

WHAT'S happening

Saturday night offers two events for readers and writers – and listeners, in one case. The **Eugene Poetry Slam**'s fourth season kicks off at The Flamingo with an open mic, slam competition and performance by featured poet **Steve Larkin** (right). Larkin's bio says he is "best described as a poet, though he is invariably described as a comedian or rapper." Last year, he was the first British poet to win a major international slam poetry title when he took top honors at the Spoken Word Olympics in Canada. With comparisons to Eminem and Eddie Izzard, he sounds like quite an entertainer. But if slam poetry isn't your thing, you could head to the First Christian Church for the 17th anniversary celebration for ***Skipping Stones***, the award-winning nonprofit children's magazine. Music, dances and talks will fill the night, with appearances from Rabbi Yitzhak Husbands-Hankin, the Rev. Dan Bryant, Forrest McDowell, Paulette Ansari and others. See Saturday Calendar.

Last month, novelist **Chris Crutcher** (below) was scheduled to visit an Alabama high school. Nothing new for the author, who writes for teens and makes appearances all over the country, speaking to and with kids who find, in his books, characters that reflect their lives, good parts and bad. But just days before Crutcher was set to speak, his appearance was canceled. His book *Whale Talk* had been pulled from the school district's shelves in March; complaints cited rough language. *Whale Talk* has won more than a dozen state awards (selected by students), a Pacific Northwest Booksellers Award, and landed on the American Library Association's "Best Books for Young Adults" list, but honest depictions of teen life still get the book pulled from shelves with alarming regularity. Crutcher's newest book, *The Sledding Hill*, takes dead aim at the censors; the storyline features an appearance by "Chris Crutcher," who turns up to help defend his work yet again. In the book, as all too often happens in real life, Crutcher and the kids who love his books wind up on the losing side, but they've only lost the battle, not the war. "If there is a pervasive sickness in our culture," Crutcher has said, "it's that we're afraid of the wrong things." Crutcher speaks as part of Teen Read Week 2005 at the Eugene Public Library. See Friday Calendar.



The **Eugene Symphony's** 40th season continues with Holst's *The Planets*, Webern's *Variations for Orchestra* and Walton's *Viola Concerto*, for which the Symphony will be joined by **Nokuthula Ngwenyama** (below), in her Eugene debut. At 17, Ngwenyama won the Primrose Competition and the Young Concert Artists International Auditions, bringing her international recognition. Her debut recitals in Washington, D.C., and New York City were widely praised, and in 1997 she was awarded an Avery Fisher Career Grant. The concerto Ngwenyama will be playing was written in 1929 for the famous violist Lionel Tertis, but when he rejected the piece it was premiered and later championed by Paul Hindemith, the German composer, violist, teacher, theorist and conductor. The concerto is generally regarded as one of the more difficult pieces in a violist's repertoire. See Thursday, Oct. 20 Calendar.

