

New BASA members help ignite KwaZulu-Natal's arts industry

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Two new Business and Arts South Africa members are helping to ignite KwaZulu-Natal's arts industry - NCP Alcohols with Flatfoot Dance Company and Rainbow with the Catalina Theatre.

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For NCP Alcohols, a Durban-based company that supplies superior high quality fermentation alcohol for the South African and International markets, a three-year partnership with Flatfoot Dance Company to support its dance education and development programmes in KwaMashu, Umlazi and Durban is part of its social development mandate.

As Peter Starling, Managing Director at NCP Alcohols, explains, "We want to be part of the drive in SA to support the arts to bring about change in the way we work, live and play as South Africans. The arts bring hope, freedom and a sense of achievement that cannot be bought."

Starling says that the relationship with Flatfoot Dance Company also fits into NCP Alcohols' "serious passion for quality". The company's engagement with partners through its CSI is configured around keeping the focus on the beneficiaries. This is especially important in NCP Alcohols' three main areas of focus - education, safety and the environment in schools and communities. The three-year partnership also dovetails with NCP Alcohols' preference for building long-lasting relationships, whether with customers, suppliers or the public.

For Lliane Loots: Artistic Director at Flatfoot Dance Company, the relationship now allows the company to cover transport costs for dance education programmes in KwaMashu, Umlazi and Durban.

This close working relationship is echoed in the long-standing relationship between another new BASA member, RAINBOW and the Catalina Theatre. Catalina director, Themis Venturas, says RAINBOW stepped in to save the theatre from closure in 2009 by paying its debt and financially supporting the theatre on a monthly basis in order to facilitate its continued operation. This initial step then moved into an ongoing relationship where RAINBOW has a mentoring role within the Catalina as well as assisting with the strategic planning of the theatre.

"They have been a most giving colleague and sponsor," Venturas says.

Venturas points out that there are multiple benefits to the theatre's relationship, aside from just monetary support. Among these is Catalina Theatre's ability to use the RAINBOW funding as a way of leveraging additional funding. He says that in the past eight months, the company has received additional funding from ACT, the KZN DAC and the Ethekewini Municipality. This has allowed the Catalina Theatre to employ 140 artists of which 75% have been previously disadvantaged Individuals."

Miles Dally, Rainbow Chief Executive Officer confirms that "Rainbow regards the Arts as an important contributor to a balanced society and thus the development of both an appreciation for the Arts as well as this talent is seen as vital".

BASA, through its head office in Joburg and its Durban representative, David Gouldie, plays a key role in the business-arts nexus in the province.

"BASA was an absolute matchmaker," says Starling of the organisation's role in establishing the three-year relationship between NCP Alcohols and Flatfoot Dance Company. With clear engagement objectives from NCP Alcohols, BASA helped

identify the Flatfoot Dance Company as an equitable partner. The facilitation came at a crucial time for the arts organisation after one of its longtime sponsors withdrew its support.

Although the Catalina/Rainbow relationship preceded the latter's recent BASA membership, BASA is working with the Catalina Theatre through the BASA Mentorship Programme, in association with Etana and has played an encouraging role. Rainbow was a winner in the 12th Annual Business Day BASA Awards, supported by Anglo American in the First Time Sponsor category, for support given to the Catalina Theatre.

Venturas says that the relationship with Rainbow has benefits for both parties. Catalina UnLtd has made a start in bringing education and advancement in the arts to the constituents of the Rainbow staff - in particular to members of their Star Schools project (a corporate social investment initiative, assisting children in Grades 10-12 with extra lessons in maths, science and English) in the Hammarsdale area. He adds that this has the potential to grow in time. "Obviously there is a huge ROI regarding the Marketing of both Catalina and Rainbow. Whenever we are at a festival, or on TV we make sure that Rainbow is acknowledged," Venturas says.

This two-way relationship is also an integral part of Flatfoot Dance Company and NCP Alcohols' engagement.

One of the key benefits to NCP Alcohol are BBBEE scorecard points through Flatfoot's art development work in historically disadvantaged communities in Durban. Indeed, this aspect of arts-business relationships is becoming increasingly important to companies and adding a compelling reason to why supporting arts projects are so beneficial.

For Flatfoot Dance Company, the opportunity to work with partners who operate in South Africa's business community is a huge plus that can significantly contribute to sustainability in the arts. Says Loots, "We are delighted to have the business input of (NCP Alcohols Transformation & Communication head) Petro Vorster as we journey ahead. This can only but strengthen our arts business portfolio and our on-going journey to secure funding and support."

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