



## CASE STUDY – October 2011

### Corporate governance plays crucial role in Vuyani Dance Theatre's sustainability

Twelve years after it was founded, Vuyani Dance Theatre (VDT) is recognised as an arts organisation whose sustainability is attributable to rigorous corporate governance oversight.

Much of VDT's good corporate governance practices rests on a strong relationship between the dance company's management, its stakeholders and, more recently, an active and skilled board. The latter was assembled with the help of Business and Arts South Africa's Boardbank - an ongoing initiative that offers skilled professionals the chance to meet with non-profit arts organisations and then offer to voluntarily sit on their boards.

Vuyani Dance Theatre's GM, Lebo Mokomele says that taking part in a BASA Boardbank event gave the dance company the chance to present itself to professionals "who are interested in the arts, the development of the arts and also in serving on boards of non-profit-organisations".

"We used the opportunity to outline VDT's ambition to transform. The ideals and ideas behind our transformation plan attracted the board of directors we currently have," Mokomele confirms.

Key to VDT's sustainability is the documented internal processes detailed in a Quality Management Systems manual, which the dance company is implementing. In addition, the board actively scrutinises all VDT's legal and financial documents, giving well-informed and accurate input that assists the dance company in its organisational and institutional growth.

Vuyani Dance Theatre's board is comprised of chairperson Thandiwe Msibi – Socio Economic Development consultant; Dr Thuthula Balfour-Kaipa – Health Advisor for Chamber of Mines; Dumo Mbethe CA(SA) – Executive Assistant to the Finance Director of Old Mutual and Vonani Mathebula CA(SA) .

Says Msibi, "The oversight that the Board brings to the organisation not only speaks to transparency and ethical behaviour but seeks to ensure that the sustainability of the organisation is translated in its entire decision making. This has become even more critical with non-profit organisations as they jockey for funding and have in the recent years dealt with the repercussions of the financial crisis."

For VDT, the benefits of a board and rigorous corporate governance practices are many. "Good corporate governance practices contribute to sustainable economic development by enhancing our performance and increasing our access to external sources of capital," says Mokomele. "Through the restructuring process, we realised that Vuyani Dance Theatre as a brand needed to be more visible and accessible. This relies strongly on VDT's corporate governance practices embedded in our brand essence and has certainly helped funders and partners to see us as a sustainable entity."



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In short, VDT has come to embrace corporate governance –as a way to allow the dance company to be run as a business through the creation of structures and processes that are in line with its vision statement and don't detract from its creativity.

Concludes Msibi, "Our aim as the Board of Vuyani Dance Theatre is to ensure that the legacy started by Gregory Maqoma is sustained by generations to come ... One has to commend Gregory Maqoma and Vuyani Dance Theatre for being open minded and wanting to see the longevity of this African gem."

- Vuyani Dance Theatre is funded by the National Lottery Distribution Trust Fund (NLDTF). VDT's patrons are Judge Edwin Cameron, Advocate Pinky Mokgatla, and Consular Paul Mees. For more information about Vuyani Dance Theatre call 011 838 7666 or visit the VDT website at [www.vuyani.co.za](http://www.vuyani.co.za).
- BASA Boardbank is an initiative by Business and Arts South Africa which offers skilled professionals an opportunity to engage with an arts organisation in a real and effective way, by providing the opportunity to voluntarily sit on the Board of an arts organisation. The value is two-fold - making the arts sector more sustainable by improving corporate governance, while providing business professionals with the opportunity to expand their own Social Investment (SI) responsibility within the arts sector. The aim of BASA Boardbank is to see these relationships growing from seed to strength. To find out when the next Boardbank event takes place, or if you are interested in becoming a Board director of an arts organisation please email [info@basa.co.za](mailto:info@basa.co.za) or call (011) 447-2295.



Photograph by John Hogg

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