

# Wits takes on the National Arts Festival like never before

The National Arts Festival will display a vast array of Wits School of the Arts (WSOA) productions. The revamped festival kicked off yesterday, Thursday, 2 July 2009.

Taking place in Grahamstown from 2 - 11 July, the NAF will host WSOA "like never before". Fourteen established and up-and-coming writers, directors and actors will take to the stage presenting contemporary new works that challenge, entertain and intrigue. The WSOA will offer its audiences a chance to laugh, cry and engage in critical thinking as they watch 14 shows that cover a multitude of genres and styles; ranging from comedy to physical theatre, slam poetry to political satire, and more.

Leading by example, the WSOA lecturers have collectively presented at the festival more than 20 years. In keeping with tradition six lecturers will present original works at the festival this year. Greg Homann will debut as a playwright at the festival this year with his self-directed new South African comedy, *Previously Owned*. Warren Nebe, a veteran of the festival will present three works at the festival, *Hayani*, *ID Pending* and *Woza Joshua*. Tsepo Wa Mamatu, the WSOA's resident political playwright will present *Mbeki and other Nitemares* whilst Jane O'Connell and Jenni-Lee Crewe will debut two new physical theatre works *Carbon* and *Paydirt*, respectively. Grace Meadows and Denzel Edgar will present a thought-provoking Aids play *The Truth about You*. Lastly, Bailey Snyman and Nicola Haskins' mimetic clowning piece, *Le Carnaval de Ma Vie*, returns to the festival once more.

The WSOA company also plans to play their part in community development through an outreach program designed especially for the duration of the festival. *The Truth about You*, *ID Pending* and *Them and I* will travel to the nearby community to present their work free of charge.

Also on the bill are up-and-coming directors and writers who again spotlight the wide-ranging productions that The WOSA has to offer. Wits School of the Arts senior directing students will present a total of five productions. Jessica Lejowa directs *The Wages of Sin*, a play that challenges the cast, director and audience to imagine alternate ways of existing in the world.

Through the use of slam poetry, *Duduetsang*, directed by Lidija Marelic, uses a fresh approach to theatre that expresses both the joys and fears of what the youth of South Africa face in today's society. This play passionately interrogates the mixture of poetry and theatre.

The play *Them and I* is an intriguing piece of theatre directed by Nina Ristic. The play is based on the concept of the journey and follows the journey of a young lady in her quest of finding the perfect movement.

*Lozenge*, by director Kieron Jina, is a piece about the way we try to overcome the hurdles and suppress the pain they cause. The body is used as a canvas to display an understanding of these social concerns.

Rounding off the bill - and one of the highlights - is *Kung-Fu Crazy* by director/actor Craig Wainwright. Everything's made up and the clichés don't matter in a play in which a peasant boy Jin-Tao loses his family in an attack by the nefarious Overdub Clan, led by the tyrannical Warlord Mugabi.

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