

## **Dancescape South Africa (DSA) August 2020 Report**

Dancescape South Africa continues to facilitate daily dance classes in August 2020 (3.00pm – 6.00pm Venue Zolani Hope Centre – Mantlane Road Zolani Ashton) engaging children in beginner and senior dance sessions, however due to the Covid 19 pandemic we have limited the classes to just 2 students per class. 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:**

There is not too much to report this month. The country moved from level 3 to level 2 lock down restrictions on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August, in an attempt to stimulate business activity and the economy. However restrictions like the use of face cloth masks and social distancing remained in place. Towards the end of August more kids were returning to the local schools but are still having to observe strict safety protocols. Dancescape South Africa continued to facilitate dance classes with only 2 students per class. We may well review this early next month and perhaps increase our classes to 4 students. Nqaba Mafilika continues to teach every afternoon of the week. Numbers of the active Covid 19 cases have dropped in the area but it's no reason to relax our safety protocols just yet.

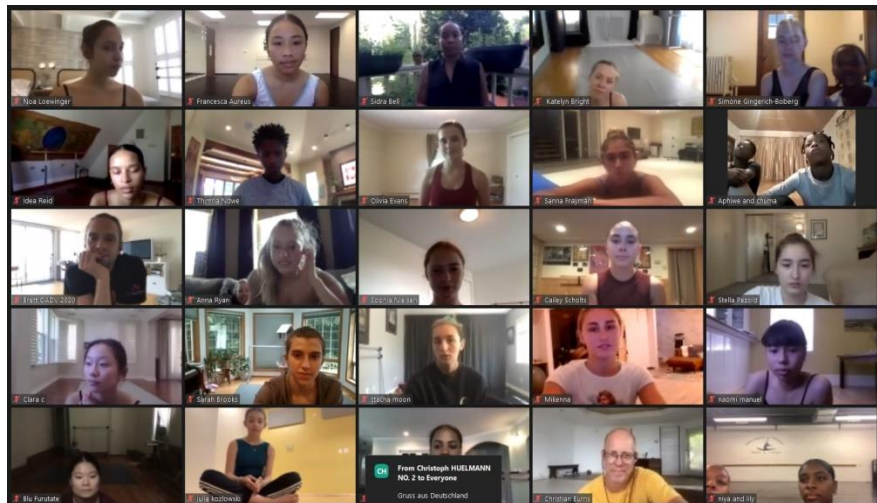


Kristine Elliott managed to arrange for two of our young dancers to attend the Alonso King Lines Ballet Summer program held in late July and early August 2020. The amazing thing was that this event was held online over 2 weeks through the Zoom platform. Chuma Mathiso and Aphiwe November attended. They had also attended the previous months online summer intensive hosted by the American Ballet Theatre. Every afternoon and evening dance space was made in the home of Chuma's living room. Chairs were used as Barre's and the classes were conducted under the watchful online eye of teachers and choreographers in the USA. Thimna

Ndwe who has been staying with Kristine in the USA was also involved. I must admit that I was at first somewhat skeptical as to just how effective this would be. However I actually ended up thinking that it was a huge success and in many respect the event could be considered historical as I don't think anything quite like this has ever been done before on this scale. Not only did the students have to partake in technical dance classes focusing mostly on the barre work but also learned and rehearsed repertoire.



**Above:** Living room converted into dance studio for Zoom classes with Chuma Mathiso and Aphiwe November. **Below:** Some of the attending students including Thimna Ndwe (second from left in second row)





**Above:** *One of the teachers watches his students ready to give correction and or praise*

I managed to watch the entire final day's performances. It started with a ballet barre class and then later in the day the dancers performed the repertoire that they had been taught during the course. The participants were separated into groups each led by a prominent dance professional. Each individual were then given the opportunity to perform their piece to the world. I was intrigued by how corrections were delivered by the teachers who were obviously scrutinizing each dancer from their own computer monitor on the other side of the world. I think that technology can be used, should be used and can be a very productive tool in the art world in general. Imagine being auditioned for a role without having to travel to the other side of the world to attend formal auditions. Through this course online training has been proven to work. The only obvious downside to it all was the lack of social and physical interaction between the participants.



**Above:** *Another of the repertoire teachers giving corrections to attentive young students.*

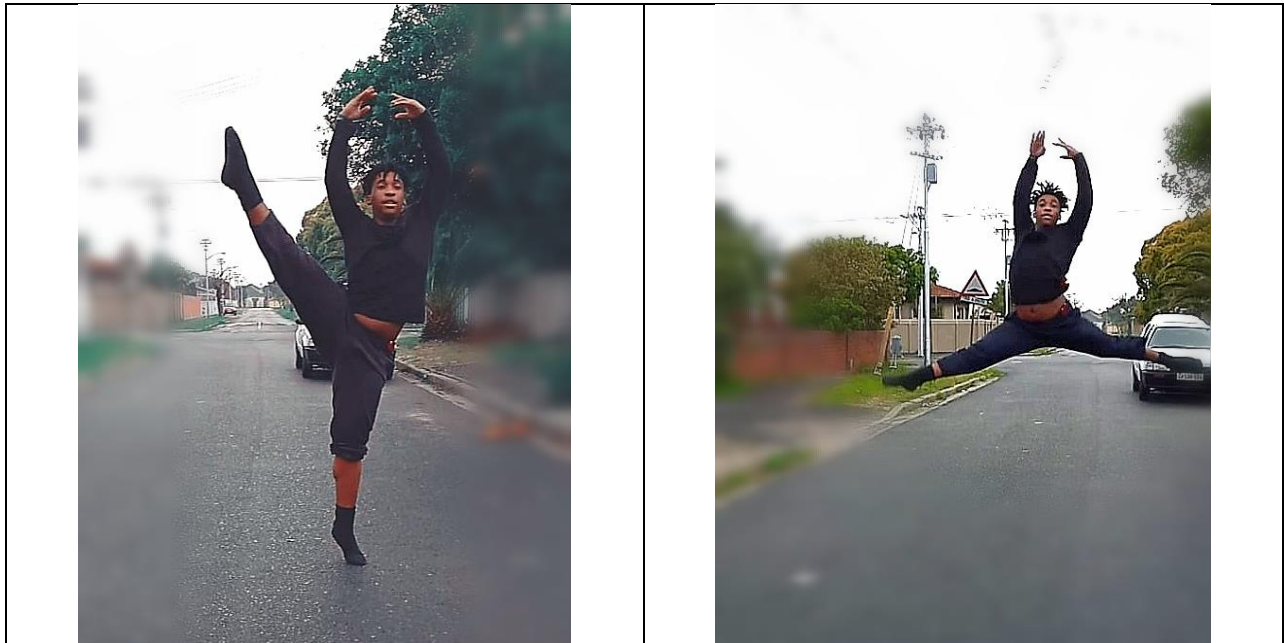


**Above:** *Chuma Mathiso dancing one of the repertoire.*

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

I have been keeping an eye on the three students attending the Cape Academy of Performing Arts (CAPA). It has been a difficult year for all of them. Lihle Mfene is in his third and final year. Imagine being trained to a high level of expertise, whilst preparing to work as a professional dancer and having your dance training simply cut short by the covid 19 restrictions for several months of your final year of training. CAPA has been allowed to open to continue training the dancers but each student only has three days a week, not the 6 days which they had been used to. I asked Lihle how he was feeling. He explained to me that because he had much more free time available he has been able to keep in contact with friends that he made whilst in Hamburg, earlier this year, and also some of his American friends. He had developed strong and intimate relationships with these friends, where he has been able to talk about personal issues and struggles. Lihle told me that he is the kind of person who loves to go out and meet new people and discover what others are thinking and not just talk about dance. Generally he finds social media difficult to get to talk to others about deeper issues and far prefers to be talk with somebody physically present. Dancing with a mask is really difficult, Lihle says, “It’s really hard to breathe in the mask, sometimes I just want to fall, faint and die”. Lihle tells me that he has

been able to learn more about himself through the pandemic. He says that it's not a good thing to have a pandemic but at least he has been able to learn more about himself.

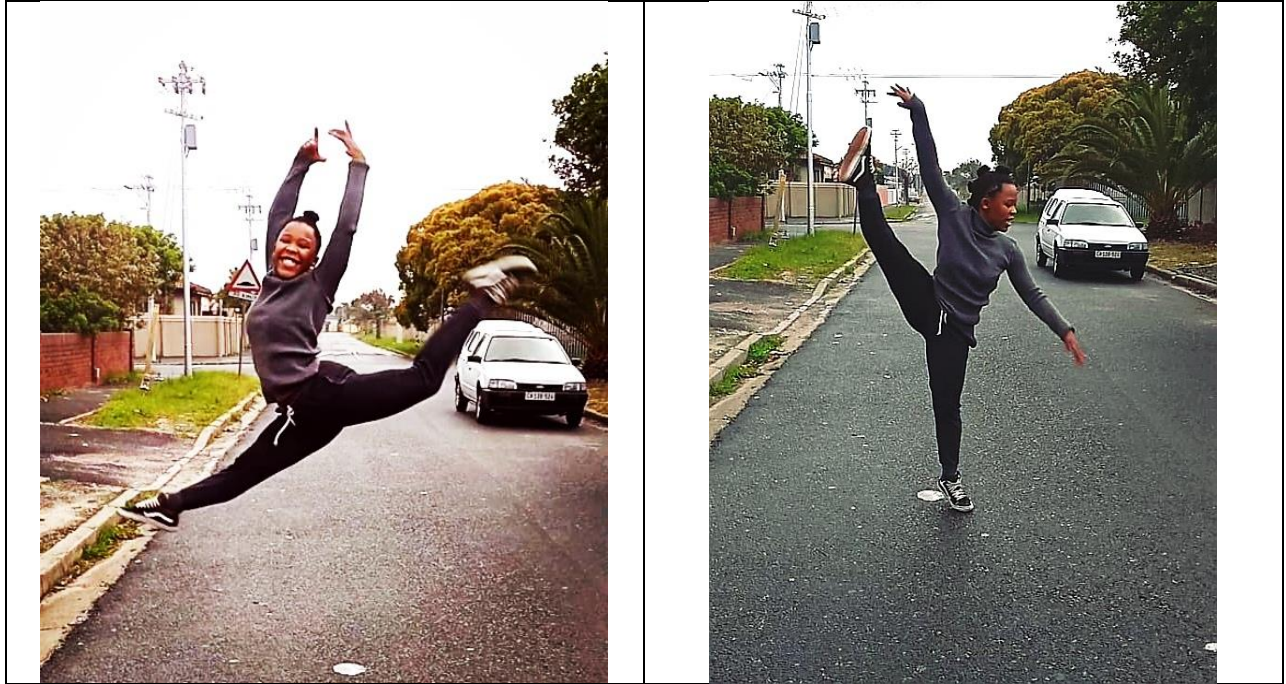


**Above:** *Lihle Mfene dancing on the street outside his accommodation*

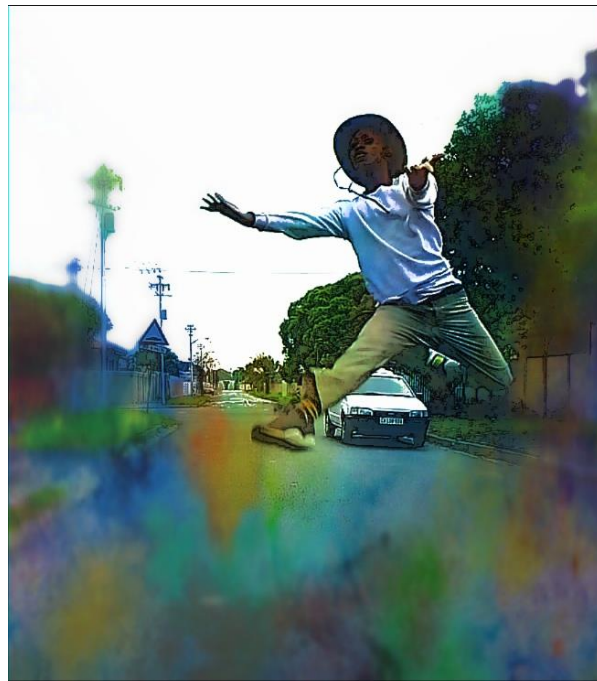
When I spoke with Milisa, she also explained how awful it is to have to wear a mask whilst dancing because it's so difficult to breathe, but everybody understands why it's necessary. She told me that the past month has been very busy as they are preparing for exams. The work load has increased. They have monologues, theatre reviews and choreography to work on and catch up with after the long months of nothing. Milisa told me about doing an extra class in the week, helping her to catch up. She needs more time doing point work and the extra class is helping her a lot.

Lutho confirmed much of what the other two had said, especially regarding the wearing of masks whilst dancing. He also mentioned that the last month has been difficult as during the prior months they only went to school once a week and now it's three times a week and the body has had to adjust to this inconsistency. He also said that the Zoom classes have been very difficult as often time he can't see what's required and the internet connection can be slow at times. He told me that the actual classes were also very difficult as each student has to stand and dance in their own space and they can't really do a proper center practice.

I hope that our three students will enjoy the rest of their year and thank them for working so hard and for sharing their experiences with us.



**Above:** Milisa Mathiso performs and **below** Lutho Zwedala caught in the air.



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)