

Cape dancers awarded scholarships to USA

Cape Dance Company's Mthuthuzeli and Aviwe November have both been awarded full scholarships to the Washington Ballet School's summer intensive next year in Washington DC in the USA. The two dancers, who hail from the Zolani Township outside Montagu in the Cape, were trained in ballet by Fiona Sargeant, who represents Dance for All in that community.

Cousins Mthuthuzeli and Aviwe November, both aged 19, come from a family passionate about ballet and dance. Mthuthuzeli's younger brother Siphe is currently on full scholarship at the National Ballet School of Canada where he has been training for the past two and a half years. His older brother Vusumizi is a Dance for All (DFA) teacher who has worked alongside Sargeant to help translate for her, and who is now on board with DFA as a hip hop teacher.

Mthuthuzeli won the gold medal in this year's prestigious Cape Town International Ballet Competition, that was held at Artscape Opera House in February. He scooped top honours in the Junior Contemporary Section, competing against some of the world's best dance talent.

Training at Cape Academy of Performing Arts

Both dancers are training at Debbie Turner's Cape Academy of Performing Arts (CAPA) in Tokai in Cape Town. CAPA is the feeder school to the Cape Dance Company (CDC) and the Novembers perform with company on a regular basis. Their next CDC season, Grace, takes place in Johannesburg on Monday and Tuesday next week and in Cape Town directly thereafter, at the Artscape Theatre.

Grace features exquisite neo-classical ballets created by South African and International choreographers such as Bradley Shelver, Adele Blank and Christopher L. Huggins. Dancers for this season include former Cape Town City Ballet principal ballerina Megan Swart; CDC founding member Louisa Talbot, with James Bradley, and Grant van Ster, Ipeleng Merafe, Angela Rebelo, Simone Muller, Mthuthuzeli November and Martin Harding amongst others.

Choreographer Bradley Shelver, based in America, defines his ballet Scenes as "the location of events that attract attention through a series of actions exhibited in their connection". A modern, minimalist, architectural ballet in four parts written to the compositions of Gallasso, Bach, Beethoven & Riley, it was inspired by the process of creativity, the elements involved when displaying or manifesting art. The ballet subtly reveals the layers that emerge when creating emotional connections with the stage, framed by observers that demarcate the space - a scene within a scene, witnessed by both audience and performer. The costume design for Scenes is by Dicky Longhurst.

Celebrating Adele Blank's long association with CDC

In celebration of Adele Blank's long association with the Cape Dance Company, a new ballet, Mnemenology, has been commissioned for CDC by artistic director Debbie Turner. Created to George Gershwin's Rhapsody In Blue, the ballet profiles Blank's trademark jazzy yet classically based choreographic style. While the work is not a narrative one, it suggests the evocation and creation of memories - as she says, "Everything we do, every instant, becomes a memory." American choreographer Christopher L. Huggins' powerful works, Enemy Behind The Gates and When Dawn Comes was first staged on the Cape Dance Company in 2010 & 2011 respectively and will complement the new programme presented this year. CDC's repertoire becomes more diverse each year and this season promises yet again to have wide audience appeal.

The Cape Dance Company was founded in 1995 by Debbie Turner and is based in Westlake, Cape Town. Turner is the artistic director of the CDC and director of the Cape Academy of Performing Arts (CAPA). Her name has become synonymous with exceptional, polished productions danced by well-trained and highly disciplined artists, many of whom are CAPA graduates. The CDC performs a repertoire of neo-classical and neo-contemporary works with technical aplomb. The company performs regularly in local theatres and has travelled extensively overseas, presenting seasons at the Alvin Ailey Citigroup Theatre in New York City and at the Edinburgh Festival in Scotland. CDC dancers are renowned for their athleticism and grace, and the ballets presented this season provide the ideal platform for them to showcase their talent.

Grace is at the Dance Factory in Newtown in Johannesburg on 3 December at 7.30pm and 4 December at 5pm & 7.30pm with tickets from R60 to R100 via Computicket or the Dance Factory on +27 (0)11 8331347. The Artscape Theatre performances are from 7 to 14 December at 8pm and on Saturday, 15 December at 3pm and 8pm with tickets from R120 to R140 via Computicket or +27 (0)21 421 7695.

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