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Sunduza still going strong

Givemore Muzariri

A lot of dance groups have been formed but many have failed to stay in the game as they are short lived due to different reasons.

Sunduza dance theatre has a different story to tell as the group has managed to produce big names in the arts industry and are alive and kicking today.

Director of Sunduza dance theatre, Simone Banda, said his group was formed in 1985 during their schooling days at St Benards.

“We were 12 when we formed this group and we were still students by then and at first our group was called Sunduza High Stars. So from the time that I completed my education in 1990 we changed the name of our group to Sunduza Boys as we had completed our ordinary level,” he said.

Banda said Sunduza dance theatre since 1985 has produced big names that are making an impact in the arts industry and a lot of these legends have given him experience that has made his group to stay intact to this day

“Sunduza as a group has produced big names in the arts industry and the first guy who we produced in 1992 was Elijah Mbambo; he was an influential guy that we had and he helped our group when we had our first tour to United Kingdom in the same year. During this tour he got some promotion deals

“So when we came back he took over a group called Bomhlaba and he started promoting their shows internationally. Bomhlaba was a group of juniors for Sunduza and the members in that group were the Mbambos so they turned the group into a family business,” he said.

In 1994 Banda met Majahodwa Ndlovu aka Jeys Marabini and they worked together for four years before they could tour the United Kingdom and other countries in the Europe.

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“As a way of adding flavour to the group in 1994 Jeys came to be part of Sunduza and he had a group called Imbizo that he left behind.

“We worked together very well for four years and we exchanged ideas on numerous things and I can say from him I got a lot of experience from him.

“So when he went to the United Kingdom Jeys also got a promoting deal so when we came back he told me that he was now taking an avenue of promoting.

“He promoted the likes of Biggy Tembo, Albert Nyathi and many others of which it was a good thing for our local artistes,” he said.

In 2001 Banda introduced drums and other instruments to his performances so he got Lewis Phiri to help him prepare for a tour to Switzerland that year, they realised that Phiri did not have a passport and it was difficult for him to get one.

“2001 was a year of experiments so we introduced drums in our songs so we wanted someone good in that so we got Phiri to help us for the whole year but only to discover at the last minute that he did not have a passport as we had to tour Switzerland,” he said

Banda said they had no option but to look for Tongesai Gumbo who took over the post of Phiri in 2002 as the tour was taking place that year. “On Phiri I really wanted to go with him to Switzerland but it was difficult for him to get a passport so I had no option but to bring Gumbo on board.

“We had that show and it was one of the best shows with Gumbo and from there he got his deal in Switzerland so that was his breakthrough to stand alone so from that time things were heavy so a lot of other guys could not stand the heat so Sunduza became me as I was left alone,” he said

Banda said from 2003 to 2007 he became an arts lecturer at a number of universities in the United Kingdom as they do art as part of their curriculum.

“From then I have been the Sunduza and I saw it proper to keep my brainchild I formed in 1985. So in the (UK) I have been a lecturer at universities in South Yorkshire, Leeds, Doncaster and Leister.

Banda said these days he now engages session artistes to help him as it is expensive to keep a group.

“For now I only rely on session musicians and I only have them if I have shows to stage,” he said.

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