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DANCESCAPE SOUTH AFRICA

Uplifting People Through Dance

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3rd Quarter Report for Dancescape South Africa from July through to September 2024

Daily dance classes continued during school term times throughout July to September of 2024 (2.00pm – 6.00pm Venue Zolani Hope Centre – Mantlane Road Zolani Ashton) engaging children in beginner and senior dance sessions. Dancescape South Africa (DSA) was able, through the kind donations of individuals and organizations to employ 1 full time resident teacher and an assistant teacher. We were also able to employ the services of a director / administrator and a general assistant. We thank all who have made it possible to preserve the Fiona Sargeant Legacy and to uplift the disadvantaged youth of our country through dance.

July 2024:

This month we were excited about two planned outings. The first was to see a performance in Cape Town at the Homecoming Centre. It's the old Athol Fugard Theatre. It was my first time there and also my first-time seeing Baba Yaya which is a dance company formed by Balu Nivision. Balu came to visit in past months to see how Nqaba was doing, and she also gave a class. She invited our students to see one of her companies' performances called Oorleef on Saturday the 13th of July. The performance was outstanding, and we all enjoyed it very much. I felt as if this style of dance, which was not classical ballet, was the dance equivalent of the abstract expressionism movement in art. The energy coming from the stage was intoxicating. Even though it wasn't classical ballet I could see that most of the dancers had been well trained as they showed a strong technique. After the show I noticed some of our students attempting some of the movements which they had just seen moments

before. A very enjoyable afternoon was had by all. Only days later we had a very early start as the bus picked the students up at 6 AM in Zolani. The reason was because the performance began at 10 AM at the Artscape Opera House in Cape Town. Thankfully all went smoothly again even though we must have spent at least three quarters of an hour in heavy traffic.



Above: DSA students attending the South African International Ballet Competition.

Earlier in June I made contact with Dirk Badenhorst who not only directs his own company in Johannesburg but organizes the South African International Ballet Competition (SAIBC) and he arranged tickets for us to see the finals of the competition. From this performance the winners would be selected and would perform alongside professional dancers at a special gala event which was

held later that evening on the 17 of July 2024. It was fantastic for the students to see a very impressive level of ballet technique. Most of the finalists were from South Africa but many other countries such as the USA, UK and China were represented. We would have loved to stay on and see the Gala as well, but it would have been a very late night for the students.



Above: Aphiwe November (top) is now a professional dancer and below, Mthuthuzeli November appointed Artistic Associate for the Dutch National Ballet Academy

On that very morning of the 17th of July, I happened to see a Facebook post about Aphiwe November, who was one of our students. Early last year in 2023, Aphiwe traveled to the USA to continue his dance training at the Houston Ballet. We were very excited for him. The post mentioned that Aphiwe had recently been invited to join the Cape Town City Ballet and was now a professional dancer. I mentioned the news to our students. Many had already heard the news, and all are very proud of him. Well done Aphiwe we hope your career goes from strength to strength.

Another wonderful snippet of information came to me in early July. Once again on Facebook, I learn that Mthuthuzeli November, has been appointed Artistic Associate for the Dutch National Ballet Academy and will take on his position with them in their next school year. Mthuthuzeli was one of the Late Fiona Sargeant former Zolani students. She would have been so proud of him.

August 2024:

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.

September 2024:

This month was particularly exciting because of the Montagu Youth Arts Festival that took place on the 14th of September at the Montagu Civic Centre. If I had to compare our rehearsals and preparation for this year's festival to last year, I must report that there were some big changes. This year the students showed a lot more commitment. They also listened to the teachers and me and applied the corrections. Last year it was difficult to get the students to respond and apply themselves and this showed in the results achieved. This year our results were a lot better. The Civic Centre was unfortunately far from ideal. The stage area is a tiled surface and there were no curtains and very limited dressing room space. However, the almost 40 dancers involved adapted very well and did their very best. We performed our 10 pieces in the morning and then watched the remaining program so that the young dancers could see what is happening in other schools.

The Montagu Youth Arts Festival Dancescape South Africa results:

1. The Gang	96%	Double Gold
2. Bolero	94%	Double Gold
3. The Call	94%	Double Gold
4. Bare	89%	Gold
5. Abomvelo	88%	Gold
6. Dancing Violin	88%	Gold
7. Happy	88%	Gold
8. Garland Dance	87%	Gold
9. Nae nae	86%	Gold
10. The Lion King	85%	Gold



*Dancescape South Africa
Montagu Youth Arts Festival
2024*



Dancescape South Africa Trophy's won:

Best Group Modern / Contemporary	The Gang
Best Group Ballet	The Garland Dance
Best Group Traditional Dance	Bare
Best Group Overall Entry	Bare
Best Choreographer / Teacher	Dancescape South Africa

Congratulations to the dancers and the team for doing so well. Thank you for all your hard work, keep it going.



Above: Dancers during class and rehearsals

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)