

## **Dancescape South Africa (DSA) August 2023 Report**

Dancescape South Africa (DSA) continues to facilitate daily dance classes in August 2023 (3.00pm – 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 teachers and learners.

### **The Dancescape South Africa Directors Report:**

The month of August is usually an exciting month for DSA because of the Montagu Youth Arts Festival. This month proved to be no exception. We only had three weeks available to polish our 10 entries after the students returned from school holidays in July. Nqaba and I got to work every afternoon of the week not only trying to get each dance piece to an acceptable level of technique but also to make sure the students become performers too. The latter is always a challenge as most of the students think that all they must do is execute the steps and movements. Every year our challenge is to change their thinking. I had to explain, almost daily, that dance is not a sport where the winner is the athlete which can run faster or jump higher. In dance not only must the dancer master the technique and remember the choreography, but also tell a story, emote and emotion, and make the audience either laugh or cry.

This year our turn to perform at the festival was on the 5<sup>th</sup> of August and as we were collaborating with The First Step Ballet, we shared the stage with Mary Silver. The Worcester Gymnasium also performed some very exciting hip hop pieces that morning. Dancescape South Africa had 10 pieces to perform. Nqaba and Patricia Chimanga, our general assistant, worked backstage whilst I stood by with the technical staff in front of house to que the music.

All in all, everything went very well, and I was proud of all our young performers. Most of them remembered their corrections even under the pressure of performing for a live audience and being assessed by judges as well. I was also delighted to see each of the students enjoying themselves. It is a great joy for me and the audience to see kids having fun even whilst they are fully absorbed in the choreography. Of course, not every piece is joyous, and the students were able to change the mood for those pieces which required it.

One of our entries was a collaboration piece. Choreographed by Nathan Bartman and Ciara Baldwin earlier this year, Bare was a combination of the First Step Ballet dancers from McGregor and our senior students. As reported several times already in previous reports, our students travel twice a month to McGregor to spend most of a Saturday doing ballet,

contemporary classes, and rehearsing. It was great to see the two schools working together and I think that everybody has learnt a lot.



Above: Pictures of our final dress rehearsal.



This year's festival was under new management with Retha Pool taking over as director. I also noticed that there seemed to be more entries this year with more days of dance to accommodate several schools. Sadly, I was unable to see any of the other schools performing as we were busy with rehearsals, however I suspect that the standard of the festival has grown substantially. Our judges for dance this year were Lee Fennel, who was a judge last year and Elize Cogle, possible judging here for the first time. We look forward to building a new repertoire for next year's festival.



Entry title	Mark received	Certificate received
Mango Groove	86.5	Gold
Goodbye Always	80.5	Gold
Drigo	89	Double Gold
Giselle peasant solo	83.5	Gold
West African	88.5	Gold
Boots	95	Double Gold
The Entertainer	77.5	Silver
Ahoy	96	Double Gold
Hamba Wena	94.5	Double Gold

Bare	83	Gold
------	----	------



Above: The DSA marks and certification received at this year's Montagu Youth Arts Festival 2023. Below: Our dancers receive their trophy for Drigo, which was the Best Ballet Entry of the festival 2023




I am very proud of the four Double Golds, the five Golds and the one Silver Certificate awarded. Dancescape South Africa also received a trophy for the Best Ballet Entry of the Festival 2023. Well done dancers, keep up the good work.

The rest of the month of August carried on much the same as usual with students arriving for daily classes. I have two pieces of good news to report.

<p><b><u>Random Acts</u></b></p> <p>Random Acts, an organization in the USA, has offered to help us financially. I will not disclose how much money they are providing except to say that it will help DSA substantially. Random Acts managed the initial crowd funding campaign in 2017 which raised enough money to keep DSA alive for more than seven years and only dried up in early 2023. We are delighted and it has taken a huge amount of pressure off our constant search for funding. We thank you so much Random Acts.</p>	<p><b><u>Harlequin Floors</u></b></p> <p>The vinyl flooring used by professional dancers and studios all over the world arrived. The product manufactured by Harlequin Floors in the United Kingdom is made of high quality and sort after by many studios. Four roles arrived in late August, however, and most unfortunately, we can't role them out just yet as our existing floor requires extensive repairs. It's going to be a wonderful day when these highly prized mates are eventually rolled out. Thank you, Ann Hall, and all those who</p>
--	---

	contributed financially to making this a reality.
	

<p><b>The Resident Teachers Report:</b></p> <p>We kicked off the month with the Montagu festival which went well. Out of 10 pieces 9 got gold or double gold certificates, 1 taking the silver certificate and we were the Best Ballet Group Entry of the festival which was rewarding. The students worked hard but we still hope to do much better in future as they have got an unexpected wake up call, the competition was tough for them this year so we will look at ways of getting more trophies instead.</p> <p>This month we received dance mats from Ann Hall which is a dream come true for any dance studio. Mitya and I are grateful to her for her generosity to the organization at large. The Dancescape students are doing well with the McGregor project, they are working hard, and I think since it's still first year for this initiative there is still room for improvement from the students though much is expected from them. One of the students, Lakhiwe, fell while trying a toure and had to be taken to hospital but we managed he is feeling well and back to classes.</p>	 <p>Above: Nqaba very happy to receive the Harlequin flooring.</p> <p>There has been a good atmosphere in the studio since we spoke to the students about pitching up for their classes, so I feel they are stepping up their game. We have a number of new students working hard and working on new material.</p>
--	---

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)