

Dancescape South Africa (DSA) January 2023 Report

Dancescape South Africa (DSA) continues to facilitate daily dance classes in January of 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 teacher and learners.



Above: Kristine Elliott teaching a step from the corner.

The Dancescape South Africa Directors Report:

Dancescape South Africa opened its doors for classes this year on the 18th of January in line with the opening of government schools in the Western Cape. However, 20 students who were selected late last year were given the opportunity to attend a special week of dance facilitated by DSA and hosted by Kristine Elliott of the Gugulethu Ballet Project. On Monday the 9th of January, Kristine invited Nathan Bartman and Ciara Baldwin to teach a more contemporary style of dance for the week whilst Kristine focused on classical ballet.

The week of dance classes was also a collaboration between Mary Silver's First Step dance school situated in MacGregor. Later in the week the Zolani Youth Choir joined everybody as they sang a piece created by Nathan and Ciara to accompany one of the dance pieces.



Above: Kristine Elliott teaches ballet to our eager students.

The week culminated in two performances on Saturday the 14th. The first was held at the Zolani Community Hall with the hope of showcasing what the dancers and singers had been working on all week and it was free to the public. We hoped to have as many of the parents and family watch. The second showing was in MacGregor at the NG Kerk Hall. The evening performance was jam packed with locals who were not disappointed by the level of dedication and energy that the performers managed to produce after a long and grueling week of training.

The dancers arrived every morning at 9 AM to begin the day with class. This was followed by rehearsal of the pieces which were to be performed later in the week. Kristine would either do the morning session and then swap with Nathan and Ciara who taught in the afternoon. After Kristine's morning session she travelled to MacGregor to teach and rehearse the First Step student that afternoon and the following day the schedule would be reversed. On Friday of that

week all the students and the choir met at the Zolani Community Hall to rehearse together. It was a long and very demanding week for everybody involved. On the Tuesday after a challenging start to the week, I was concerned that the students wouldn't have the strength to get through the week. I wondered if any of the dancers would return on Wednesday but fortunately a strong resilience prevailed and by Thursday, I observed a determination in all the dancers to complete the week and must say that I am very proud of them. The students stopped for lunch which we provided for them before the afternoon session which usually ended at 6 PM. Sandra Reichert, the DSA chairperson, managed to arrange some fruit which the kids feasted on. Watermelons, plums, cherries, apricots and apples provided much needed refreshment and complimented the sandwiches and burgers which we proved daily. Thank you, Sandra, for arranging this and to all those local farmers who provided.



Above: Nathan and Ciara putting the students through their paces and quick to demonstrate how things should be done.

I am very glad to report that this month Chuma Mathiso, his older sister, Milisa, Phelo Ngxukumo and Thimna Ndwe began their work and training with Jazzart Dance Theatre, based in Cape Town. It's a very exciting opportunity for them and they will be trained and mentored

by the very best. Earlier in January, Phelo reported to me that each of the students will be given a stipend which will assist with accommodation and travel expenses. We wish them all the very best for the year ahead. All the above-mentioned dancers attended the week dance intensive which no doubt prepared their bodies for the busy schedule at Jazzart the following week.

Late last year I received a very exciting message from Aphiwe November. Aphiwe informed me that he had been given an opportunity to join the Houston Ballet in Texan, USA. I don't know the exact details and how it came about but clearly, he has found a way to return to the USA and to pursue his dreams of becoming a professional dancer. We are very happy for him and hope his dreams are fulfilled. By January of 2023 Aphiwe had already left and is living and working in Houston. We are going to miss him.

Nqaba Mafilika then continued his role as resident teacher when the school reopened later in the month. Many of the senior students who the younger dancers look up to, have left this year and one of Nqaba's challenges is to find those who are now going to take on leadership roles in the group. We wish him all the strength he needs to stimulate the very best from our dancer throughout the year ahead.

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)

