Presented by Junction Avenue Theatre Company

LOVE, CRIME and JOHANNESBURG
By Junction Avenue Theatre Company

16-20 MARCH @ 7.30 PM
THE THEATRE – ST ANNE’S COLLEGE
R40 CONCESSIONS R60 ADULTS
BOOKINGS on 031-343 6100

“You may proclaim, good sirs, your fine philosophy
But till you feed us, right and wrong can wait!”

‘The law was made for one thing alone, for the exploitation of those who don't understand it.’

“When crimes begin to pile up they become invisible. When sufferings become unendurable the cries are no longer heard.”

Bertolt Brecht

Given the theatrics at our recent State of the Nation Address, there seems no better time to be staging Love, Crime and Johannesburg; a highly relevant and topical investigation of our ‘new’ democratic South Africa.

Created through workshopping at the Market Theatre in 1999, the cast worked with the real life stories of three high profile South Africans: firstly, the people’s poet, Mzwakhe Mbuli, who was arrested in 1997, accused of robbing a bank. It seemed ridiculous to everyone. He had been a powerful and hypnotic figure who performed poetry at mass rallies and funerals throughout the bitter 1980s in front of tens and thousands of people. This story was compounded when Robert McBride, a controversial soldier of the struggle, death row prisoner and then a member of parliament in South Africa’s first democratic government, was arrested, accused of gunrunning, and held in a Mozambican jail for six months without trial. How was this possible? Some claimed he had joined the ranks of criminals running guns into KwaZulu Natal. Others said he had infiltrated the operations on behalf of the secret service. Or was there a secret secret service in the ‘new’ democratic South Africa to spy on the old secret service? The media was full of such speculations. Then when Colin Chauke, former Umkhonto We Sizwe commander, was arrested and accused of masterminding the bank heists that were plaguing Johannesburg, speculation was that members of MK, the former guerrilla army of the struggle, were now putting their skills to work robbing banks and organising crime. Chauke, a high profile prisoner, managed to escape a high security prison, and while on the run from the law, lived a glamorous lifestyle partying with cabinet ministers and moving freely in and out the country. Yet when he was finally arrested, his girlfriend did not even have the money to pay the rent on her small Benoni flat. Where was all the money?

These three real-life stories fuelled the imagination of the workshop players. Could these extraordinary events be interpreted into characters to tell a story so central to the tensions and contradictions of postapartheid South Africa and its ‘new’ democratic government?

The workshop players created the play in true Epic Style by injecting songs and commentary into the action. As political theatre for social change, there was a strong desire to portray the complexity of the issues at hand while simultaneously allowing the audience to reflect on its meaning. Love, Crime and Johannesburg will be staged true to Brechtian style with songs, audio-visual scene titles and projections contrasting contemporary media to the events and characters of the play, and with a strong ensemble cast.