

Creative

Evolution

The Arts Education Department Newsletter 2005

Arts-infused technology sound crazy?

A special exhibit at the Standard Bank National Schools Festival was "Sounds Crazy", kindly extending its run from the National Arts Festival. **Toni Olivier** reflects on bringing arts and science together in a techno-hip-musical experience.

Anyone who has had to get a computer to do something reliably for any length of time, or at a specific time knows: computers are evil. After working for months preparing for Sounds Crazy, an exhibition of interactive sound installations for the National Arts and Schools festivals, I swore never to touch one again. I told people I was going to become an estate agent.

The problem with this plan, is that I love what computers can achieve when they behave, and particularly what technology can bring to the arts.

People who walked into Sounds Crazy were not aware of the computers, or the months of programming and tweaking that went into them. What they experienced was closer to magic than technology. This was the goal - to allow them to make sounds in mysterious and invisible ways, with no complicated instructions or interfaces.



The reaction was superb. One scholar said of his favorite installation, "I love the head banger, because I love music. It gave me the chance to freestyle and it really made me believe that I can compose and sing".

You can't have a conversation about education without falling over the phrase "curriculum-aligned" every second breath - yes, we may want students to know that sound waves are longitudinal and that $v=fl$ - but learners have to be inspired to want to study these principles in the first place, and they need to stay inspired if they are to retain these concepts and details.

At Sounds Crazy, scholars were both amazed and inspired. They gained confidence from the experience of making music with such ease. They wanted to know more about how it was possible to get sounds out of these strange devices - like bicycles, game controllers and even thin air. Malibongwe Molefe was fascinated by the Magic Organ, where he spent most of his time. "I want to know how they did it, which is why I'm touching all the different keys".

What will inspire him more: sitting in a classroom and hearing only the sound of his teacher's voice while looking at pictures of garden hoses making wave-like motions, or, having the crazy, interactive sound experience at the festival? I believe the latter will more likely get Molefe to study further, and to look for ways of integrating technology in his own music making.



Studio for Interactive Sound plans to establish a centre in the Eastern Cape where technology and the arts can be explored further. The scope of our workshops will expand as we try to find ways to align the curriculum to the Sounds Crazy experience. We also plan to create a travelling component of the exhibition that can reach more people.

Sounds crazy?
"Well it is, but we are very serious about it!" says director, Louisa Clayton.

Toni Olivier is still thinking of becoming an estate agent, but in the meantime she perseveres with establishing and finding support for Studio for Interactive Sound. More at www.ru.ac.za/sis

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Unforgettable Favourites from the 2005 Schools Festivals

- ▶ *Kicking off the Western Cape Schools Festival with a bang was **Alan Committie's** entertaining, yet inspiring keynote. He also treated delegates to a fantastic DIY one-man-rock-band performance encouraging learners to absorb and get involved in the Arts.*
- ▶ *The Standard Bank National Schools Festival featured some of South Africa's **hottest up-and-coming bands**. Fokopolisiekar's Afrikaans heavy metal, Undone's fresh, funky sound, Airship Orange's mixed jazz and rock, and The Finkelstiens music had the delegates (as well as director, Louisa Clayton) dancing and partying up a storm. This was a fabulous opportunity to present fresh bands to young South Africans.*
- ▶ ***Bad Apple**, by young newcomer Brett Goldin, based on the Columbine shootings, was received with standing ovations, teary eyes and roaring applause. It connected with students in a fresh and exciting way exploring issues of social pressure and bullying.*

continued on next page ▶ ▶ ▶

Schools Festival highlights cont.

- ▶ In **KZN Hilton College's gorgeous campus** was a huge highlight of the festival. Students were housed on site and the festival was contained in the stunning facilities. The beautiful venue really focussed the activities shared with so many students from around the province.
- ▶ **Ubom! East Cape Drama Company's poetry programme Say Otherwise** was a smash hit. Touring with the Schools Festival team it exposed learners to exciting, relevant ways to explore written language. Visually and cerebrally challenging, they used dance, music and colour to investigate adolescence, life, abuse, politics, Aids, poverty, and other relevant, controversial issues.
- ▶ The exciting African martial art, **Capoeira**, was a highlight of the workshop programme. The game is characterized by such dynamic movements as cartwheels, handstands, spinning kicks and spontaneous acrobatics. At its highest level of practice, capoeira is considered an improvisational conversation between two bodies - the learners were enthralled.



Capoeira on the gorgeous Hilton College lawns

the time he kicks up his heels and unleashes his pelvis to Trompies, he proves that this whitey can not only jump into the skins of his black compatriots but could even out-dance them. Matthew Ribnick walks the walk and, eish, talks the talk bru...



Matthew Ribnick in Hoot

- ▶ **Matthew Ribnick's** new work **Hoot** had a spectacular run at the Standard Bank National Schools Festival for grade 12s. Ribnick, who attributes much of his success with **The Chilli Boy** to his extended affiliation with the Schools Festivals, has perfected language and body language. By the
- ▶ **Gcina Mhlope**, South Africa's most celebrated storyteller, and a renowned performer and writer, gave keynote addresses at the Mpumalanga and Standard Bank National Schools Festivals. There wasn't a dry eye in the house after she left the stage. She sang, performed, told stories and gave a uniquely fresh perspective for many school attendees. Her play *Have you seen Zandile?* also made appearances at the Gauteng and Mpumalanga festivals.
- ▶ **Mmapula Mother of Rain Aubrey Sekhabi's** festival work, at the Standard

Bank National Schools Festival was a dance-music spectacular and was passionately received by 340 festival delegates who commented, "It is the epitome of the saying "one lives a thousand lives with theatre." "Breathtaking, awe-inspiring, it has given a totally new meaning to the drama I have been taught".

- ▶ **Sounds Crazy**, an amazing interactive sound workshop and exhibition, displayed clever gadgets that make music while you play with them illustrating aspects of how sound works and is achieved. For more information see the front page.
- ▶ **Noises Off**, Michael Frayn's comic masterpiece, is a farce-within-a-farce about actors acting as actors acting characters in a theatrical joyride. At the Standard Bank National Schools Festival the play's luckless characters couldn't get through more than a page of dialogue without losing contact lenses, dropping their trousers, falling down the stairs, gluing themselves to a plate of sardines or accidentally sitting on a cactus! Delegates were hysterical.

Thanks for making memories with us!

Olympiad Winners Celebratory Week

The De Beers English Olympiad is an open-book exam written every March. The top 50 pupils receive a free first-year tuition scholarship to the renowned Rhodes University, pupils placed fourth to twentieth receive cash prizes and the final top three are awarded an English Literary tour to Britain. Nearly 4000 entrants from 293 schools took part in the De Beers English Olympiad which culminates in a week-long trip to the Standard Bank National Schools Festival where the rank order of the top 15 candidates is announced.

One sleepy Sunday in July, Grahamstown breathed a sigh of relief as the 2005 Arts Festival slipped silently into the hand of history. However, for those involved in the Standard Bank National Schools Festival, including the two English Olympiad Chaperones, that brief spell of calm proved to be a mere eye in the storm of the arts.

What a week was in store for us and the 15 young men and women, the top of their league in the De Beers English Olympiad. It was a maelstrom of shows, workshops, lectures, zooming this way and that, rushing all over the place, and generally just enjoying ourselves. Let us tell you: these guys were overflowing with energy! We had to get them to every meal of the day, to their lectures, workshops and shows on time, which weren't necessarily all at the same venue, control their excitement and make time for quiet introspection and general discussion on the outcome of what they had seen and experienced in the course of the day.



2005 Winner, Marina Mariano, with Alan Stephenson and Louisa Clayton

The group started as a formidable collection of bright young minds with staggering general knowledge and an amazing ability to express themselves. However, as we spent time together and initial defences began to dissipate, strangers soon started becoming friends. Not only did they get the chance to express themselves as they watched and responded to the various productions, lectures and workshops, but the arts began to do what they do best and open the door to human vulnerability and honesty. By the second night, they were a united group laughing raucously and daring to discuss ideas that they were serious about too.

But nerves soon started to kick in for the big event, the placing of the top 15 in their numerical order. As our guys one by one received their award on stage, we felt a huge sense of nervousness ourselves; we were more worried about the prize giving than they were! Romina Mariano from St Theresa's Mercy School was placed first, with Danielle Boxshall-Smith of St Dominic's School taking second place and Joseph Roussos of Sacred Heart College taking third.

Their memorable week ended with a unique Grahamstown-by-night tour, followed by a sleepless night as the guys wanted to savour all the available time they still had together before they left for home. All 17 of us, as well as the other 900-odd delegates attending the Standard Bank National Schools Festival were challenged, stimulated and enriched. The Standard Bank National Schools Festival and the De Beers English Olympiad are most worthy projects. The week that we shared with the Top 15 proved that convincingly.

by Leanne du Preez and Sean Greyling

Grahamstown Township Dancers Perform their hearts out!

by Gina Balarin

Just one glance at the excited faces of the Grahamstown Township Dance Project girls and boys will show you how hard-work, dedication, and love of their art will overcome even the most difficult odds. These girls and boys from disadvantaged areas of the Grahamstown community have been under the wing of dance teacher and project director, Janet Buckland, since 1993 with great success.

Despite a lack of response to their 2004 application for funding from the NLDTF they have managed to diligently prepare for their exams and receive many more exceptional passes as they continue to learn new steps and dance routines and gain more grace and confidence during this process.

This year they have performed for the Studio programme at the National Arts Festival as well as wowing audiences at the Eastern Cape Schools Festival with their poignant production *Hellfire*. Audience comments like "Beautiful!! I'm a dancer and watching such young dancers come to life was very inspiring. STUNNING CHOREOGRAPHY," as well as, "When I see these dances I am proud to say I am South African," demonstrate the positive responses of the grade 11 audience to this moving work. "It is wonderful to know that our dancers have touched people's lives in a positive way", says Janet Buckland. "The girls work really hard and enjoy dancing so much. I think that shines through".

The girls also participated in the dance section of the 2005 Eastern Cape Eisteddfod and walked home with a multitude of gold and double-gold awards. "They were an absolute hit at this year's Eisteddfod! They have such energy and enthusiasm and there is clear evidence of good training" commented the Eisteddfod organiser.

Another highlight is the appointment of several dancers to the First Physical Theatre Company's youth company, affectionately termed "First Fizz". Six of the eleven dancers chosen for the company are trained by the Township Dance Project. These dancers have had the incredible privilege of working with the top dancers and choreographers from the company and have performed in the same programme as the professional dancers.



One of many performances that received top awards at the Eastern Cape Eisteddfod

Finally, in a synergy of different artforms, a photo journalism student completed and exhibited a photographic study on Nomcebisi Moyikwa, one of the featured dancers in the project.

Without funding for 2006, the Grahamstown Township Dance Project is in serious jeopardy, as are many projects of the Arts Education department. But Buckland remains optimistic "We are applying all over the place for funding. Let's just hope we can find someone who is as enthusiastic about the project as we are".

Successful 2005 Eisteddfod by Gina Balarin

A profusion of gold, silver, bronze, merit and participation awards were handed out to 115 schools and some 4000 participants who excelled in speech and drama, music, dance, creative writing and visual arts at the **Eastern Cape Eisteddfod** which took place in Grahamstown from 9-27 May 2005.

This year's Eisteddfod was characterised by high standards of performance and talent across the board. Says well-known visual artist, Vusi Khumalo, of the section he adjudicated, "the quality of artwork has improved compared to previous years... the art teachers of various schools did, and still are doing, a wonderful job in developing and nurturing the young talent."

Dance co-ordinator, Greer Hawley, was impressed with the display of modern, tap, contemporary, jazz, fusion, Indian, gumboot and other dance, "The one thing I really think is awesome about a function like this is that people learn about the professional side of dancing. It's one thing to dance, and dance well, but it's another thing to know the professional side and to be criticised with constructive criticism".

Creative writing entries came from near and far with a wide range of people participating including school pupils, university students, adults and even some pensioners looking for exposure for their retirement writings.

Fran Cox, who travelled all the way from Cape Town to adjudicate sections of the speech and drama week, says she feels privileged to be part of such an initiative that warmly praises and encourages youth development.

A special mention should be made of the enthusiastic and talented Learners with Special Education Needs (LSEN) who participated again this year. "All people have potential, whether disabled or not. It is important that they are exposed to the various



Dancers get frantically enthusiastic responses at the Eastern Cape Schools Festival



Respected sculptress, Maureen Quin, adjudicates visual art at the Eastern Cape Eisteddfod

Successful Eisteddfod continued... ▶ ▶ ▶

forms of art so as to discover their talent", said special school educator, Nomvuyo Jenkins.

The Eisteddfod continues in 2006 with outreach programmes with the main event taking place in 2007. In the mean time posters in hues of fiery reds and oranges have been printed in anticipation of the next successful Eisteddfod which will bring together thousands of participants from the Eastern Cape and beyond.



A Message from the Director...

Are we listening?



Louisa Clayton -
Director of Arts
Education

When Alan Committie brought the house down with an amazing mime of a one-man-rock-band at the Western Cape Schools Festival, we knew our hearing was in for some serious stimulation in 2005. The awakening continued with the techno-hip-musical experience of the *Sounds Crazy* workshop at the Standard Bank National Schools Festival, and the wonderful Pieter Toerien production, *Noises Off*, where actors frolicked in a farce about a play, in the process of a performance.

Listening to our audiences and researching responses to all our projects: The Eastern Cape Eisteddfod, the South African Schools Festivals, the De Beers English Olympiad and the Grahamstown Township Dance Project is always an energising challenge that involves the whole department. We frequently get asked: "What do you do when the festivals are over?" Well amongst other things (like balancing the books for this year and finding money for the next), the part of the job we enjoy the most at this time of year is catching up with what you said about our projects and looking at ways in which we can update and improve them for you in the future. A BIG THANK YOU to you all for your valuable input.

We look forward to implementing many of the suggestions. One, for example, is that there should be a separate, dedicated co-ordinator for the disabled entries to the Eisteddfod.

Unfortunately the suggestion that the schools festivals should only show positive, feel-good, uplifting theatre is not a suggestion that we can always implement. While much of the content of the festivals might fit this brief, life is not always pretty, and to pretend through our art that it is, is to deny society the opportunity to expose prejudice, rethink stereotypes, explore different realities, clarify complex issues, and find creative and open-minded solutions to conflict, abuse, poverty, violence, unfair governance, and unrequited love. Art provides a forum in which we can experiment and play while exercising free choice in our decisions, morals and actions. In playing with all of these we can empower ourselves to bring about meaningful, positive change in ourselves and our world.

Art is not safe, but in using it as a vehicle in which to play out different realities, life might be less harmful.

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How to... run an arts festival at your school

The Schools Festivals are aimed at grade 11 and 12 learners. Why not run a festival at your school to cater for earlier grades? Here are some helpful hints...

- Organise a committee or find someone to be in charge of **planning the event**.
- Find a good **venue** to host the event (Fill all the space to the max with exciting workshops and shows).
- Hold **auditions** for everyone who wants to take part.
- Select a **good variety of art forms** (dance, drama, music, singing, and anything else you can think of).
- Invite someone really cool to give the **opening address** (an interesting teacher, parent, friend or a famous relative).
- Make it a **collaborative effort** with another school, or group of schools. Choose the best performance from all the schools or show-case both groups.
- Ask teachers, parents or older learners to **give workshops** on different things.
- **Plan it all very carefully** so you have a full evening/day/weekend/week of activities with time for people to rest, eat, watch shows and take part in workshops.
- Make it a **fund-raiser** for your school. Charge people an entry fee or have raffles and competitions.
- Suggest that **school clubs or groups take part** and put on their own demonstrations.
- Organise **technical equipment like** microphones, lighting, music and sound etc.
- **Advertise** it in your local newspaper, school newsletter or call your favourite radio show.
- Get some artistic people to **design and make/print posters** to give people enough warning of the event and invite them to take part.
- Get the non-artistic people to **help behind the scenes**, by selling food, making sure things are running on time and helping people get to where they need to be.
- Make a **programme** for the event with all the items listed that people know what to see or do, when and where.

Make it fun! **Have a ball!** Be creative! Make the most of the opportunity to learn new things and share experiences.

A quote to consider... from Gina Mhlophe's keynote address.

"Our heads are made round so that our thoughts can change direction!"

Contact us:

Arts Education Department
PO Box 304, Grahamstown, 6140
Tel: +27(0)46 603 1107
Fax: +27(0)46 622 7462
schools.festival@foundation.org.za
<http://schoolfest.foundation.org.za>

Creative Evolution Team:
Gina Balarin, Dani Marais, Louisa Clayton, Sam McCann & Lily May



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How the Schools Festivals started my career

by Luke Rous

I grew up in Pretoria and got half way through Matric without a clue about what to do with my life. My high school career consisted of scoring a total of one run in the "F" cricket team and constantly learning lines for house plays. My plans to become a professional sailor and see the world were cut short when I went to the National Schools Festival in 1999 and saw two things that changed my life.

The first was *The Well Being* with Andrew Buckland and Lionel Newton. I sat mesmerized in the dark theatre as the entire audience was transported to a small town in the Eastern Cape where the story of a young woman, a dolphin and a self destructive town unfolded with only two actors, some crate paper and a watermelon. "OHHH! So this is what I'm supposed to be doing with my life!"

The second was a lecture by Deon Opperman. The man was filled with such zeal and confidence as he expounded on the meaning of life as an actor. That was the first time I heard about the school that he, Garth Holmes and Bata Paschier were running in Jo'burg - AFDA.

Life at AFDA was a non-stop boiling pot of new ideas and influences where a myriad of cultures came together for one common goal - to create art. Whether on film or stage, it was an exciting place to be and four years later I graduated with an honors degree in writing and physical performance.

Now the real world loomed ahead and with a sinking feeling in my stomach I was faced with the almighty question all young graduates face - how the hell am I going to make money???

Ok - calm down - you managed to pay your way through college, life should be a piece of cake right? Wrong! Even though I managed to land a role in an abysmal sitcom, my first year out was rough. And then the heavens parted and one of life's great lessons unveiled itself to me. Do what you love, with all your heart, and good things will happen to you.

I had been working on some projects with my partner in crime, Meren Reddy, and together we formed Rous & Reddy productions - catchy huh? We took our work to the Grahamstown Festival and I can tell you now, the volume you learn about yourself while acting in a 270 seater to an audience of 3 and one walks out half way through - is immeasurable. But we got better, and didn't give up, and before long were greeted with standing ovations and packed houses.

And then came the school's festivals. A completely unique opportunity to touch lives, teach skills and develop friendships with fellow artists. With the support of Louisa and her team, we toured our work and taught our workshops to most of the schools festivals in the country. And I can tell you, there is nothing quite like performing to a packed house of grade 11s in the State Theatre. It's an awesome experience. But the workshops are where the real magic takes place. Running a "clowning" workshop for the most part, allowed me to instill a sense of play and curiosity in the students. Opening their eyes to the fact that your body is a tool, that when manipulated correctly, can uncover endless comedy, tragedy and melodrama.

Currently I am a member of Black Brain Pictures, a production company I co-founded, which is producing a sitcom for SABC 1 called "City Ses'La". Physical theatre remains my first passion, but I am learning that the challenges of running a business and merging art with commerce is another skill I'm keen on acquiring. But watch this space - the language of physical theatre in the country is only a teenager - and I'll definitely be around when it blossoms into a beautiful adult.

Shakespeare meets Ali G

by Paige Newmark

Question: what do a Gangsta rapper, an African kraal, and gumboot dancing have to do with Shakespeare? Answer: Shakespeare SA's recent production of *The Winter's Tale*.



Formal Shakespearean English in Act 1 of The Winter's Tale

Producing Shakespeare is always fraught with challenges, but producing his plays for a 21st century audience in South Africa is even more demanding. I had to find a way of making *The Winter's Tale* accessible, exciting and believable, and yet not compromise the written play. My approach was to carefully read and unpick the play in order to unearth what it meant to its original audience of nearly 400 years ago; only then could I start finding equivalent resonances for our modern playgoers.

Of the many themes that pervade the play, the issue of reconciliation is central to the story but something that would be hard to effect on stage. After all, Leontes becomes insanely jealous, (without any provocation), and then ostensibly becomes responsible for the deaths of his wife and two children. How does the play manage to start as a tragedy of such epic proportions and end in forgiveness and reconciliation? I was immediately struck how the theme might resonate in a pertinent way with a South African audience only recently immersed in the antagonism of Apartheid and the resolution found in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.



"Ali G" shakes things up in Act II. Shakespeare can be funky too!

Armed with this idea I pursued the notion of suggesting racial tension as a possible cause for Leontes jealousy (echoes of *Othello*?) and one that finds its resolution in an ideal world where colour is no longer an issue. Bohemia thus became a post-Apartheid South Africa, where the inter-marriage of white (Perdita/Camillo/Lord) and black (Florizel/Paulina/Emilia) was no longer problematic.

On a lighter side, the modern and localised setting opened up the chance for us to make the same sort of jokes that Shakespeare achieved with his audience. No one today would understand that the songs in the play were popular ballads recognisable to everyone at the Globe in 1611; however, we used the song *Ghetto Superstar* to elicit an equivalent response of instant recognition from our audience. Costuming Autolycus as Ali G became a shorthand way of letting the audience know exactly who the character was: a charlatan who pretends to be someone other than he is, at the expense of all around him. In this case the white-man-dressed-as-a-black-man worked perfectly as Autolycus sought to gain a credibility in a community that would otherwise be unavailable to him. His rapped lyrics proved to be even more revealing in their self-deprecating humour. The sheep-shearing scene remained a sheep-shearing feast where we simply substituted the traditional English Morris-dancers with traditional African Gumboot-dancers. Both are light hearted, entertaining and celebratory; both remain true to the play.

It is possible to stage Shakespeare and make him fun, fashionable and funky, but still keep him real.

"A musician must make music, an artist must paint, a poet must write, if he is to be at peace with himself. What a man can be, he must be."

Abraham Maslow

"He who works with his hands is a laborer. He who works with his hands and his head is a craftsman. He who works with his hands and his head and his heart is an artist."

St Francis of Assisi

Healing, singing and celebrating colour through drama

by Heike Gehring

For colored girls who consider suicide when the rainbow is enuf *showed at the Standard Bank National Schools Festival this year to great acclaim. It seemed to touch a nerve with many young learners who could associate with the deep emotions represented in the play. Director Heike Gehring discusses how she came to stage this play and its appeal to a South African audience.*

As a new lecturer at the Rhodes University Drama Department and as a theatre maker who is particularly interested in making performances that unpack gender and cultural identity in a “New South African” context, I was looking for a playtext that could serve as a showcase for the enormous number of talented female actors at the Drama department. I also wanted to create a platform for performers to voice pertinent issues related to sex, race and gender. *For colored girls who have considered suicide when the rainbow is enuf*, written by Ntozake Shange during the American 1970’s, turned out to be the perfect vehicle for these needs.

Shange, who refers to herself as a feminist writer, says that she wrote this play due to the need that arose for black American women to voice their opinions during a time when the black liberation movement was mostly driven by men, and the women’s liberation movement was mostly reserved for white middle class women.

For colored girls... was originally performed in informal performance spaces such as pubs and cafes. The content varied, depending on the actresses involved in each performance. The stories were mostly episodes from the performers’ own lives. It was only later, when the production became increasingly popular – eventually performed on Broadway - that the content was fixed and the playtext was published.

The monologues and poems from this choreopoem are conveyed by seven actresses who represent the colours of the rainbow. These colours are red, orange, yellow, green, blue and purple and are indicative of the moods and emotional qualities of the characters associated with those hues. There is also a Lady in Brown, who resembles a mixture of all the other colours. She starts and finishes the production and the other women’s stories can be regarded as reflections and fragmentations of her life. She is symbolic of “every woman of colour”. It does not imply that the target audience experienced the same events as the girls in the play, but it is certainly implied that a bond exists between them. *During the Rhodes production, the audience’s reaction to the piece made it clear that the subject matter was neither aimed exclusively at people from a certain cultural background, nor restricted to the empowerment of women only. A lot of men were also moved by the piece.*

Most importantly, *For colored girls...* addresses issues that are often hidden by society. It publicly announces those stories that generate feelings of discomfort or shame, thereby urging people to celebrate their lives fully; dirty washing included! *For colored girls who have considered suicide when the rainbow is enuf* has, again, proved the power of theatre as a tool for celebration, healing and ultimately positive transformation.



For colored girls... deals with issues of love, loss, self-confidence and the triumph of the female spirit

The Arts vs. Sports sponsorship debate: a lesson from a grade 10 pupil

Louise Featherstone, a grade 10 pupil at Queenstown Girls High School, presented a speech for the Eastern Cape Eisteddfod that eloquently describes why sponsors would get a better return by investing their money in the arts rather than a losing rugby side. We thought the world should hear how an educated young South African can share an important lesson about the arts.

“South Africa, the fruit salad of happiness – celebrating art and diversity. Unfortunately we as artists and performers, the exotic fruits of the salad, live in a pretty little dish in the fridge. If we want to do something with our lives we can always open the door, walk over the counter and jump into the fruit bowl – of apples. The apples play rugby and they are nurtured all the way from the apple orchard to the fruit bowl on the counter.”

Today I was hoping to address you on my cultural hero – John Jacobs – master of mimicry. Unfortunately when I went onto the Internet, I found nothing. Unworried, I then went on to research a list of other names, with no success. But why? If I were looking for a sporting hero I would have found the required information in no time. Previously, I have never questioned why investors invest so much money and energy into sport. Rugby is the favourite sport of millions of people, but why do investors give so much to it and nothing to the arts? It can’t be giving such great returns if no South African teams featured in the Super 12 this year. No returns, even after being sponsored from grass roots level (school boy rugby) to the apple bowl on the counter (super 12 etc.). Losing rugby sides are invested in while performance arts specifically sit behind the cold, closed refrigerator door.

If we consider these two variables and Apartheid, players of most sports were banned from international sport and so they were forced to sit at home and prepare for the matches that weren’t happening. The arts went out there and at great risk to their safety, wrote plays and poems, sang, performed, drew and danced until the world was aware of our problems. Many of these people were at the forefront of the struggle and yet today nobody invests in the arts even though they are aware of the power it possesses. Today, the arts make us aware of what happened in order to overcome it and helps educate people on relevant, important issues such as Aids and crime. Sport is not helping our country one bit. All it has achieved is to reintroduce racism in the form of sport quotas which bring certain people forward, make people feel they are only good enough for the team due to skin colour and reverse Apartheid racism. At school level investment campaigns are also discriminatory because many sporting events are sponsored and young athletes are given experience and opportunities whereas children who are involved in the Arts can hardly ever better themselves because without sponsorship only children who pay and are trained privately can attend. When we attend festivals like this we aren’t funded or transported by anybody except our parents. A huge inferiority complex is arising in the arts and children would rather play sport because then at least they have a chance to get somewhere. Investors need to invest in the arts as well so that all children benefit and the arts in our country do not die out.

The Arts entertain everybody from the beer drinking, rugby playing, Leon Schuster or Billy Flynn fans to people who enjoy ballet, theatre or music, be it rock, pop, kwaito, opera or boeremusiek. Investors should invest in the arts because it can reach a much larger audience in its different forms and therefore have more returns. Developing both sport and the arts can create jobs and earn people money, but the Arts don’t all rely on talent alone and can line the pockets of the poorest people in our country. Poor people can be entrepreneurs selling beadwork at the beachfront, having craft stalls at shows and selling sculptures and paintings to overseas tourists. The only way our country is going to develop is if the poor can get jobs and opportunities. Investors have to invest in the arts in all its forms.

In closing, last year the world was shocked when a rugby player died on the field. I’ve never seen an actor die on stage, well not literally anyway.

I dedicate this speech to all my national cultural heroes who are writers and performers and to all budding artists. Watch out you rugby playing apples, the arts will open that fridge door and wake investors up no matter how much drawing, writing and performing it takes!