

## Dancescape South Africa (DSA) July 2021 Report

Dancescape South Africa (DSA) could not facilitate dance classes for most of the month of July 2021 due to the schools being closed and level four Covid restrictions being put in place for most of the month. The schools did however reopen on the 26<sup>th</sup> of July and we were once again able to resume our classes from 3.00pm – 6.00pm at the Zolani Hope Centre – Mantlane Road (Zolani Ashton) engaging children in beginner and senior dance sessions, however due to the Covid 19 pandemic our classes are currently restricted in numbers attending. We observe the relevant protocols such as screening the students before class, observing body temperature, sanitizing hands, observing social distancing and making the wearing of cloth masks mandatory. Our top priority is to facilitate classes in a safe environment for both teacher and learners.

### The Dancescape South Africa Directors Report:

Due to the country being placed on level 4 lock down restrictions and the early closure of the schools we were forced to close the studio in line with these measures. The school did however reopen on the 26<sup>th</sup> of July and classes and rehearsals resumed. This month we were shocked to learn of the passing of Africa Mtikitiki. Masonwabe Natious Mtikitiki affectionately known to us as Africa was born on the 18<sup>th</sup> of February 1985. I was told that Africa had struggled with cancer which would lead to his untimely death in July of this year. I must add that I, like many who knew him in the Zolani community, was very sad to hearing of his death. He had worked alongside the Late Fiona Sargeant for many years to teach dance in the Zolani Community.



*Above: Some of the people who attended the memorial service organized by the students to pay tribute to Africa Mtikitiki who passed away in July 2021*

Africa was a very talented teacher, well respected for teaching traditional African dance. His vibrancy and energy towards his craft was amazing and as I mentioned to those who attended his memorial service, this was a man who had been taken from us far too soon. He still had so much to give to the youth of the community. Africa had in past years taught and choreographed for our organization and then in recent times we did not hear from him, no doubt due to his illness. We send our condolences to his family and friends at this time. I have many fond memories of Africa but one stands out. One afternoon Africa arrived to teach. He told me that he would be teaching an African style class which would include a barre. I was intrigued by this as I had never seen or heard of anything like this before. It was amazing to see how the ballet barre could now be used to complement an African traditional style of dance. I was very impressed, and it will be a very happy memory of this man who had given so much to the kids of our community.



*Above: Our dancers dancing at the Africa Mtikitiki memorial service*

Africa had no doubt left an impression on our students. So much so that these students who knew him well decided to host a memorial service and on the afternoon of the 12<sup>th</sup> of July a special memorial service was held. There was dancing and some words were spoken. It was a special time of remembering this teacher who had given so much. I was so impressed that the students had taken the initiative to remember Africa and how he had made an impact on their lives.

Another wonderful moment this month was when Thimna Ndwe approached me with an incentive to give food to the local community. Sponsored by Kristine Elliott and assisted by our resident teacher food was given out to the community on Mandela Day. It was wonderful to

hear how Thimna was giving back to the community. I am very happy when I see people taking the initiative to do something good for the local community. Well done Thimna and thank you.



*Above: The local Zolani community receives a food handout on Mandela Day, initiated by Thimna Ndwe and assisted by Nqaba Mafilika.*

We are preparing for the Montagu Youth Arts Festival to be held in August of this year. Unfortunately due to the pandemic and the recent lockdown level 4 restrictions we were unable to rehearse and will only have about 2 weeks of rehearsal time left before the performance at the festival. We have 10 entries to perform this year and hope that all will go well.

#### **The Resident Teachers Report:**

The school closed down on the 1st of July due to Covid level 4. This month we also had a bit of a sad moment when we heard about Africa who passed away due to Cancer. He had worked with the late Fiona Sargeant and was a part of the kids' lives. The kids paid tribute to him by organizing a memorial service where they performed to those attending the service. A few words were spoken where it was mentioned how he had looked after them and how he had treated the dancers. It was also very emotional for me as the new teacher who in a way has taken over from him. A few days later on Mandela Day we were able to give food to the

community. Sponsored by Kristine Elliott, the event was very exciting and Dancescape South Africa has received recognition for helping the people of Zolani with this handout. Thimna Ndwe who has recently returned from the USA where she was staying with Kristine helped to organize the event. We are now back in the studio following the reopening of the schools and working hard on coming events. We are rehearsing our repertoire for the Montagu Youth Arts festival, trying to get our fitness back. Also just to mention as well that Aphiwe and Chuma have successfully completed their online course with American Ballet Theatre and are now busy with Alonzo King Lines ballet doing their last few classes this week and I'm very happy that they get to have a world class experience of teachers mentoring them

**Lutho Zwedala and Milisa Mathiso report back from Cape Town:**

Lutho reports.....Hi teacher Mitya, I hope you're doing well this month of July. I didn't do much because I just started my second section of my Rehab and since I went to Africa's funeral so Cape Town City Ballet said I must isolate for two weeks before coming back so am doing my rehab at home and now am building strength on my legs so that I can go back, in fact this is my last month doing my rehab so I'll be back on studio with them soon.. I am getting there because I don't feel the pain on my leg anymore. I would like to thank DSA for their investment in me, thank you so much...

Milisa writes... Hi..We did online classes this month as we were on level four so by next week we hope to go to studio because there is also the taxi violence here in Cape Town. When we get back we going to rehearse for a performance that we will have at the end of August at Artscape

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)