

Dancescape South Africa (DSA) August 2024 Report

Dancescape South Africa (DSA) continues to facilitate daily dance classes in August of 2024, (2.00pm – 6.00pm Venue Zolani Hope Centre – Mantlane Road Zolani Ashton) engaging children in beginner and senior dance sessions. We currently employ the services of a resident teacher, a general assistant, and a director. Thanks to the support of all those who have donated to our project we are able to preserve the Fiona Sargeant legacy. Our top priority is to facilitate classes in a safe environment for both teacher and learners.

The Dancescape South Africa Directors Report:

Usually, the month of August is all about performing at the Montagu Youth Arts Festival. However, this year the festival has moved to September. We are hard at work preparing our ten entries for the festival, but this month was not without its own excitement as we were also preparing for a performance at the Artscape Opera House in Cape Town.

The month began with a meeting of the Dancescape South Africa trustees. I was excited to inform the board that we had a very positive response from the National Lotteries Commission. I had a busy month completing the necessary documentation and eventually delivering it in person for signing at their offices in Cape Town later in the month. From then and toward the end of the month much time was spent sending documents to them as they are very thorough. I also informed the board that The Department of Culture and Sport are also funding us, and more paperwork was needed later in the month to finalize that agreement. At that DSA meeting we also discussed the Zolani Youth Choir and how we could help them financially as the choir was travelling to Moscow, Russia to represent South Africa. The board and I agreed to donate R5000 towards the cost of their clothing. I am glad to say that the choir managed to raise all the funds required. We are delighted that they were given this opportunity. Nqaba Mafilika, our resident teacher, attended a sendoff on our behalf before their departure.

The board and I discussed the importance of trainee teachers. We currently don't officially have one and it was agreed that this should be a priority. I mentioned that a former teacher had appealed to me for help and was available to teach. Aviwe November, one of the Late Fiona Sargeant early students had taught for DSA before the Covid Pandemic. However, at that time he had been unreliable, and I didn't want to bring him back as a teacher. I proposed that I should have a good talk with him and see if he was prepared to teach again if his performance was to improve. I did so shortly after our meeting and can report that we have employed him for a three-month trial period and a lower salary with the intention of seeing if he will work alongside Nqaba and be consistent in attending work daily. Aviwe is a good teacher and has a lot of experience as a performer. We hope that he will not disappoint, and I hope to be able to employ him as a full-time teacher after his trial period.



Above: Aviwe November teaches.

I spent several days this month going in to rehearse for the 25th of August performance at the Artscape Opera House. Ten of our students we are going and Nqaba chose a piece called The Gang. Initially Lihle Mfene began the choreography, but Nqaba finished it. Unfortunately, many of the cast were not pitching up for classes and rehearsals. Once again, we had to have several pep talks to motivate the senior students to change their attitude. I am glad to say that toward the final week of rehearsals we managed to get a full cast every day and they eventually developed the strength and technique to get through the demanding piece. It seemed to me that the dancers were slow to understand the significance of performing on the Opera House stage. However, towards the due date their excitement grew in leaps and bounds, and I think that some of them were beginning to feel nervous as reality set in. Once again at the early rehearsals we had the usual difficulties and that being that the dancers were only executing the steps devoid of meaning and feeling. This is usually the most difficult barrier to brake, but it all began to come together closer to the performance.

On the 25th of August the cast of ten, Nqaba, Patricia and I travelled to Cape Town to perform in a production called "Centre Stage" Presented by Cape Town City Ballet (CTCB). We were a part of 19 other dance studios coming from in and around Cape Town and the Western Cape. Laura Bosenberg, a former principal dancer with CTCB was the brainchild of the event and chief organizer. Her team of helpers

included Sanette van der Mescht and Brigitte Reeve Taylor. Sanette was one of our guest teachers several years ago. The performance was a part of the Cape Town City Ballets 90th Birthday Celebrations. Our first task was to have a stage placing and lighting rehearsal in full costume on the Opera stage. The dancers could now feel the enormous stage space, possibly double the size if not more of our studio in Zolani. Once done they all had a chance to relax, eat and prepare for the show which was scheduled for 7 PM that evening. I would like to thank Carol Bruton from RAM for their donation of food and drinks for all of us, we really appreciated this. Soon enough it was time for performance and Dancescape was 13th in line. Dear reader, I must mention that the most amazing thing happened at the beginning of the show. Laura Bosenberg came out to address the audience. She introduced the evening and thanked all the studios for being a part of the event, but it was her final words which shook me. She said that the performance was dedicated to the memory of Fiona Sargeant and her dedication to dance. I was awestruck. I had no idea that after all this time after her passing, people like Laura and so many others were moved by our founding members' contribution, so much so that they chose to acknowledge Fiona at such an important event. Thank you so much Laura, we are trying to preserve the Fiona Sargeant Legacy, and she was helping us to do this.



Above: Patricia Chamanga with all the food donated by Carol from RAM for our day at Artscape

Our dancers and staff were given the opportunity to watch the first half. I don't know if this did anything to quell their nerves. And then suddenly there they were on the Opera House stage dancing with all their strength and passion. I was so proud of each and every one of them and the audience equally showed their delight with hearty applause. Well done young dancers, you have achieved something so special that I hope you will remember for a long time. Later we all got back onto the bus, tired but elated at the same time. I would like to take this opportunity to thank God for having his hand over us, especially when we travel so late into the night. Thank you, almighty God, for your mercy.



Above and below: Our dancers performing "The Gang" on the Artscape Opera House stage.



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25 Aug 2024, 19:00. Tickets available via webtickets.co.za

CAPE TOWN 90
CITY BALLET 90
Centre Stage

20 different dance schools, including Cape Town's tertiary performing Arts Training institutions, come together to each present a performance piece to celebrate the joy of dance for CTCB's 90th year. Over 200 young dancers-in-training and full time students aged 5 - 25, will present 20 different pieces of choreography, ranging from classical ballet, to jazz, musical theatre, African contemporary and gumboot. These young dancers come together to honour CTCB's past, its present and to dance into its future with the joy this company has given to so many

25 Aug 2024, 19:00. Tickets available via webtickets.co.za

Nqaba Mafilika, our resident teacher's, report:

This month started very intensely, the attendance was good at the studio, but some of the other students were busy with schoolwork, school projects and some were kind of silly trying to lack motivation. Mitya and I needed to rehearse them anyway and we kept our faith, hope and focus on committing ourselves to working with the students, preparing them for the expected upcoming performance.

I am glad and happy to have an additional helping hand from Aviwe November who is working nicely with the kids under my guidance, and I believe that he has a lot to offer the students. I also think that if he is really passionate and shows respect to this kind of organization, we can take Dancescape South Africa to great heights. Liseza is pleased to teach but I believe she still needs lots of mentorship from the organization and wish that she gets to be serious about assisting with the kids and anything expected from her.



Above: Nqaba attends the Zolani Youth Choir sendoff before they travel to Moscow, Russia.

The Dancescape students were invited by their school this month to perform, and they did two pieces at the hall in front of their teachers and higher-grade learners. They did an amazing job, and their peers

were blown away. This is a good initiative for them to make the other kids in their community respect, realize, give understanding to others that one doesn't just get up and dance but takes years of training and be a dancer. The Artscape performance was phenomenal, and I can't really explain how the students did, but they put their best foot forward. I am so proud of them, and I am grateful for the support I get from the Dancescape structure and wish they continue to do so in the future.

The McGregor program is still going strong and there are good vibes everywhere and we can't wait to present some work on their anniversary in November for the public. I went to attend a sendoff for Mr Odwa Mvunge and his Zolani Youth Choir as they were embarking on a trip to Moscow and he was grateful and appreciated the support he got from our organization, mentioned this in his speech publicly.

Once again, we thank you for taking the time to read this report. Please visit our website at: <http://dancescapesouthafrica.org.za/> and follow us on social media.

Mitya Sargeant (CEO, and Director – Dancescape South Africa)

