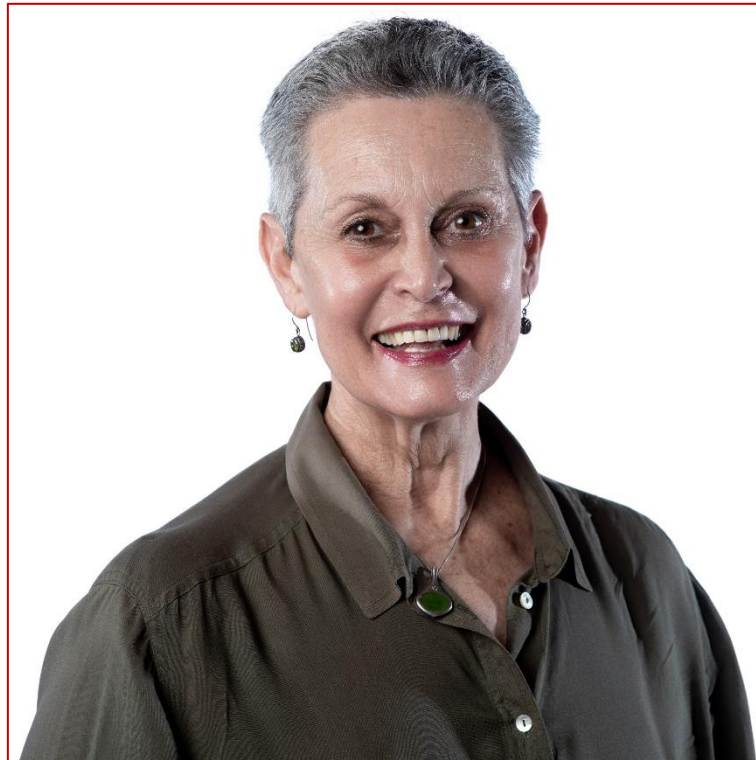




**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT
2021**



Esther Nasser
Chief Executive Officer

It is my privilege to report on Joburg Ballet's activities and achievements during 2021. As had been the case through most of 2020, the continuing coronavirus pandemic impacted every aspect of Joburg Ballet's activities during the year. While the company's box office income was seriously curtailed as a result, we were fortunate to continue receiving funding from a number of sources, most notably from the City of Johannesburg. Joburg Ballet is deeply grateful for this support which contributed to keeping the company operational.

The company returned to work following the annual break on 21 January 2021 with the foreign dancers returning by 5 February 2021 depending on their visa collections. In response to the pandemic, Janet MacKenzie of Baker McKenzie recommended the Brazilian and Italian dancers go into a 10-day isolation period because of virulent new Covid strains.

But the pandemic notwithstanding, the year started on a positive note with new and interesting projects in the pipeline and we were hopeful that Joburg Ballet was on the way to recovering the self-esteem, confidence and momentum that had inevitably been impacted by Covid-19.

The period covered by this report witnessed several date and programme changes, performance cancellations and postponements. Most hard hit was our second season which had to be totally revised programme after we had to cancel the original season due to the large number of dancers needed in rehearsals and on stage as well as its stamina demands at a time some dancers were recovering from Covid-19. Covid-19 regulations restricted the size of audiences and by extension, box office income.

JOBURG BALLET BOARD

The nomination process for a new Board was underway and although it was hoped the new members would be welcomed at the Board’s meeting on 8 August 2021, further delays made December appear to be a more likely date.

ONLINE MERCHANDISE SHOP

Joburg Ballet’s online merchandise shop did well with a steady stream of orders coming in. In response to requests from the public, the wardrobe department looked at expanding our merchandise by making and selling tights but to date the project has not been initiated in deference to the production related workload carried by wardrobe mistress Yolanda Roos.

Above: Merchandise barter advertisement in the *Mail & Guardian*

Above: Merchandise barter advertisement on the pARTicipate website

JOBURG BALLET RAW

Joburg Ballet presented an impressive choreographic workshop, Joburg Ballet RAW, in our studios on 20 and 21 March 2021, featuring new works which were well received by the audience. These were Tumelo Lekana’s *Legae*, a haunting fusion of traditional South African

dance and ballet; *We Pray*, an emotionally charged duet for Claudia Monja and Gabriel Fernandes by Ruan Galdino; Thabang Mabaso's pristine *Le Roux Variations*; and Armando Barros' quirky, fun-filled *Omega-3*.



Above: Joburg Ballet RAW choreographers with members of their casts: *Omega-3* Armando Barros (left) with Erica Vadelka, Mario Gaglione, Chloé Blair; *Le Roux Variations* Thabang Mabaso (centre) with Armando Barros, Alice le Roux; *Legae* Tumelo Lekana (right) with Monike Cristina; *We Pray* Ruan Galdino (centre) with Gabriel Fernandes, Claudia Monja (Photos: Lauge Sorensen)

SEASON 1 2021: BALLET AND BEYOND

After thirteen months away from the stage, the company reclaimed their element when they returned to the main stage of the Joburg Theatre for the first season of 2021. At the start of the rehearsal period, Covid-19 regulations permitted no more than 50 people per performance in the 1000-seat theatre; this was later increased to 100 and then just before we opened, to 250. However, the social distancing in the auditorium contributed to a sense of the theatre being almost full. The success of this 4-part programme, entitled Ballet and Beyond, exceeded our expectations and it was heartening to see the company welcomed back to the stage with such enthusiasm from audiences.

Ballet and Beyond featured new works by dancers Craig Pedro and Mario Gaglione -- *I Am Woman* (Pedro), and *The Silent Wanderer* (Gaglione), with both works being enthusiastically received. Excerpts from the Soviet-era Russian ballet classic *Laurencia*, adapted by Bruno Miranda, was a technically challenging work that had the dancers quite literally on their toes. International choreographer Corey Baker's work, *Grey*, challenged the dancers to explore a new way of moving.

The performance on Sunday 11 April 2021 at 11h00 was interrupted and then cancelled by a power outage. Audience members were sympathetic, most offering to donate their ticket money to the company. For this generosity, Joburg Ballet extends heartfelt thanks.



Above: Gabriel Fernandes and Ruan Galdino in *Laurencia*; Revil Yon and company in *Grey*; Monike Cristina, Sarah Miller, Darragh Hourrides, Chloé Blair in *I Am Woman*; company in *The Silent Wanderer* (Photos: Lauge Sorensen)

JOBURG BALLET SCHOOL

At the start of 2021, Joburg Ballet School students were back in the studios and preparing for exams in July 2021. It was heartening to have the students back and to see how much they had grown in the past year. The School now had the challenge of helping them catch up after a year of distance learning. This, however, was short lived with new strains of Covid-19 forcing a return to distance learning.

Eventually both the satellite schools and Joburg Ballet School returned to their venues at the beginning of September but due to the pandemic there were no exams except for the few students who were ready, and instead of a Showcase at the end of the year, a showing of the assessments in the downstairs studio was planned for November.



Above: Students of the Joburg Ballet School

SEASON 2 2021

The initially intended second season for 2021 was Evolve, a four-part programme comprising three new ballets choreographed by members of the company (*The Afterlife: Souls* by Shannon Glover; *Legae* by Tumelo Lekana; *The Game* by Mario Gaglione) and the Grand Pas from the classical ballet, *Paquita*.



Above: *Paquita*; Monike Cristina, Nicole Ferreira-Dill, Gabriel Fernandes in *The Game*; Darragh Hourrides and Craig Pedro in *The Afterlife: Souls* (Photos: Lauge Sorensen)



Evolve billboard with image from *Legae* (Photo: Lauge Sorensen)

Six performances of Evolve were scheduled for the Joburg Theatre from 1 to 4 July but cases of Covid-19 in the company required that all the dancers be sent home for fourteen days. Consequently Evolve was postponed to 5 to 8 August 2021.

However, Covid-19 cases in the company put pressure on the dancers in terms of stamina and workload and it was decided to postpone Evolve, possibly to 2022, and to replace it with a programme requiring less physical interaction between the dancers, both in the rehearsal studio and on stage. For this purpose the artistic management devised Solo Flight, an hour-

long programme made up largely of solo items and pas de deux. The Joburg Theatre offered us later dates for Solo Flight, namely 12 to 15 August 2021. Prior to this, however, the country was on Covid-19 Alert Level 4 and all public gatherings were prohibited. Nevertheless, we continued with rehearsals and preparations for Solo Flight in the hope that the restrictions on public gatherings would be eased before the season. Dancers worked in groups of ones and twos and only those required for in-studio rehearsals came into the studios.



Above: Mario Gaglione in a marketing image for Solo Flight (Photo: Lauge Sorensen)

IN-STUDIO EVENTS

Also impacted by the Covid-19 cases in the company was the series of in-studio events scheduled for 19 and 20 June 2021 which was to have comprised three “gratitude” performances. Entitled Rea Leboha, the ticket sale income from these performances was to have been shared with the staff of Vanessa Nicolau Theatre and Events (VNTE) who have been badly impacted by the sharp downturn in the theatre and events support industry. VNTE has handled Joburg Ballet’s production and technical management since the establishment of the ballet company. In addition to the Rea Leboha performances, also scheduled was an Open Day for Evolve and a performance to mark Youth Month. All these in-studio events had to be cancelled.

INFLATIONARY INCREASES AND PROMOTIONS

Due to the unexpected inflationary increase received from Johannesburg City Theatres with the new funding cycle in 2020, the Joburg Ballet Board was able to give all employees a 4% inflationary increase implemented at the end of July 2021. Promotions announced in March 2020 could be unfrozen and added to the salaries of the promoted dancers.



Above: Promoted dancers Revil Yon, Ruan Galdino, Shana Dewey, Chloé Blair and Tumelo Lekana (Photos: Lauge Sorensen)

CREATIVE HUB

The concept of a creative hub was introduced at Joburg Ballet to begin a process of offering a platform to new voices in the company and providing the opportunity to add to the company’s vision. A second meeting was held and yielded exciting ideas and the possibility of new works which could contribute to the programming for 2022 and 2023.

TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY

21st Century presented the proposed strategy plan to the Board and the representatives of the JCT Board and a resolution was passed to proceed with the implementation of the Transformation Plan. During the year under review the transformation strategy progressed to the point where the Board and the CEO were in discussions with BakerMcKenzie lawyers regarding the restructuring of Joburg Ballet's Senior Management and Staff to align with the transformation vision of the City of Johannesburg, the JCT Board, and third parties. Alongside this discussion will be the implementation of new contracts in alignment with the new positions and the three-year funding cycle from the City of Johannesburg.

EMPLOYMENT EQUITY PLAN

The Employment Equity Plan (EEP) compliance documents were electronically submitted on 13 January 2021. However, the submission was delayed due to congested systems at the Department of Labour. It was submitted on a daily basis following 13 January but there were no responses to email or telephonic inquiries about the delay.

CONTRACTS

Discussions took place with BakerMcKenzie to re-negotiate the outdated generic contracts in order to align them with the general standards of 2021 and with the three-year funding cycle from the City of Johannesburg. It was anticipated that the first draft would be discussed by the Board and then be presented to stakeholders for discussion.

SEASON 3 2021: THE NUTCRACKER

The third season of 2021, *The Nutcracker*, was presented at the Joburg Theatre from 8 to 17 October for seven performances. A change to the Covid-19 regulations allowed us to sell 250 seats per performance which had a beneficial impact on box office income with 92% of the seats having been sold before the season started. *The Nutcracker* achieved a total R891 260.86 at the box office and after expenses we banked R165 806.24. Expenses would have been less had we done the Angela Malan production of *The Nutcracker* as originally planned.



Above: Gabriel Fernandes in a marketing image for *The Nutcracker*, 2021 (Photo: Lauge Sorensen)

STREAMING

Joburg Ballet negotiated with StarrStruck, a multimedia production company, to film and stream Season 1 of 2021. In terms of the arrangement, StarrStruck would carry the financial risk and Joburg Ballet would assist with the marketing. Because StarrStruck would carry the financial risk, the income from the project would be split 55% to StarrStruck and 45% to Joburg Ballet. It was hoped that this arrangement would assist Joburg Ballet to create content which

could be streamed at a time when, due to the pandemic, it was anticipated that the streaming of performances would be a way for ballet companies to reach audiences remotely. In the event, the arrangement with StarrStruck did not proceed beyond the initial phase due to that company encountering financial challenges.

Later in the year we took up the streaming project again, this time in partnership with photographer and videographer Lauge Sorensen. *The Nutcracker* was filmed at the Joburg Theatre on Wednesday 13 October 2021 by Lauge Sorensen and this performance made available for view-on-demand streaming on Mr. Sorensen's Vimeo platform from Wednesday 22 December 2021 to Wednesday 5 January 2022. To purchase the streaming performance was R150 and booking was through Webtickets. This marked Joburg Ballet's first streaming project.

PARTNERSHIP WITH THE ITALIAN CULTURAL INSTITUTE

On Tuesday 12 October 2021, the company performed extracts from Mario Gaglione's *The Silent Wanderer* for the Italian Cultural Institute (ICI) in the foyer of the Joburg Theatre to guests of the Italian Embassy. For this project Joburg Ballet received R47 150.00 (including VAT) from the ICI. The theme of the presentation was the impact of the pandemic and this was reflected in both Mr. Gaglione's ballet and in the photographic exhibition, *Invisible Squares*, presented by the ICI.

The company performed *Inferno*, also by Mario Gaglione, for the Italian Cultural Institute to mark the 700th anniversary of the death of the Italian poet Dante Alighieri. This was performed at the Market Theatre on Saturday 30 October 2021 where it was well received. For this project Joburg Ballet received an amount of R80 270.00 (including VAT) from the ICI.

Following the success of the performance at the Market Theatre, arts administrator Ismail Mohammed requested performances of *Inferno* at an arts festival in Durban in 2022 while the Italian Cultural Institute requested a tour of the production to Cape Town.



Above: Posters for *Inferno*

THE NUTCRACKER IN DURBAN

Joburg Ballet flew to Durban on Monday 13 December 2021 to perform *The Nutcracker* at The Playhouse for four performances from Friday 17 to Sunday 19 December 2021, with live music provided by the KwaZulu-Natal Philharmonic Orchestra. The performances were sold out in advance. Auditions had been held in Durban for children required in the ballet.



Above: Chloé Blair in a marketing image for *The Nutcracker*, 2021 (Photo: Lauge Sorensen)

THE TEATRO, MONTECASINO

The Teatro, Montecasino, approached Joburg Ballet to possibly perform a gala season in early December 2021 or a full-length ballet early in 2022 but due to the continuing limitations on the size of audiences, the Teatro management found themselves unable to proceed with either of these proposals.

WORLD BALLET DAY

For the first time Joburg Ballet was an official participant in the annual World Ballet Day which took place on 19 October 2021.



FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

The company rehearsed through November for an abridged version of the traditional classical *Nutcracker* which Joburg Ballet presented at the 2021 Festival of Lights at the Johannesburg Zoo from Thursday 25 November to Sunday 5 December 2021. As expected at this time of the year, heavy rainfall resulted in a number of performances having to be cancelled at this outdoor venue. In addition, the last three performances were cancelled due to one of the performers having tested Covid-19+ and a staff member having had a family member also test positive. As a result, Joburg Ballet went into quarantine for five days followed by rapid antigen testing before returning to the workplace.

THE LEONARDO HOTEL

Following the success of an earlier promotional project in partnership with the Leonardo Hotel in Sandton, the hotel group requested the making of another video using Joburg Ballet dancers. This took place at their bush lodge in the Pilansberg and featured dancers Monike Cristina and Gabriel Fernandes. Payment was in the form of banking another night to the value of R20 000.00 for Joburg Ballet guests along with one week for two guests at the Leonardo Hotel when needed.

NEW WEBSITE

Following a call for applications from companies to design a new website for Joburg Ballet and a selection process by committee comprising Rethabile Kikine (Board member), Jonathan Hurwitz (Marketing and Publications Administrator), Jo-Anne Wyngaard (Joburg Ballet School Co-ordinator and Teacher) and Yolanda Roos (Wardrobe Mistress), the tender was awarded to ECAT Online to create the new website and ECAT was also approached to handle Joburg Ballet's social media platforms. PlugIn Theatre, who had very efficiently managed our social media platforms since being appointed earlier in 2021, regrettably terminated their services due to changes in their company.

NIGERIAN BALLET STUDENT

Olawale Olameda Ajoke, a student of Daniel Owoseni Ajala of the Leap of Dance Academy in Lagos, Nigeria, was offered a position in Joburg Ballet's Aspirant Programme for 2022. This is a potential opportunity to grow Joburg Ballet's footprint in Africa through social media and other coverage. Ms Ajoke was also offered a place at the Royal Ballet School in London but Mr. Ajala decided he would like her to take up the opportunity with Joburg Ballet.



Above: Olawale Olameda Ajoke

THE FRIENDS OF THE BALLET

Joburg Ballet extends grateful thanks to the Friends of the Ballet for the generous cash gifts made to every member of the company to mark the end of the ballet year. This is made annually by the Friends but at a time when membership is down and activities have been curtailed, it is all the more appreciated.

SPONSORSHIPS RECEIVED

Mary Oppenheimer and Daughters Foundation: R100 000.00.

Rand Merchant Bank: R120 269.00.

Michel Tesson Trust: R300 000.00 (to assist with the funding of pointe shoes).

The Oppenheimer Memorial Trust: R350 000.00 (to assist with operational costs; the OMT will discuss further funding opportunities for Joburg Ballet in the first quarter of 2022.

The Ball Family Foundation: Joburg Ballet received a generous sponsorship increase from The Ball Family Foundation who extended their sponsorship for a further three years to 2024 and increased the amount from R200 000.00 to R400 000.00. After a meeting with Colette Ball, Chair of the Board and CEO, it was agreed that the increase of R200 000.00 would go towards the equalisation of salaries according to the newly introduced dancer rankings. This was a welcome development as it will enable Joburg Ballet to correct the inconsistent salary

structures that were historically implemented. The other R200 000.00 will go the Joburg Ballet School.

FINANCES AND AUDIT

I am able to report that the finances of the company are in good order. The annual audit by Mazars was completed at the end of July 2021.

THANK YOU

Joburg Ballet extends its gratitude to our stakeholders, sponsors and supporters for their generosity during 2021 as we continued to navigate our way through a world severely impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. With you by our side we look forward to bringing the joy and magic of dance to a growing audience in 2022.

I also extend my personal thanks to the Board, Management, Dancers and Staff of Joburg Ballet for their passion and commitment and for all they do to contribute to the success of the company.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Esther Nasser', written in a cursive style.

ESTHER NASSER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Date of this Document: 26 October 2022