

Providing opportunities for young performers, Q&A with Artscape's Marlene Le Roux

 By [Ruth Cooper](#)

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Artscape has been showcasing and inspiring young actors, musicians, dancers and comedians since the beginning of June through their Youth Month Festival. We got in touch with Artscape's CEO, Marlene le Roux to find out how the festival is progressing and how the arts can help uplift young communities.

■ ***What are some of the new developments taking place at this year's Youth Month Festival?***

Artscape is collaborating with a number of community based arts organisations in order to offer a platform of diversity as well as introduce arts genres that has not been seen on the Artscape stage. The Ayatshis'amateki Mapantsula Competition is such a production. It aims at providing a platform and showcase for talent in the Isipantsula Dance genre. Comedy has always been a hit with audiences through the ages. However, it's never been performed as an art form during Youth Month specifically to entertain youth. Thus another "newbie" to the Artscape Youth Month lineup showcased Cape Town's best up-and-coming comedy acts on Friday, 16 June and Saturday, 17 June 2017 when well-known comedian, dancer and actor Ambrose Uren hosted the Youth Comedy Festival.



Youth Comedy - Ambrose Uren

■ ***What would be the top productions you would recommend seeing?***

Artscape Youth Jazz Festival on Friday, 30 June 2017. Launched by Artscape in 2003, the project is aimed at skills development, while the festival is the culmination of a 10-week training programme where young jazz musicians get the chance to be mentored by some of the city's best including, Camillo Lombard among others.

The popular Sekunjalo Edujazz concert returns on Saturday, 1 July 2017. This year the band will be joined by dynamic voices featuring, Robin Pieters, Sasha-Lee Davids and Elwira Standili, as well as special guests, Lana Crowster and Sammy Webber; for a two-and-a-half-hour musical extravaganza.



Edu Jazz – Sekunjalo Jazz Event

Artscape Youth Development's Borne Frees will end the Youth Month programme from Thursday, 13 July to Saturday 15 July with their dance production: *Hear Our Voices*. Artscape's Borne Frees project gives an opportunity to 100 young dancers from different schools across Cape Town to express their dreams and concerns through the art of dance.

■ **What are some of the major challenges facing young South Africans these days?**

Unemployment remains one of the issues of concern. It is rife within our economically disadvantaged communities where our young people roam the streets denigrating our communities into zones of war. Thus, education played a pivotal role in my life.

Access to quality education is my passionate concern. While the right to education is enshrined in our constitution access to quality education remains a challenge in our country. It remains a cause that we need to strive for so that every child in all corners of our country including the rural areas should have the best teachers and quality facilities.



■ **Artscape Theatre plans exciting lineup for Youth Month**

17 May 2017



■ **Can you explain a little more about the collaboration between Artscape and the Department of Education?**

The Artscape Theatre Centre has been working with the WCED around various of our children's and youth projects. We liaise with the heads of English, Afrikaans and IsiXhosa to stage each year the grade 12 Set Work productions. This is an initiative by which we stage the literature and so bring to life the written word on stage. Just over 25,000 grade 12

learners visit our Theatre Centre each year. The Subject Advisors in all 8 education districts drives the communication to all the language teachers in the province. This allows us to introduce young audiences to drama in a professional theatre as far as the most rural areas of our province. In the genres of music and dance we attract both primary and high schools in giving young people a chance to perform on our Theatre stage.

Each August we have over 100 schools who participates in our Schools Arts Festival and each child get 5 to 8 minutes to showcase their talent. The same is done with workshops to teachers specialising in drama in script writing, acting and directing and then they prepare their learners for our audition phase which takes place in four districts and then an adjudication team selects 16 schools each year to participates in our Main High School Drama Festival. Furthermore we create access to learners to visit our Final Dress Rehearsals and many times it is the first time they enter a Theatre Centre. We work closely with the School Enrichment Coordinators who focusses on Arts and Sports in developing schools in all 8 districts and this has seen thousands of young people accessing our programs and graduating into our Artscape Youth Jazz and Artscape Youth Classical Programs.



Marlene Le Roux

■ ***What are your thoughts on Generation Z?***

This cohort is a very interactive generation due to practically being born into social media. They strive knowledge and information – an excellent quality to possess in order to mutually inform ourselves of societies, different cultures and world events. It's a generation that I see as world leaders who would strive towards resolving socio-economic challenges, societal and cultural differences by consensus, creating an effective base towards a more peaceful world.

■ ***What advice would you give to other young people looking for a career in theatre?***

Exposure is important and accessing relevant information. Young people should enquire from their teachers and search the internet for where opportunities is available for arts education. The sector is not just about being on stage but also the careers that exist behind the scenes in production management, stage management, sound, lighting, set design and wardrobe. Artscape have both a Resource Centre where young people can become members and access training and workshops to empower themselves in the general skills needed to be a sustaining artist or building an arts business. Artscape provides specialised training in technical skills and have developed young people who are now professionals within the sector.



Borne Frees Dance production

❑ ***If you could travel back in time what advice would you give to your teenage self?***

To read more and find out as much information about what you would like to achieve. Access to information creates wealth. Wealth not only in monetary terms but access to networks, skills and opportunities. To be a self-actualisation individual will allow you to build sustainability for your existence and career you would like to follow.

❑ ***Which social media channel is your favourite?***

Facebook because it is personal and it drives commerce more and more each day. Yet to be careful not to portray yourself in a way that will negatively influence peoples perspective of you.

Tickets for this year's Youth Month programme range from R40 to R300 and are available at Computicket or Artscape Dial-a-Seat on 021 421 7695. For more information about any of the productions, visit the [Artscape website](#).

ABOUT RUTH COOPER

Ruth is the production manager at Bizcommunity: ruth@bizcommunity.com

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