

Dancescape South Africa (DSA) January 2019 Report

Daily dance classes resumed on the 9th of January 2019 (3.00pm – 6.00pm Venue Zolani Hope Centre – Mantlane Road Zolani Ashton) engaging children in beginner and senior dance sessions. We also continued our dance classes in Ashbury at the Ashbury Civic Centre in the new school term in collaboration with the RAD Foundation.

The Dancescape South Africa Directors Report:

The staff and dancers of the Dancescape South Africa studio enjoyed a welcome break over the December school holidays. A new year begins and we are all excited to focus our energies on facilitating dance classes in our rural communities. Last year was a fantastic year for our organization with many milestones being reached. The challenge this year is to build upon last year's successes. The year began with the opening of the studio on the 9th of January in line with the start of the school terms. This time of year is usually hot and this year was no exception. The heat does keep some of the kids away and also those who are participating in school sport which takes precedent at this time of year. We do however see growing numbers in the baby ballet classes and hope to encourage attendance consistency. The team also realized that many of the kids are coming to the classes for the free sandwich that we give to our students.



On Tuesday the 8th of January the resident teachers and I sat down for the first meeting of the year to discuss the way forward and other issues like the sandwich problem mentioned previously. We spoke about quality of teaching. The students need to understand the concepts behind the movements that they are doing and to use this knowledge to develop their technique and strength. Much time was spent discussing discipline and some rules were laid down to enforce this. Arriving to class on time and behavior in the class are important issues to be addressed this year. I expressed my desired goals for the teachers for the year ahead. I was also hoping that the resident teachers would not see their roles as just teachers but rather life coaches, having an interest in how each child should develop and reach their full potential.





This month we are delighted to introduce our two new trainee teachers. We have chosen Ayakhanyo Mase as our young male trainee teacher and Osiphayo Peter as the female teacher. They are both young and we hope that over the next few years that they are with the project, before they matriculate, they will develop into fine young teachers. The added benefit for these two is that as they learn how to teach

and more about the theory of dance they too will develop their technique as dancers. Welcome Aya and Osi to the team.



Above: The DSA new trainee teachers Ayakhanyo Mase (redtop) and Osiphayo Peter (front)

On Wednesday the 16 of January Farouk and I drove down to Cape Town. Our primary objective was to take Lutho Zwedala to his new residence. After auditioning late last year, Lutho, one of our senior students, was accepted to study at the Cape Academy of Performing Arts (CAPA) in 2019. His course started on the 21 of January. Lihle Mfene, another one of our previous students, had already completed his first year at CAPA, and will continue his studies as he enters his second year with CAPA this year. The two young men will be sharing a room in Southfield, Cape Town. It was an exciting day for Lutho but it started with an emotion farewell as he said goodbye to his family in Zolani. At least Lutho can rely on the help and guidance of Lihle who had already gained valuable experience. We wish both men all the best for the year ahead and thank all who have made their dreams a reality. Without the kind financial donations from many all around the world both young dancers would most likely not have left the Zolani Township as yet.



Patricia Chimanga continues her work building bridges with the parents in Zolani. Over the last few months that Patricia has been working as a public relations officer for DSA I have realized how important her work really is. Creating a link between the parents and other interested parties in the community is vital. Patricia arranges appointments with all the parents. Once she has explained the project and its benefits they are encouraged to sign their kids up to participate in the DSA Project. Most of the parents, especially those of our babies group are delighted that the kids have something to do and somewhere to go, instead of playing in the streets. Thank you Patricia.



The resident teachers report:

We have started our new year with a different approach, we started with slow and basic exercises to help with technique and strength and seems like it is working well. We have also been busy training our trainee teachers to understand the exercises themselves and to be able to correct and demonstrate to the class and set exercises. We have lost two of our senior dancers, one went to further his studies in dance and the other went to further his academics, but we are very excited to work with our junior boys and girls who are showing much dedication and hard work. Our younger ones are also working harder and are learning fast, the classes are also getting bigger in numbers now. We have an exciting year ahead of us and are looking forward to the development of our students.



Lihle Mfene and Lutho Zwedala report from CAPA:

Lihle Mfene reports:

“What a fantastic new year, this month has been really amazing. We had an amazing workshop with Vincent Mantsoe, who is south African but stayed in France for more than 20 years, wow what an amazing experience we had. Now from this week until the end of this term we're learning a new choreography from Michelle Reid, and I'm very excited to start with it today. This is the most amazing opportunity I've never thought I'd have, thanks to Dancescape SA for their personal investment in me.”

Lutho Zwedala says:

“First of all I would like to say I'm really grateful for everything. Becoming a dancer is not easy, it takes a lot of courage, commitment and hard work to be the best and also keeping yourself inspired every time. This month was very tough, my first day was nice and easy until the end of it, but my second was very hard because nothing is easy in this world. Later in my first week Vincent Mantsoe gave us a workshop which was really amazing, great experience. This week we're learning a new piece from Michelle Reid, which is very exciting and just learned it today, and it's going to be an amazing piece... Thanks to Dancescape South Africa and the sponsors for making this possible for me. Thank you so Much...”



I talked with Patricia Chimanga our Public Relations Officer:

She tells me that the parents say she has started to speak with them about the project too late. What they mean by this is that many of their older kids from age 13 upwards are used to being on the streets because they are growing up in the streets. The parents try to encourage their older children to go to dance classes, some do but within a few days they are back on the streets and not in class. Patricia agrees that she should have been doing what she does a long time ago. The parents are excited about the younger children because by starting early these kids will not grow up playing on the streets but will have something constructive to do with their afternoons. The parents see that this is a good project. Dancescape South Africa has an open day coming up on the 23rd of February. Patricia is trying to talk to

the community, encouraging them to visit on that day when the project will be doing class and rehearsals. She would like to keep looking for influential members of the community to spread the word about the project. People such as the head masters, ward councilors and perhaps the mayor. She hopes that there will be a steady flow of visitors who we can talk to and answer questions. Patricia is grateful that DSA is providing the opportunity for her to pursue her driving license. She got her learners license last year and DSA is providing lessons for her to learn to drive. It's difficult as she has little experience driving and has had to start from the beginning but want to persevere and get her license soon.



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)