

Dancescape South Africa (DSA) December 2020 Report

Dancescape South Africa continues to facilitate daily dance classes in most of December 2020 (3.00pm – 6.00pm Venue Zolani Hope Centre – Mantlane Road Zolani Ashton) engaging children in beginner and senior dance sessions. We have tried to 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. Our final day of classes was on the 18th of December and our year ended with a performance on the 19th of December alongside a special screening of the “Beyond Moving” film. We plan to resume classes on the 27th of January 2021 as the schools begin the 2021 year.



Above: Students attending classes and rehearsal conducted by our resident teacher Nqaba Mafilika.

The Dancescape South Africa Directors Report:

On the 14th of October 2020 I contacted Vikram Dasgupta to request a special screening of his movie “Beyond Moving” Vikram, a film maker, living in Canada was asked to make a documentary about the students who graduated from the Canadian National Ballet School. One

of these students was Siphe November who had joined the school back in 2011 largely due to our founder member the Late Fiona Sargeant. Siphe graduated in 2017. It's an amazing movie and tells the inspirational story of how this young boy of 10 years old was able to attend this prestigious school and become a brilliant dancer and who has subsequently won awards and is currently a soloist with the National Ballet of Canada. The movies focus shifted completely onto Siphe's remarkable story and whilst filming the movie here in South Africa, Vikram and I became friends. Vikram managed to get the permission of his executive producer to make this special screening possible. The planning continued into November as we tried to find a suitable date for the event.



Above: The Dancescape South Africa students attending the special screening of the international movie "Beyond Moving" and performance at the KWV Building in Montagu.



Above: Our students dancing at the KWV performance on the 19th of December 2020

The idea for this screening had been that of our treasurer, Mareletta Munday, who proposed it at our Annual General Meeting held in October of 2020. Mareletta working with the Montagu Ashton Tourism Association finally settled on the 19th of December and to screen the movie at the KWV buildings cinema. Our hope was to make this screening a fund raising initiative as we knew that many people knew about the movie and wanted to see it. All of this happened whilst the Covid 19 virus seemed to be abating and infection numbers had drastically reduced. However in early December of 2020 things were about to change and it was officially announced that the country was in the grips of the dreaded second wave of the pandemic. However we chose to persevere as this occasion would give our student an opportunity to perform and to showcase the amazing work that Nqaba Mafilika has done over recent month.



Above: Aphiwe November dances a solo variation (top) and below with Chuma Mathiso, two of our senior students.

Nqaba, our resident teacher, has gained respect in the Zolani community resulting in an increase in numbers of students attending the classes. Even though we have had to restrict class sized the students attend shortened classes at least twice a week. He has been building a repertoire and presented some of his choreography at the Beyond Moving performance. I have witnessed a marked improvement in the students. They are stronger and their technique has also dramatically improved. Not just the senior dancers but also the juniors who have not been dancing for long. We hope that we can build upon this success next year when the student return in late January.



Above: The students once again hard at work in a contemporary style class at our Zolani based studio.

This month I spent some time working alongside Nqaba to get the students ready to perform. For many of them this was going to be their first opportunity to face a live audience. As with many Dancescape South Africa students before them they soon learnt that performing is not just about doing the steps and movements. We had to get the message across that performing is so much more and requires a special interaction with the audience. As a dancer you are required to communicate your story, message or emotion to the audience through movement. I am glad to report that on that Saturday afternoon the time spent rehearsing had indeed pay off. There was a lovely energy and I could see many of the young dancers coming out of themselves to give without reservation to an eager audience.

Our audience for both the performance and the screening of the movie was small but very receptive and appreciative. The government had implemented more restrictions in line with the second wave of the Covid 19 pandemic. It meant that the cinema which could host 60 could now only host a max capacity of 50% of that. Furthermore most people were fearful of large gatherings reducing our audience even more. However those who did attend were clearly moved by the movie and performance and expressed this to me afterwards. Perhaps there may be an opportunity to screen the movie at another time when the pandemic is no longer a threat.



Above: Students dancing at the Beyond Moving performance at the KWV building

Dancescape South Africa would like to give a huge thank you to the following people and organizations that have gone out of their way to make this occasion as special as possible for our young dancers. A massive thank you to RAM (Rescue Among Many) who were able to

provide all the gifts and treats to our dancers. Thank you to Mareletta Munday and the Montagu-Ashton Tourism Association for organizing and bringing it all together, you are a star. Thank you to Shoprite South Africa for a special treat of a Hot dogs, cupcakes, Stationery Packs, Party packs and the most awesome staff from Montagu branch who served with so such love. Thank you so much. Also to Coca-Cola Peninsula Beverages for quenching the thirst of our dancers. Thank you to The Angel Network - Western Cape for funding the party packs and fruit juices received. It was a huge surprise to our students to receive such big party packs. Ladles of Love for a 25lt bucket of Peanut Butter and Jam for that essential sandwich. We also received Checkers coupons to the value of R1200 in order to buy bread for our hungry dancers. We thank you for the donation of R5000 from John and Helen Cross in the UK. It really was a huge surprise to give our dancers so much. Wow and once again a very big thank you.



Above: Dancescape Director Mitya Sargeant receives a R5000 donation, a massive bucket of peanut and jam mix for our sandwiches, and coupons from Shoprite to provide food to our students. Mareletta Munday from MATA on the left and Carol Bruton present the donations on the right.



Above: Students receiving their gift packs after enjoying a delicious lunch. A very big thank you to all who contributed.

As the year comes to its end and our studio closes for the school holidays I reflect on the year gone by. Like many I share the sentiment that it's been a difficult year. The Covid 19 pandemic has no doubt left its mark on all of use. Never before have I experienced a world shut down. Apart from essential services our planet essentially shut down for about 3 months of this year. Our students confined to their homes and the streets of the townships. However, as a testament of the human spirit which is full of resilience and hope, our dancers returned to dance another day. We hope and pray that we can continue to facilitate dance classes, provide opportunities to perform, and a chance to change and uplift the lives of these children of the townships in 2021.

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)

