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Dramatic 'rape' on stage at Festival

SHOCKING BRUTALITY: Performance artist wants to horrify people and bring the reality of abuse home to them

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A CONTROVERSIAL performance artist plans to simulate a brutal rape in what has been described as potentially the most shocking example of live performance art yet seen at Grahamstown's National Arts Festival.

The play, *6 Minutes*, is designed to draw attention to the plight of rape and child abuse victims in South Africa, but has met with mixed responses from women's rights groups.

The play will run on the Fringe, which starts on Thursday, for four nights in the Botanical Gardens and sees Rhodes University drama graduate Peter van Heerden, 34, viciously attacking University of Cape Town drama graduate Leila Anderson, 23.

The audience (at R60 a ticket) will then witness a brutal rape scene as well as scenes of whipping and other abuse. Speaking from Cape Town, Van Heerden said: "I rip off her blouse and then her panties. Then I rape her."

He said although the act would be simulated, there would be full nudity and the overall impression would be of a live rape.

Van Heerden says the play is named after a statistic that a child is sexually abused every six minutes in South Africa.

He believes the public has become so numbed by statistics and news of the rape of women and children that it is necessary to depict these horrendous acts as vividly as possible.

He called his work "visceral". "It is rough stuff. We get hurt. It is not a pretty play. It is a demonstration of our cycle of abuse. We read about rapes like this every day in the newspapers, and then we turn the page and read about how the Springboks are hoping to fare. I am showing something that is in our social fabric." The show ends with Van Heerden, naked, tied by the feet and strung upside down.

Grahamstown One-in-Nine anti-rape campaigner Larissa Klazinga said she worried that the work might be a "bit sensationalist". However, she said she needed to see the piece before commenting fully.

Eastern Cape theatre personality

CONTINUED/P2

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MEC scuffle: Cops suspended

DETENTION FURORE: Six officers disciplined after run-in with Bhisho safety and security head Thobile Mhlahlo



PHOTOGRAPH MIKE HOLMES

RIOTOUS COLOUR: The Botha sisters from Nelson Mandela Bay, 16-year-old Chelsea (left) and Ashleigh, 14, are enchanted by this prolific display of Cape honeysuckle on the edge of Settlers Park in Walmer. The Cape honeysuckle - *Tecoma capensis* - is a popular garden plant, but varieties of it occur in the wild throughout Africa, in colours ranging from yellows to deep orange. With vivid displays like these it's hard to believe the province is in the throes of winter. This weekend's temperatures are also more suggestive of summer, with 26°C expected in the Bay today and 29°C tomorrow. The Garden Route will experience a high of 29°C on both days, while East London can expect 28°C today and 29°C tomorrow.

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A HEATED late-night scuffle during which Eastern Cape Safety and Security MEC Thobile Mhlahlo was flung into the back of a police van may cost six Port Elizabeth police officers their jobs.

The officers are to be suspended for apprehending Mhlahlo last week after he intervened during the arrest of his chauffeur. The officers, who put Mhlahlo in the back of a police van and took him to the Humewood police station, were on Thursday night served with letters notifying them of the impending suspensions.

Mhlahlo was later released after telephoning national police commissioner Jackie Selebi to intervene. The suspension letters were served by provincial commissioner, Mpuemelelo Landu, and the officers - three from the Flying Squad, two from the dog unit and one from Humewood Police Station - were given 48 hours to make presentations on why they should not be suspended.

The incident happened in the early hours of last Sunday when Mhlahlo's chauffeur, Constable Zotwa, was pulled over for reckless driving. He then called Mhlahlo for assistance who soon afterwards arrived on the scene and allegedly remonstrated with the officers.

The chauffeur was subsequently fined R200 for changing lanes without indicating.

The impending suspensions have caused dissatisfaction among fellow police officers, who say the six are being victimised for doing their jobs. They fear they too could find themselves in trouble should they have to apprehend a highly placed political figure.

Sourcees said the charges against the six officers included detaining Mhlahlo without arresting him, humiliating a senior political official and unlawfully taking his two cellphones.

“They left me in the van for more than 30 minutes, when they had no grounds for arresting me in the first place”

THOBILE MHLAHO
SAFETY AND SECURITY MEC

However, some of the officers involved, who refused to be named for fear of further disciplinary steps, said they had been advised not to press charges against Mhlahlo.

“Charges were drawn up against the MEC, including interfering with a police investigation, intimidation and attempted murder, but these were not brought against him after negotiations were held in the boardroom of the Humewood Police Station,” said one.

Another officer said a distress call had been broadcast by one of the officers from the flying squad vehicle involved, calling for help because they were being attacked and threatened.

“When the MEC arrived on the scene, he threatened to take away a police officer's gun and throw him off a bridge. He also waved his business card at the police officers, saying he was their boss's boss and didn't have to listen to them.”

Mhlahlo said yesterday he was glad that action had been taken.

“It was not just an incident of placing me in the back of the police van but that they took me to the police station and left me in the van for more than 30 minutes when they had no grounds for arresting me in the first place,” he said.

He said he called Selebi to report the incident “not to try and pull rank, but because he is the head of the SAPS and I felt the need to inform him of the serious misconduct of his police officers.”

The six officers said they had met the Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (Popcru) and that the union would meet the MEC on Monday.

Booming EC game reserves turning away visitors

Brian Hayward
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GAME reserves in the Eastern Cape are having to turn away customers because business is so good and tourism experts say it will only get busier in the run-up to the 2010 Soccer World Cup.

While game reserves in the province have reported an up to 80 per cent increase in turnover and visitors over the past year, SA Tourism statistics show a 20% surge in visitors staying overnight in the province last year, compared with a mere 9% increase in 2005.

With the Eastern Cape increasingly being recognised as one of the world's top international biodiversity destinations, experts said other reasons for the increase in visitors included “greater collective marketing” by game re-

serves in the province with the numerous awards for reserves gaining international attention.

Eco-documentaries filmed in the province and shown abroad had also had “huge spin-offs”, they said.

“The tourism trends in South Africa are positive and the Eastern Cape is getting its share,” said Peter Myles, director of the Tourism Research Unit at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University.

“The 2010 World Cup automatically increases South Africa as a tourist destination, especially among soccer-playing countries as teams come to the country to prepare for the tournament.”

According to Myles the figures would “significantly increase” each year in the run up to the World Cup and a well-hosted World Cup would spell further good news for tourism. “Interna-

tional research has shown if a World Cup is hosted successfully, 37% of first-time visitors will return,” Myles said.

A knock-on effect of the tourism boom is a spike in local employment as reserves clamour to build, expand and upgrade their facilities to capitalise on visitors.

Several reserves are using the “off-peak” months from May to September to build multi-million rand conference centres, upmarket lodges, hotels and even boutique accommodation in Port Elizabeth for visitors before they leave for their reserves.

But even the traditionally quiet months are becoming increasingly busy with many South African tourists taking advantage of off-season prices, say owners.

Game prices have also spiralled thanks to the boom in both the eco-

tourism and international hunting market. “Game prices have gone up about 15% in sought-after species (since last year),” said Eastern Cape game management CEO Jokile Roux.

Craig Cullingworth, owner of Blaauwbosch between Port Elizabeth and the Karoo town of Steytlerville said: “Five years ago the Eastern Cape didn't have a big game reserve selection, now there are more than 12 and people are staying here instead of travelling up to places like the Kruger Park.”

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Learn to speak the same language as your pet

PHOTOGRAPH EUGENE COETZEE



Nwabisa Nofemele
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IS your cockatoo a little crabby, or your hamster highly strung? If so, chances are you and your pet are just not speaking the same language.

Two workshops to be held in the Eastern Cape in the next month will show pet owners how to communicate with their furry friends and solve their behavioural problems.

International animal communication author Jenny Shone will host an animal telepathic communication workshop at Kwantu Private Game Reserve on July 7 and 8. Organiser Sandy Carter said the

workshop would teach participants how to open communication channels between humans and animals, “even those animals that have crossed over”.

“People will learn how to pick up messages from animals other than using the normal senses - it's a spiritual process.” The workshop will also focus on healing energies and communicating with dead pets.

As if that wasn't enough, Pretoria-based animal behaviour specialist Dr Helen Zulch will highlight behaviours considered strange by humans but perfectly normal for animals, at a seminar in Port Elizabeth on July 14. Other speakers are veterinarians Dr Dean Sim and Dr Tarryn Pick, of Port Elizabeth.

Sim said misunderstandings between humans and pets could cause a stir in some households. “Humans should be a little more tolerant and learn pet language,” he says. For example, if you pat your dog on its head and it bites you, “it probably just thought you were challenging it to fight”.

Sim said some pets would do anything to get a reaction; often, the best option was to ignore the behaviour.

“When a pet does something wrong, the natural reaction is to punish it. For animals this does not work - the worst punishment is being ignored.”

The workshop will be held at 78, a restaurant in Mount Pleasant.

IN TUNE: Veterinary assistant Headman Tutu bonds with ginger cat Georgie.



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