

Dance Academy brings hope

Issued by [Provantage](#)

12 Dec 2010

Forget about the litter-strewn streets, the poverty and violence, the seedy bars and the risky nightclubs because downtown Jo'burg is more than this. It is also home to a thriving dance academy supported by Provantage Out of Home Media. The academy brings hope, purpose and employment to hundreds of teenagers and young adults with a talent for the performing arts.



Created in 2003, the Dance Academy aims to give those interested the opportunity to dance professionally. It also encourages children to stay off the streets by giving them a purpose, a meaning and something to progressively work towards. The studio is open to everyone between the ages of thirteen and thirty, but it is self-discipline that sets a hundred or so aspiring dancers apart from the rest. "The dancers attend training of their own free will and this ensures dedication and diligence from those who really want to be here. For many who travel great distances to rehearse at the studio, it is an honour and a great privilege to be part of the troupe," says Livingstone Kona, one of the founding members.

The Academy is never short of dancers as the response to recruitment is phenomenal, to the extent that satellite studios have opened in other areas of Gauteng. Hopefuls are enthusiastic about the academy as they are trained by professional choreographers, ensuring that their careers commence on the right footing. "The studio is open to everyone, but we prefer younger people because their bodies are still supple and they learn to do the moves properly. Artists fall under various categories including kwaito, hip hop, contemporary and street. It's common to see some characteristics of street dance being mixed with traditional moves and more theatrical performances, all of which work well for Provantage Shoppa Shows," explains Livingstone after a group of women perform a sequence that originates from Ghana.



Through the academy, dancers have the opportunity of employment doing what they're passionate about. They audition for the Provantage Shoppa Show Team and are selected after going through a rigorous scanning process. Provantage employs many of them, in so doing providing a sleek, professional and polished edge to their activations.

Twenty-one-year-old Mamsi Sithole joined the academy in 2006 and has since started her own group within the school. "We specialise in modern dance which is a mixture of contemporary moves. I love being here and being able to provide for my family by doing something I enjoy. The Dance Academy has fulfilled my dream of becoming a professional dancer," she says holding her posture.

The academy has grown from a handful of dancers to over four hundred. This allows Provantage to choose the best performers in the dance styles relevant to the needs of an activation. "As Provantage has grown so has the Dance Academy and we're grateful to Livingstone for training such talented individuals as it brings an immediate energy and vigour to our activations, which the audience responds to in a positive and interactive way," says Charisse White, Head of Activations at Provantage.

The Dance Academy has flourished in leaps and bounds, it has offered an opportunity second to none to individuals who relentlessly show their dedication and brilliance in practice and on stage. Livingstone's vision is to continue the growth of outstanding performers and provide them with opportunities to fulfil their artistic need for expression with the help of Provantage Out of Home Media.

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