

# TALK OF THE TOWN



For the whole of August, the Peter and Paul Fortress is playing host to Art Beach, a new festival featuring sand sculptures and daily outdoor concerts. Sand sculptors or "carvers" from all over the world have come to St. Petersburg to create works of art on the theme of "the tree of life."

Fifteen two-person teams are working with specially imported river sand which allows braver artists to create sculptures up to 20 meters in height.

Dutch carver and last year's third place winner **Michel Dekok** said: "It is fantastic to be able to come to one of the few sand-sculpture events in Russia... the quality and popularity of sand sculpture is growing worldwide and it is good to see a competition of this kind in the heart of the city."

Despite occasionally inclement weather, the ear-splitting midday cannon and a few calamitous collapses, Michel and his fellow competitors have until 4 p.m. Friday to complete their works, the best of which will claim the \$1,500 first prize.

Of several Russian teams in the competition, **Marina Budkovera** is the only participant from St. Petersburg. Although she is a new comer to sand sculpting, Marina