Khumalo. During his stint working at Egazini, Lindi was in contact with the late artist Mark Hipper, and together they "discovered" the work of a young man named Zola Toyi who suffered from autism but was producing work of "great emotional vitality". Lindi managed to win Toyi's trust and later helped him to mount the exhibition entitled *Ancestral Voices* at the Rhodes Press and Print Research Unit in 2007.

And all this time, Lindi also constantly refined his own techniques of colour relief work (from wood cuts) and etching, at times morphing the boundaries between traditional representations such as still life and life drawings.



The year 2010 proved to be something of a roller-coaster ride for Lindi. Returning from an inspiring and enjoyable three-month stay at the Cite Internationale des Arts in Paris -- part of his prize as winner of the Gerald Sekoto Award -- he plunged straight into preparing for his final studio practical, as well as trying to complete the outstanding credits for his Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) degree, and holding down his job as a studio attendant.

Already a tall order, the challenge was exacerbated by a severe mugging incident during which he was stabbed and beaten up. This meant an enforced break from his activities while in the midst of producing a serious body of work. He still managed to mount the exhibition but it cost him in terms of finishing off his credits -- which he now aims to do by the end of 2011.

Apart from his sought-after frames, Lindi will not be exhibiting at the National Arts Festival this year as his solo exhibition is currently on tour around South Africa and Zimbabwe. However, he will take some time out from his day job to go and look at the exhibitions of other artists and find inspiration wherever it might present itself - "even sometimes in the kitsch pieces being sold by street vendors, if you look a little deeper".

There is a sense that the 35-year old Lindi is still a man on a mission. "My work didn't end with winning an award. I have to constantly produce good work."



Sacred Spaces

Grahamstown-based artist Mathias Chirombo has been hard at work preparing a uniquely inspiring body of work for the National Arts Festival this year.



Having grown up in a Shona-speaking family in Harare, where a strong belief in the spirit world and creating harmony between people and the natural world is revered, this rich spiritual culture has become the driving force behind his work.

Sacred Spaces, the exhibition can be viewed at the Albany Museum's Green Gallery for the duration of the Festival. Chirombo graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Art at Rhodes University in 2010 and this is his third National Arts Festival exhibition. His work has been bought by private collectors in South Africa, the United Kingdom and Australia-where he received a scholarship from the LBW trust for his four-year degree, which was also partially funded by a Rhodes scholarship.

"My paintings depict the places where *vadzimu* [a Shona term for the 'spirits of the dead' or 'ancestors'] exist," says Chirombo.

As he specifies in his portfolio: "It is in this space of knowing yet not knowing, of mystery and of understanding what we cannot always explain, that sacredness exists." Struggling to find the words to adequately describe the intricate process of communicating with the spirit ancestors, he tells a story about one practice through which his parents ask for guidance. "Because I grew up in a family where such rituals are performed, my painting has become a continuation of that, of paying homage to the spirits, acknowledging their presence," he says.

His body of work for this exhibition is created through two processes depicting different types of landscapes -- one based on realism and one in which he intuitively depicts a sacred landscape and the presence of spirit ancestors, using himself as a catalyst. "I can't force the issue, I paint a landscape but that's all I know, I am guided," he says. The figures in the paintings are reminiscent of human or animal forms yet diaphanous, making their shape recognisable yet unknown. Chirombo emphasises that it is pertinent that the spirits are within a landscape as "they are linked to nature and animals. They are like totems. To be in harmony with those sacred spaces is respecting nature."

"There are two tiers to my work: How what I paint is relevant to my own life and how people find their own resonance or meanings in my work," he says. "I want to show people how powerful ancestral spirits and mediums are and how they are present in our lives. They see everything, every single person, every decision you make. It opens up the door for you and people close to you. I try to let it out, let it speak for itself."

He likens it to rock paintings and how we don't always understand the mysteries of what is depicted in them. Yet people of all beliefs can sense that element of the unknown, the mystical. "I get a shock at how, when I'm thinking about something but set it aside, it comes through in my painting. I am so grateful for the ability to ask for guidance through my painting. People have been touched, it affects them deeply sometimes, some have even cried. A painting changes someone's life if it has relevance to their life. This is how I can make a contribution."

Mathias Chirombo, Fine Art graduate, will be exhibiting his work at the National Arts Festival.



The story of a song

The Language We Cry In is a contemporary dance piece that draws on universal themes using a unique combination of Grahamstown talent. Under the auspices of Ubom! East Cape Drama Company, the piece is choreographed by Rhodes Drama student Sifiso Sikhakhane and features the Kingswood College Concert Band and teenage dancers from the Amaphiko Township Dance Project.

Sikhakhane says he was inspired by an amazing story portrayed in a documentary called *The Language You Cry In*, which he watched while studying Ethnomusicology in 2008. The film featured his lecturer, Cynthia Schmidt, and related the extraordinary history of a song that originated among the rice cutters of Sierra Leone. Many generations later, the same song was being sung on another continent, as an African-American lullaby. Schmidt was on the team -- along with Joseph Opala from Sierra Leone's Fourah Bay College -- who traced the origins of the song, finding that it was actually a dirge (a song sung at burials) that had survived through slavery.

In terms of creating the narrative for the piece, Sikhakhane decided from the beginning to "allow the kids to take ownership of their work" so both he and Kingswood College's Stephen Holder, who conducts the orchestra, gave the musicians and dancers tools to explore and express what they believe the story is about.

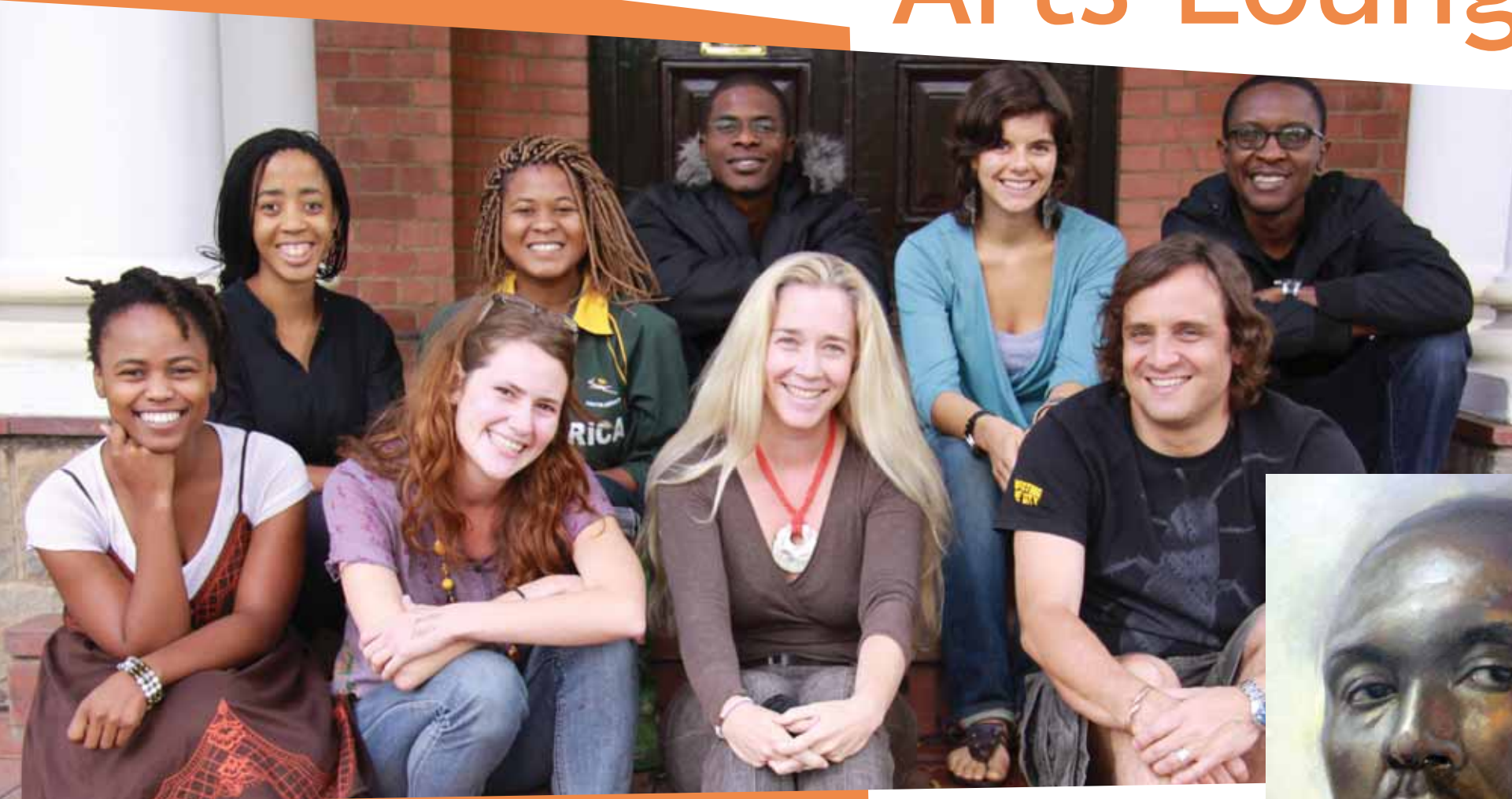
Sikhakhane choreographed the dance beforehand but let the dancers rehearse while the band improvised. "It was great to give the kids that freedom, to play with ideas," says Sikhakhane. He was so touched by the story of the song that it made him think about culture, memory and identity. "I believe that if you can speak another language, you can live in another culture. When we cry over the dead, we speak in our mother tongue but even if you don't speak that particular language, you can understand it. This is how language is part of your identity," Sikhakhane says.

"Every song we sing has a meaning in terms of our personal history as well as the history of the people who are singing and have sung the song. Memory is entirely intangible, it is a gift you cannot touch," says Sikhakhane.

Sikhakhane hopes that by watching the dance, the audience will question their own roots, as this is not merely a story about slavery, it affects us all. It made him ponder how two cultures -- such as the African slaves and American colonists -- saw each other and how both cultures impacted on one another "without just naming an oppressor".

space

Neurons spark in the Arts Lounge



In an innovative collaboration between the Fine Art and Drama Departments, the new Arts Lounge at 17a Somerset Street is set to be an unmissable experience for those Festival-goers who truly appreciate the chance to both view and discuss art in all its myriad forms.

The Lounge is the brainchild of Ruth Simbao, Associate Professor of Art History and Visual Culture at Rhodes University. Through her dedication to breaking down the boundaries between branches of the Humanities, Prof Simbao has created a venture that is set to shake up the experience of festinos and to initiate conversations that will carry on long after the last Festival posters are removed and Grahamstown has returned to its usual sedate pace.

The Arts Lounge is made possible by an infusion of funds from the Mellon Foundation and the National Arts Festival, and is hosted by the Rhodes University Fine Art Mellon Focus Area: *Visual and Performing Arts of Africa* (ViPAA).

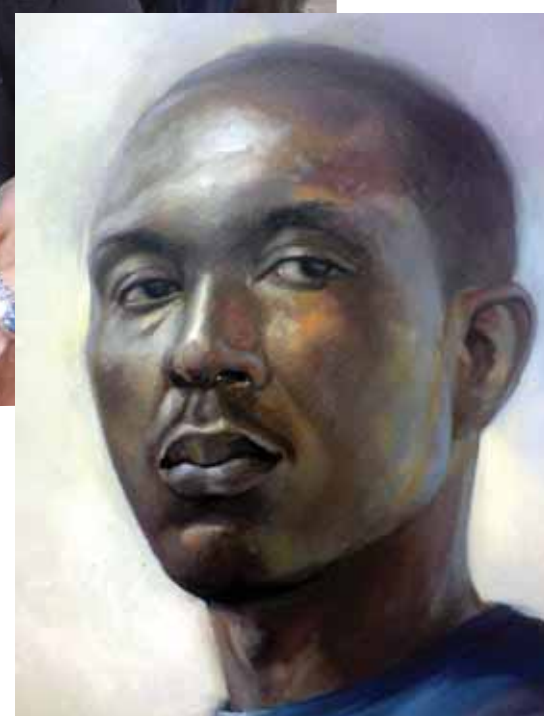
The research in which ViPAA is engaged is themed *The Audacity of Place - Geopolitics and the Arts of Africa*, and the team Prof Simbao has gathered together consists of both artists and art historians -- all with a keen interest in the complex relationship that exists between place and identity. The individual research carried out by ViPAA team members comes together in ways which subvert the traditional Euro-centric view of African art and, instead, look to develop a more nuanced and relevant discourse and vocabulary with which to approach it.

Prof Simbao is a widely acknowledged authority on the arts of Africa and has undertaken extensive research on performance in relation to cultural festivals in Zambia. Her current research interests incorporate site-specificity, diaspora and xenophobia. Other ViPAA members include Zimbabwean visual and performance artist Gerald Machona, known for the use of Zim dollars in his artworks, and Nomusa Makhubu, a Lecturer in Fine Art and PhD student focusing on Nollywood.

Dotun Makun, a current ViPAA MFA student from Nigeria, will take part in a panel discussion on negotiating 'strangeness' and xenophobia in contemporary spaces alongside ViPAA member Rachel Baasch, artist Maurice Mbikayi, Dr James Gambiza from Environmental Science, Dr Sam Naidu from the English Department, and PhD student in Fine Art, Biggie Samwanda.

*Front l to r: Nomusa Makhubu, Rachel Baasch, Ruth Simbao, Paul Cooper
Middle l to r: Lerato Bereng, Zama Nsele, Annemi Conradie, Dotun Makun
Back: Gerald Machona*

Dotun Makun, self portrait



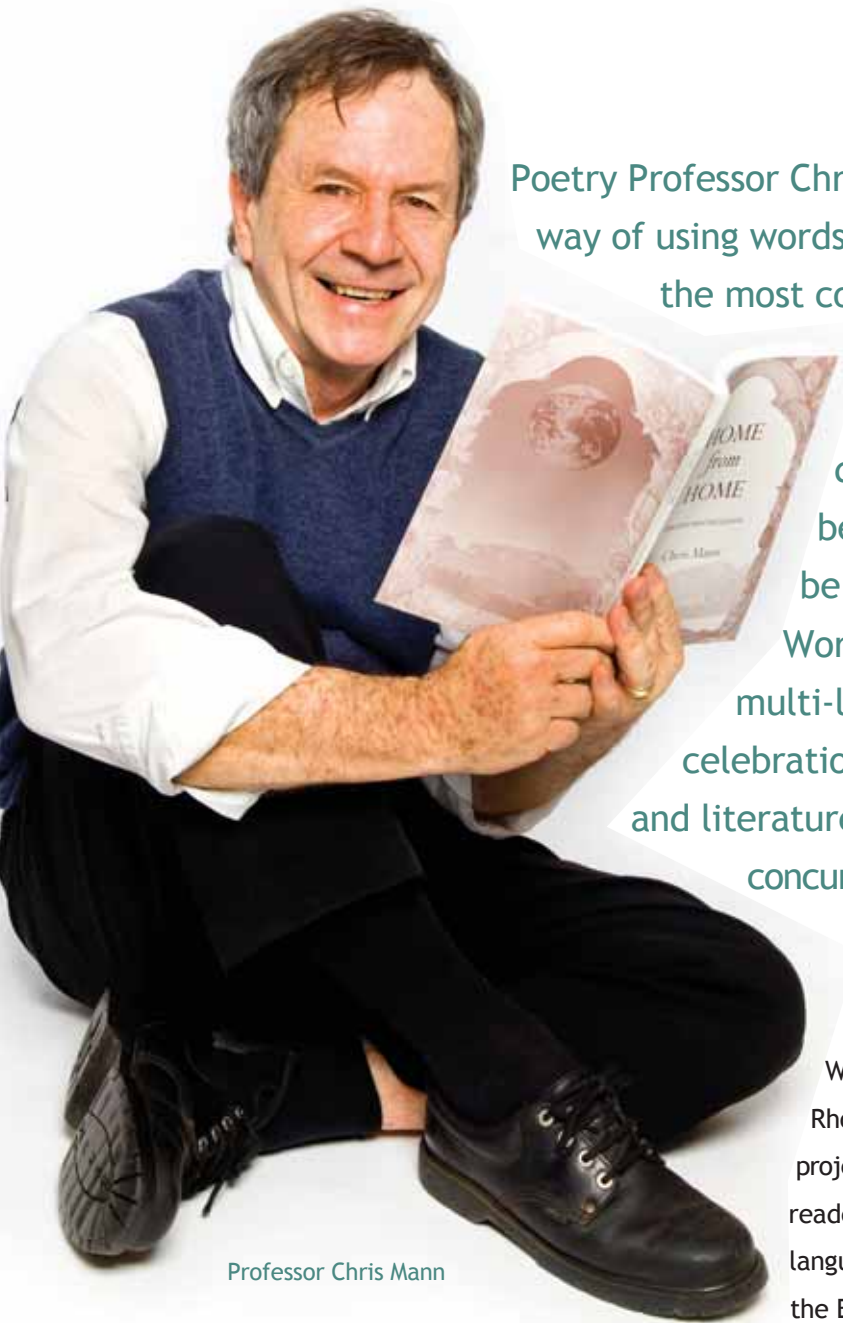
Mbikayi trained in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and on July 9 will treat Festival-goers to a contemporary performance on horseback in which he, swathed in bandages, aims to evoke the vulnerable situation in which incomers from other African countries find themselves in South Africa. Particularly pertinent in view of the recent renewal of xenophobic attacks in the Limpopo area, this piece of street theatre promises to be a Festival highlight.

Two particular events illustrate the collaborative and cross-disciplinary nature of this project. On June 30, a poetry and music performance will see Anton Krueger from the Drama Department reading a poem accompanied by Machona's hauntingly original music compositions. On July 8, *LesDem* draws together performers Gavin Krastin and Madele Vermaak from the Drama Department with Rat Western and Sonja Smit from Fine Art. Fine Arts lecturer Christine Dixie will also be presenting a screening of her installation *The Binding*, recently purchased by the Smithsonian Museum for African Arts in Washington DC. Other ViPAA members, Eben Lochner, Zama Nsele, Paul Cooper, Lerato Bereng and Annemi Conradie are involved in various performances and panel discussions. Distinguished guests include Mandie van der Spuy, Michelle Constant, Nandipha Mntambo, Serge Nitegeka and Jay Pather. Eastern Cape artists will also make their mark. Look out for discussions by Vusi Khumalo and Meshack Masuka, as well as a skin suspension in the ViPAA garden by tattoo artist John Wayne Stevens.

The Arts Lounge will open each afternoon with a performance vignette curated by Athina Vahla, lecturer in the Rhodes University Drama Department. Each item on the programme promises to spark the neurons and engage the senses of those ensconced on the Lounge's sofas. A variety of comestibles and tea, coffee and gluhwein will also be available to ensure festinos' physical appetites are not neglected.

For more info on the Arts Lounge schedule see www.research-africa-arts.com.

Wordfest - a South African celebration of literacy and development



Professor Chris Mann

Poetry Professor Chris Mann has a way of using words to make even the most complex issues tangible, accessible and digestible. Who better then to be in charge of Wordfest, the multi-lingual celebration of language and literature that runs concurrently with the National Arts Festival?

Wordfest serves as a Rhodes outreach project, especially for the readers, writers and language practitioners of the Eastern Cape.

Prof Mann is professor of Poetry in the Institute for the Study of English in Africa (ISEA), from where Wordfest is organised and administered. The ISEA works closely with other Rhodes University departments such as the School of Languages, School of English and the Journalism Department. Planning starts in November, with the work gaining in intensity as the Festival draws closer.

Wordfest 2011 will see the launch of over 30 books in five different languages: English, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Setswana and Sesotho, by both new and established authors. This includes the launch of veteran journalist David Beresford's book and includes a lecture by Beresford entitled *Truth is Stranger than Fiction: Shattering exposés of Vorster, Zuma & others*.

A collection of African poems that has been translated into Mandarin by a scholar from the School of Languages, with the help of Prof Russell Kaschula, will also be launched.

A new Wordfest platform has been created for singer-songwriters in South Africa. They will perform free of charge next to the Wordfest restaurant in Eden Grove during lunchtime. The purpose of this is to encourage original lyrics that come out of the South African context.

The developmental aspect of Wordfest has always been very important to Prof Mann, who spent a number of years working in rural-based NGOs. To this end he has built a relationship with the Eastern Cape Department of

Sports, Recreation, Arts and Culture that has resulted in an opportunity for 100 writers from across the Eastern Cape to attend writing workshops at Eden Grove as part of Wordfest. All of this takes a huge amount of administration, and Prof Mann is delighted at the way in which ISEA secretary Nomangezi Kelemi has developed and honed her skills to provide an excellent administration service in collaboration with supervisor, Carol Leff. He even honoured them with a poem entitled "*In praise of good administrators*"!

Other developmental opportunities have been provided to Radio Journalism students and practitioners - who report on Wordfest to over 14 million people in three languages daily - as well as to print journalists who work for Wordstock, the Wordfest newspaper, and management interns that obtain skills and experience in events management for the literary arts.

Last year, Prof Mann launched his latest poetry collection called *Home from Home*, which has since become a prescribed work for English major students at a university in the USA. He was also nominated to take up the Chair of Poetry at Oxford.

Perhaps the greatest spin-off of Wordfest, says Prof Mann, is that people of all persuasions have said they "feel at home on Rhodes campus", and many indicated that they themselves or their children would seriously consider studying at Rhodes.

words

Nomangesi Kelemi, Secretary at the ISEA plays an important supporting role in the administration of Wordfest



What the ear wants to hear

Three talented fourth-year Rhodes Music students Mia Pistorius, Jacques du Plessis and Andrew Duncan will be flexing their musical muscles on the Fringe programme at the National Arts Festival this year.

Du Plessis and Duncan are particularly excited to be performing a programme called Four Hands at the Beethoven Room, which comprises both duet and solo pieces. "It was a challenge to bring two different peoples' ideas and styles together but it works well because we are critical of each other, in a good way," said Duncan. Du Plessis agrees, adding that they are very honest with each other, which makes it easier to reject ideas that don't work. "We're thick-skinned. As a duo we are very strong because we get on very well and we laugh all the time," added Du Plessis.

The two will be giving eight performances throughout Festival. The two duets are Schubert's *Fantasie in F Minor* and Faure's *Dolly Suite*. Du Plessis will be playing Rachmaninoff's *Prelude in G Minor*, op 23 no 5 and *Reflets dans l'eau* from *Images, Book 1* by Debussy, and Duncan will play Schumann's *Papillon*, op. 2.

Du Plessis hastens to add that they are not selling themselves as 'concert pianists', but "as students

making our way into that world, so it's important to have fun while you're doing it". All three students expressed their admiration of how supportive the Music Department has been, especially their teacher, acclaimed pianist Catherine Foxcroft.

"We listened to a lot of recordings of the pieces we play, which was very important towards realising how to shape the interpretation," said Du Plessis. "There's always one element that's more important, that can be singled out. In that sense it's what the ear wants to hear."

Mia Pistorius is in her final BMus year and will be performing six recitals of what she calls "only beautiful pieces" - each of the two different programmes will be centred around a major work. The promising young talent started playing the piano at the age of seven and has already performed to great acclaim in Germany and Bulgaria where she attended piano master classes and festivals in 2010. This plunged her into unfamiliar territory, which she says "had a profound influence on the way I see my own music".

Pistorius will play Liszt's *Piano Sonata in B Minor*, marking the centenary of the composer's birth this year. The other major work, Beethoven's *Sonata no 21 in C Major* (opus 53) runs for 30 minutes and is "substantial and recognisable, but challenging for me". She also likes to "champion unknown composers"



Mia Pistorius

by introducing the audience to something new and special. Among these is the modern American composer Lowell Liebermann, who composed *Piano Sonata no. 3, op. 82* in 2002 and Rautavaara's *Etudes, op. 42* (1969). As she quipped: "If I'm experiencing a challenge, the audience should be challenged too!"

"In this kind of environment (the National Arts Festival) people are excited to be entertained. For me it's wonderful when someone comes up to me and says they enjoyed it or they heard a piece they haven't heard before. You want the audience to respond in their own unique ways. So much of music is an expression of yourself -- it has to change with you," she concluded.

Music Department Jazz Festival

The Rhodes Music Department is hoping to increase public awareness of the jazz curriculum offered at Rhodes during this year's Jazz festival. Head of Department, Dr Jeffrey Brukman, says he is hoping that the wide array of jazz concerts, featuring local and international performers, will attract interest in the music courses offered at Rhodes. "I'm hoping that other musicians and interested jazz enthusiasts will become aware that jazz forms part of the curriculum at Rhodes," he said.

Dr Brukman, who lectures in Musicology and Music Theory, said that although no Rhodes students will be performing in this year's jazz line up, he is hoping that two talented members of staff will take to the stage next year. Dr Nishlyn Ramanna and Mr Jared Lang have been teaming up for experimental jazz piano sessions, and Dr Brukman said he is encouraging them to represent Rhodes next year.

As part of the National Youth Jazz Festival, which runs concurrently to the Jazz Festival, Rhodes Music Department will play host to internationally renowned musician, Professor Carolyn Wilkins, who has headed up the ensemble programme at Berkley, University of California, for 30 years. Wilkins will be visiting Rhodes in her capacity as a Fullbright specialist, and Brukman said he is hoping this will mark the beginning of a successful working relationship. "It will be great to develop this contact with Carolyn and to encourage her to study jazz in the Eastern Cape," he said. Alongside Rhodes's jazz curriculum, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University and University of Fort Hare are developing courses that will contribute to the developing jazz curriculum in the Eastern Cape.

The Grahamstown Sextet

The Grahamstown Sextet is just one example of the musical talent and energy that can be found in this small city. Senior Rhodes Music lecturer Catherine Foxcroft is thrilled that the Sextet, of which she is a part, features on the new Arena Music programme at the 2011 National Arts Festival.

The Sextet comprises four musicians from Grahamstown including Foxcroft, who is an acclaimed classical pianist, Jenny Brand (clarinet), Hilary Paterson (oboe) and Boris Mohr (French horn), all of whom teach music at local independent school, Kingswood College. They are joined by highly acclaimed flautist Liesel Stoltz from Cape Town and Penny Fraser, who plays principal bassoon in the Johannesburg Philharmonic Orchestra.

The sextet first played together last year for the Grahamstown Music Society. After the success of this outing, they made the decision to present a series of performances at the Festival. Foxcroft describes the new Arena programme as a "comfortable place", as opposed to the more high-pressured Main programme.

In June, the Grahamstown Sextet will air its repertoire at the South African Society for Research in Music (SASRIM) Conference being held in the Rhodes Music Department. They then have a week of rehearsals together before their first Festival appearance on Friday, July 1. Foxcroft is excited about the rehearsal period. That length of time, she says, is rare in the musical world and - having put together their initial concert for the Music Society in just two days - she is looking forward to working more closely with the others for these performances.

The Grahamstown Sextet will be playing a variety of pieces, including solos and windwood quintets. Foxcroft is eager for audiences to hear the pairing of the piano with the woodwind instruments. The more usual combination is with the strings, and the Sextet will therefore be offering a richly unusual sound, with what is described on the Festival Programme as "an unique variety of timbres, textures and styles".

The venue for the performances is the Beethoven Room, and the repertoire extends from the Baroque period through to the contemporary era.

The Sextet will play four shows, compactly scheduled during the first days of the Festival as Fraser has to return to Johannesburg for the opening of the Philharmonic season.

Thinking Africa launch

By Siphokazi Magadla

In *The Invention of Africa* V.Y Mudimbe reminds us that “although generalizations are of course dangerous, colonialism and colonization basically mean organization, arrangement. The two words derive from the Latin word *colère*, meaning to cultivate or to design ... Colonists ... as well as colonialists ... have all tended to organize and transform non-European areas into fundamentally European constructs.”

If colonialism was an organization or arrangement of a certain kind, then post-coloniality can be seen, in part, as an attempt to re-organise or re-arrange Africa in order to restore pre-colonial modes of thinking and being. For post-apartheid South Africa this has meant a re-organisation and re-orientation of knowledge but also a re-arrangement of the institutionalisation of that knowledge. This generates three very complex, related questions: *Why* transformation? *How* to drive transformation? and, *What* institutional arrangement will best allow us to drive that transformation? Indeed, after 17 years, post-Apartheid South Africa of 2011 still faces the urgency to transform the epistemic structure of knowledge production in South Africa in order to provide quality education.

As a response to this multiplicity of questions, at the beginning of 2010 the Department of Political and International Studies at Rhodes University launched its flagship project, Thinking Africa. Headed by a Departmental Steering Committee, the project seeks to create an internationally renowned postgraduate programme on African studies. This is to keep young researchers studying in South Africa instead of overseas. It makes it possible for students to collaborate with internationally acclaimed scholars located in institutions in and outside Africa through its Thinking Africa Associate Fellows composed of national and international scholars. With a commitment to contributing

THINKING AFRICA, RHODES UNIVERSITY

APRIL 2011

NEWSLETTER

Formal launch, July 2011

Exciting new project launched with celebration of Frantz Fanon.



About Thinking Africa

Not all great projects have auspicious beginnings. Thinking Africa - a project, an idea, an engagement with the time and place of thinking - has too many origins for us to locate the “birth” of this specific project. One incidental origin would be a whim, one Friday afternoon, when I was re-designing a post-graduate course and suddenly wondered, What if we stopped thinking about ‘teaching’ post-graduates and rather invited them to participate in our on-going research projects? What if teaching were a spin-off of working

to an inclusive transformative pedagogical national project, the Department is sufficiently ambitious to seek, not only to contribute to existing academic work on Africa, but also to critically rethink the study of Africa.

The project will officially be launched on July 6 with a range of different events including; a Public Lecture by V.Y Mudimbe, a Colloquium, a Winter School and a Postgraduate Proposal Writing Workshop. The theme of this year’s Public Lecture, Colloquium and Winter School is ‘Fanon: 50 Years Later’ in recognition of the 50th anniversary of the death of Frantz Fanon. The intention is to hold these or similar events each year during the June/July University break period. Each year’s Thinking Africa events will have a particular theme and will tie into a particular postgraduate course that will be offered during the second semester. The course for this year is a 13-week course by Richard Pithouse called *Mind of the oppressed*. The project has secured a book series publication from UKZN Press where papers from the colloquium will be published.

Magadla is a Lecturer in Rhodes University’s Political and International Studies Department. She teaches International Relations, and African security and development.



Thinking Africa Departmental Steering Committee: from left to right Mr Richard Pithouse, Dr Sally Matthews, Mr Mike Mavura, Prof Leonhard Praeg and Ms Siphokazi Magadla.

Thinking Africa in Grahamstown



Political and International Studies postgraduate students from left to right: Simone Levy, Danielle Bouuler, Chantelle Malan and Bongani Hanise.

By Richard Pithouse

Grahamstown is named after Colonel John Graham, a colonial soldier, who, with what he called a proper degree of terror, drove 20 000 Xhosa people from the area and built a colonial garrison in 1812.

Seventeen years after the end of apartheid the municipality is named in honour of Nxele Makana who, in 1819, led an attack on Graham's garrison. Of course there have been many moments, some of them important, where it could be said that the legacies of Graham and Makana have been brought together in a higher synthesis. But on the whole the colonial structure of the town remains strikingly and terribly evident. This fact is not solely a legacy of the past. Post-apartheid development has often taken a neo-apartheid form of actively reinscribing exclusion into the physical structure of the town. And of course Rhodes University is named for a man whose imperial vision stretched from the Cape to Cairo. The university has been both a site of struggle and a tentacle in a colonial and then neo-colonial system of knowledge production and distribution.

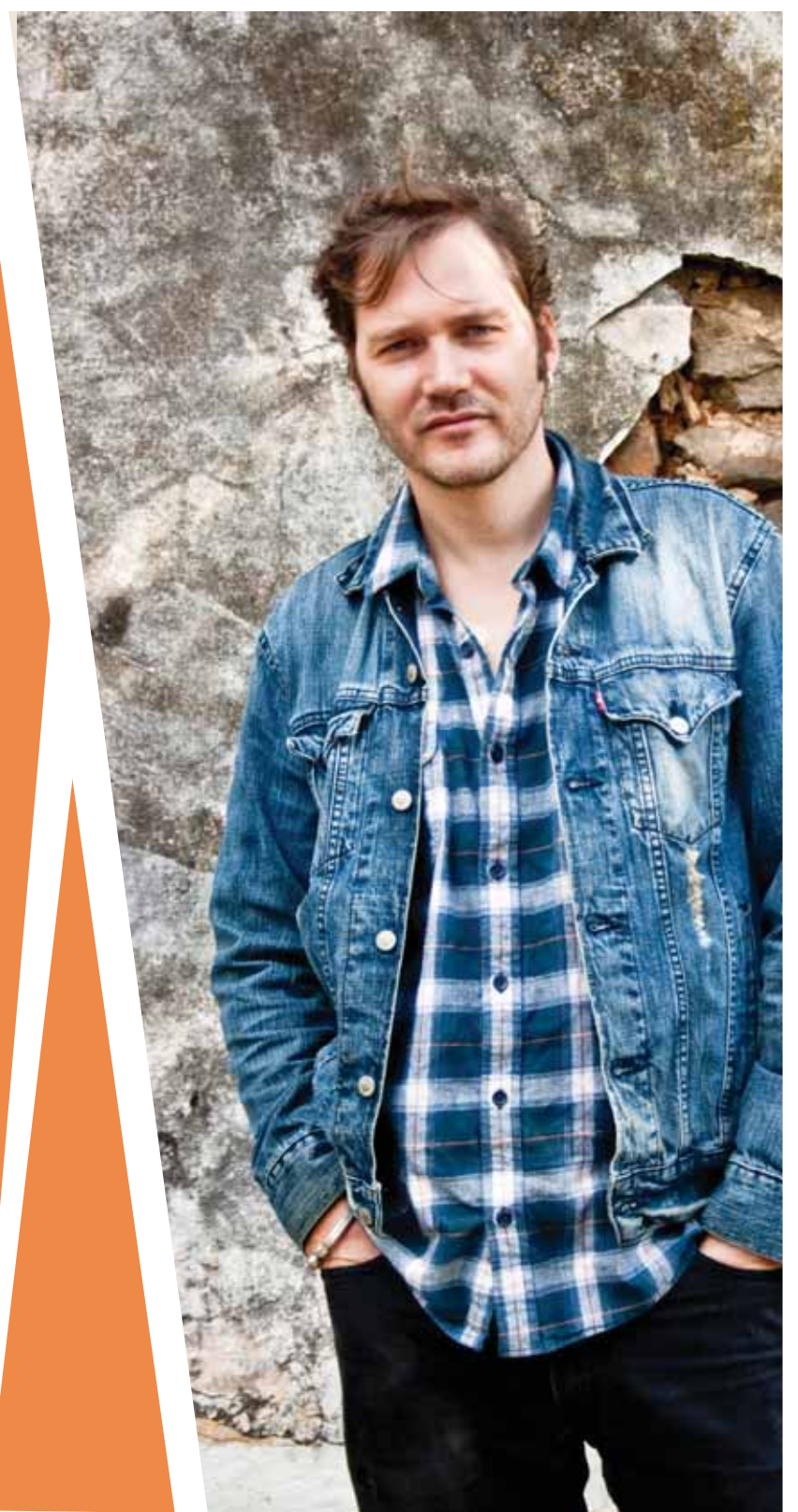
Thinking Africa here is not without its challenges. But the fundamental task is clear and that is, to borrow an elegant phrase from the Caribbean Philosophy Association, to shift the geography of reason. The idea is to self-consciously think from Africa, in community with others in and out of the academy, rather than, as has been more typical in the academy, about Africa in a way that constructs Africa as a problem to be diagnosed from without. We aim to create a new node in a network of insurgent spaces that can think Africa, and its place in the global South, not as an object of research but as a subject of emancipatory action.

From the 6th to the 9th of July some of the very best scholars in South Africa, people like Nomboniso Gasa and Pumla Gqola, as well as the very best Fanon scholars in the world, people like Nigel Gibson, Lewis Gordon and Ato Sekyi-Otu will come together at Rhodes University to reflect on the meaning of Frantz Fanon fifty years after his death.

This will be the start of the Thinking Africa project and it will be a magnificent start. In the coming years there will be other meetings on other themes. But to start with Fanon, a thinker with an unambiguous commitment to African emancipation, is a clear and deliberate declaration of intellectual intent.

Pithouse is a Lecturer in Rhodes University's Political and International Studies Department. He is interested in the philosophy and politics of equality and freedom.

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Mr Richard Pithouse

CHERTL Roundtable examines Critical Issues in Higher Education

By Professor Pedro Alexis Tabensky

It's increasingly argued that South Africa is a neo-colonial state. It is suggested that its institutions and the mindset of its people are still largely structured by the nefarious legacy of apartheid. This legacy is not identical to apartheid, but it is an unhealthy offshoot of it. Frantz Fanon and Steve Biko warned us that social health couldn't be achieved merely by the creation of a black elite which has not dealt with its own brokenness and with the transfer of political power to black hands.

They argue that the only true path to liberation involves a quest for a new humanity, divested of the pathologies brought about by 'centuries of incomprehension'. Such a quest cannot be successful without a clear understanding of the neo-colony's ability to replicate structures of injustice in society and in the minds of its subjects.

It would be short of miraculous if our academic institutions did not inherit the legacy that largely informs South African life in general, including the mental life of its inhabitants. South African Universities are disproportionately populated by white students and staff and it is crucial that we come to a clearheaded understanding of why this is the case.

It seems that part of the explanation will involve appealing to wide social factors, such as the legacy of racist and economic injustice, the lack of proper role models within poor communities and the scourge of mediocre schooling. But it would be odd if racism stopped at the campus gates.

Indeed, one often hears black university students and staff complaining about racism on campus today. A cynic could argue that these complaints are unfounded. But, given the deep legacy of racist injustice that pervades

almost every aspect of life in South Africa, it would be highly unlikely that racism was not richly present on today's campuses, and it is arguably our responsibility as scholars to identify its manifestations. And, indeed, to find a way forward.

Some have argued that the South African university is a colonial construct and that the very content of what is taught, and key structural features of the sector, are racist. Others have argued that there is a problem with institutional culture that makes it the case that many black university students and staff find it difficult to thrive. But what precisely do we mean by 'institutional culture'?

This and other questions will be addressed in the third CHERTL Roundtable Series on Critical Issues in Higher Education to be held at Rhodes University on July 11 - 13. This annual Series will continue indefinitely and it aims to be the principal fora where critical issues of higher education are discussed.

Tabensky is a Professor of Philosophy at Rhodes University.



Professor Pedro Alexis Tabensky

Rhodes Business School engages in the Fest

Prof Owen Skae, Director of Rhodes University's Business School, is excited about the involvement of the School in this year's Festival line-up.

Describing the Festival as having national and international prominence, and involving "a wonderful diverse mix of people", Skae, who succeeded Prof Gavin Staude as Director in 2010, said it was important for the Business School to "be part of the Festival as part of our contribution to the Eastern Cape".



This year will see the return of a "very successful" collaboration between the School, the National Arts Festival and Makana Municipality in the form of a training programme for local entrepreneurs.

Launched last year after a discussion between Skae and CEO of the National Arts Festival, Mr Tony Lankester, the programme involves a six-week training course for local entrepreneurs, aimed at facilitating the development of sustainable small business operations. "The idea is to get local entrepreneurs involved in providing services to Festival-goers, with a view to getting them involved in the other festivals that happen in Grahamstown," said Skae. Such services include providing cellphone charging facilities and food services.

The Business School will also make a contribution to Think!Fest in the form of a series of lectures under the banner Leadership for Sustainability. Speakers will include Clem Sunter, former Chair and CEO of Anglo American's Gold and Uranium Division, on a sustainable future; Steuart Pennington, co-editor and publisher of nine books on South Africa and Africa and a receiver of the 2007 Public Service Entrepreneur of the Year Award from the African Heritage Society, on Sustainable competitiveness; and Les Aupiais, guest presenter on and director of Carte Blanche and one of South Africa's most versatile, experienced and creative media figures, on sustainable media. There will also be a panel discussion involving Pennington, Aupiais and Cedric Tyler of Business Genetics, which will be chaired by Skae.

Professor Owen Skae

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