

School Holiday Youth Development Program 2011 at the Castle of Good Hope

Article supplied by Mrs Regine Lord. Photos by Mrs Regine Lord and Lance Corporal Leon Wessels.

At the start of October 2011, during the school holiday week, three talented youth groups from the Western Cape performed at the Castle of Good Hope in central Cape Town, as part of the School Holiday Youth Development Program 2011 that is run under the auspices of the South African National Defence Force – and specifically the Defence Reserves.

This youth development and skills training program is organised by the Defence Reserves Provincial Office of the Western Cape (DRPOWC) (Lieutenant Colonel Johan Conradie) in close cooperation with the Castle (Captain Francois Morkel) and the SA Army Band Cape Town (Director of Music Major Martin Chandler and group liaison officer Warrant Officer André van Schalkwyk), with the support of the Officer Commanding Army Support Base Western Cape in Youngsfield (Colonel Pieter Kobbie).



Photo 1: The Drill Squad from the Western Province Schools Marching Drill and Exhibition Association

This is the seventh year that the SA Army Band Cape Town has given Western Cape youth groups from previously disadvantaged areas and with an interest in marching and bands a learning opportunity to participate in an exciting program of events over the school holidays. The Army Band is strongly

committed to building bridges between the community and the SANDF. As part of the youngsters' musical and skills development, they performed in public at the Castle of Good Hope.

On Monday, a drill squad from the **Western Province Schools Marching Drill and Exhibition Association** (WP SMDEA), in their black pants, white shirts and shiny blue vests, impressed visitors to the Castle with a powerful performance. The vision of the WP SMDEA is that all learners exposed to the marching drill program should develop into model citizens, positive role models and future leaders, and a sense of self-worth, achievement, teamwork, pride and discipline is instilled in the learners.

This drill squad is made up of the best students from the drill squads of each of the participating schools in Mitchells Plain. The relentlessly thumping beats of the drums, which reverberated all around the ancient walls of the Castle, the oldest colonial building in South Africa, ensured that

the youngsters maintained a cracking pace throughout their routine, earning them well-deserved applause.

On Tuesday, the **St Joseph Worker Church Lads and Girls Brigade** from Bishop Lavis braved the dark clouds and the soft drizzle to display their musical skills on fifes, drums and bugles. A non-profit organisation established in 1952, this Brigade has become one of the leading organisations in Bishop Lavis to raise awareness on all social issues and to train potential leaders within the community it serves.

The large crowd of spectators, comprising local and overseas tourists as well as several school groups, who were touring the Castle, showed their appreciation by applauding and cheering loudly, particularly when the very young drummers and fife players of the Youth Band marched into the front courtyard for their performance.



Photo 2: The bugle and fife band of the St Joseph's Worker Church Lads and Girls Brigade

On Wednesday, it was the turn of the beautifully attired and decorated **Marimba Dancers of the Likhwezi Arts Projects** to delight the throngs of spectators at the Castle with their high-energy song and dance routines. Likhwezi (meaning “Morning Star”), established in 2003, is a community service organisation whose members come from Gugulethu, Nyanga and Khayelitsha.

The group’s repertoire combines song and dance from a variety of Southern African cultures, accompanied by marimbas, drums and percussion. Their talented dancers have performed at several corporate 2010 FIFA World Cup soccer events and have collaborated with well-known artists both nationally and internationally.

Not only does this program of events at the Castle give the various groups an opportunity to be part of the tradition of the Cape Town Military Tattoo, and to keep the culture and history of the country alive, but it is also a preparation for three upcoming events:

The first of these was the **Western Cape Schools Drill and Marching Festival**, which was held at Vygieskraal Stadium, Johnson Road, Rylands, Athlone on Saturday, 15 October 2011. The opening ceremony involved the SA Army Band Cape Town, the Cape Field Artillery Pipes and Drums and the St Joseph Worker Brigade Bugle and Fife Band. The Dog Unit of Air Force Base Ysterplaat also did a demonstration. To signal the end of this opening ceremony, the Field Guns of the Cape Field Artillery fired a shot – these same guns fire the 21-gun salutes during state visits and at the annual opening of Parliament.

Grade 12 learners from all schools in the Western Cape visited the numerous static displays of the SANDF, including career displays by the provincial Defence Reserves office, 3 Medical Battalion Group and 9 SA Infantry Battalion. The Regiment Oranje Rivier had their awe-inspiring Rooikat armoured vehicle on show.

Throughout the day, there were performances, marches and exhibitions of the various schools' precision drill squads (including the WP SMDEA), the drum majorettes of the WP Drum Majorettes Association, and the gymnasttrada of the Western Cape School Sports Organization.

The second upcoming event is a **Military Sunset Concert** that will be held at the Castle of Good Hope on 18 and 19 November 2011, at which the SA Army Band Cape Town and the Pipes and Drums of Cape Field Artillery will be joined by several youth groups. The concert starts at 19h00, and visitors are invited to have a relaxing sunset picnic inside the Castle before the show.

For booking information, please contact the DRPOWC at the Castle on 021 787 1167 or email defencereserveswc@gmail.com.

The third exciting event to diarise is the **SA Army Band Cape Town's annual Gala Concert** in the City Hall, central Cape Town, on 02 December 2011. The concert starts at 19h00.

For booking information, please contact Staff Sergeant Jerome Mecloen of the SA Army Band Cape Town at 082 561 4539. Tickets will also be available at the door.



Photo 3: The Marimba Dancers of the Likhwezi Arts Project