

Dancescape South Africa (DSA) July 2024 Report

Dancescape South Africa (DSA) continues to facilitate daily dance classes in July 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:

The school term began on the 9th of July and Nqaba continued to teach daily classes. He was a little concerned about a leak at one of the taps which had created some flooding in the boys' changing room. Also, he reported that one of the boards was showing signs of wavering again. There were also still some leakages from the roof. The leaking pipe was eventually fixed later in the month.

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. Earlier that week there had been a lot of rain and severe damages in Cape Town. I was concerned about the flooding and only after consulting Lihle Mfene who lives in Cape Town did we decide to leave on that Saturday Morning. Thankfully the bus trip went smoothly even though the rain was continuous in Cape Town. 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: Our students attending the Baby Yaya performance. Tickets were arranged by Balu Nivision.



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.

Our next outing will be an opportunity for 10 of our dancers to perform at the Artscape Opera House in late August. As mentioned in a previous report we have been selected to dance there as part of the Cape Town City Ballets 90th birthday celebration. We are all very excited and Lihle Mfene and Nqaba Mafilika choreographed a piece for the event.

Nqaba Mafilika, our resident teacher's, report:

This month was very special for me, and I think for everyone at Dancescape as we were in Cape town for performances twice in a row. We got to watch a show by Baba Yaya dance company contemporary where there was so much energy being displayed on the stage and a good contact for us to have for future references, we watched the ballet competition where Mitya and I felt that there was a shortage for male dancers.

As I have observed from our dancers, they loved what we did for them and found it very educational to go out and experience such talent, they realized that they need to work hard. It was nice for them to unite with Phelo, Chuma and Thimna to see that they are still pushing with their dancing.

I would like to thank everyone who made these outings possible for us, we appreciate and look forward to more events such as these in the future and making new contacts for the organization.

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)