

A COLOURFUL SPECTACLE BY THE LIGHT OF THE FULL MOON: THE DRESS REHEARSAL FOR THE CAPE TOWN MILITARY TATTOO 2012

Article and photos supplied by Mrs Regine Lord.

The Dress Rehearsal for the Cape Town Military Tattoo took place on a rather windy and very cold Tuesday night, 30 October 2012. Nonetheless, it was well-attended, with spectators on all the stands. Representatives from the various media had been invited, and numerous photographers lingered on the sidelines, occasionally sprinting from one place to the next to get different angles, looking for the perfect shot that would capture all the thrill and excitement of this event and motivate their readers to buy tickets!



Photo 1: The strong men from the Cape Field Artillery Saluting Troop work together to move the heavy 25-pounder guns into the correct position

The mood backstage was one of nervous excitement and eager anticipation. During the day, the team of wranglers from Cape Garrison Artillery and Regiment Westelike Provincie rehearsed the sequence with which equipment had to be carried on and off the arena – with WO2 Mike Cairns dashing hither and thither to issue stern instructions. The ushers, made up of soldiers from 3 Medical Battalion Group and the SA Air Force, were busy applying numbered stickers to the seats with much good-humoured bantering. And the medical teams from made sure that all their equipment was ready in case of any emergencies requiring first aid. The welcome squad in luminous yellow bibs greeted spectators, as they began to arrive for the evening's show, and inside the heavy Van der

Stel gate, a group of smartly dressed soldiers was handing out programmes and red paper poppies (in celebration of Remembrance Day on 11 November 2012).



Photo 2: The four ceremonial guns fire a salvo during the 1812 Overture, the signature piece of the Cape Town Military Tattoo

In the late afternoon, an impressive static display consisting of a Rooikat from Regiment Oranjerivier, a Ratel of the Cape Town Highlanders, and an Oerlikon 35mm twin-barrel cannon of Cape Garrison Artillery, had been set up outside the front entrance of the Castle. The four heavy 25-pounder guns of the Cape Field

Artillery Saluting Troop were being neatly lined up and their barrels adjusted on the lawns outside the Castle to face roughly northeast. Thereafter, the troops went through their pre-show routine of testing the rounds. The guns need to be able to fire in very quick succession during the 1812 Overture, which is the CFA Saluting Troop's trademark piece at the Tattoo, and it is thus crucial to prevent any misfiring.



Photo 3: Drum Major Staff Sergeant Johan Labuschagne of the SA Army Band Kroonstad exuberantly 'does the twist'

One of the highlights of the show – judging from the reactions of the spectators – was the performance by the SA Army Band Kroonstad, who revealed – to everyone's surprise and delight – that their soldiers are not only accomplished musicians, but also talented dancers! Can you picture "The Skater's Waltz" danced (well, kind of...) by a couple of men in khaki-coloured uniforms, with frilly little tutus slipped on? And a Drum Major laying aside his mace and cap and dancing exuberantly to "Let's Do The Twist"?! As Captain John Manning, the announcer, explained, it is not surprising that Staff Sergeant Johan Labuschagne is a reigning world champion line dancer; in fact, he is due to travel to the USA to defend his title!



Photo 4: Corporal Rahube launches into the theme song of the CT Military Tattoo 2012: "Thank you for the music"

What made the entire evening even more memorable was the sight of a vividly clear full moon rising above the east-facing walls of the Castle, just as the massed military bands entered the arena, and Corporal Godfrey Rahube of the SA Army Band Cape Town launched into the theme song of the Cape Town Military Tattoo 2012 – ABBA's "Thank you for the music":

"So I say
Thank you for the music, the songs I'm singing
Thanks for all the joy they're bringing;
Who can live without it, I ask in all honesty
What would life be?
Without a song or a dance, what are we?
So I say thank you for the music
For giving it to me..."

Indeed!

More photographs can be found here:

<http://namibsands.wordpress.com/2012/11/03/a-colourful-spectacle-by-the-light-of-the-full-moon-the-dress-rehearsal-for-the-cape-town-military-tattoo-2012/>