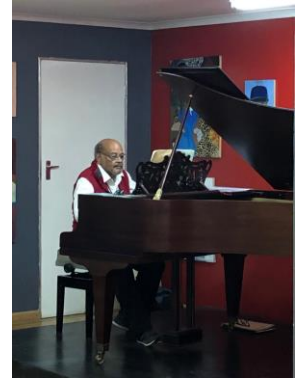




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## Sihlalo Outreach Newsletter December 2022

Welcome to the December 2022 newsletter for Sihlalo Outreach Pty Ltd. Sihlalo is a not-for-profit Public Benefit Organisation based in Salt River, Cape Town. Its mission is to provide training opportunities for young adults disadvantaged by lack of opportunity or education, or by illness or poverty. Sihlalo was started by Australians Karen and Keith in 2019, with a focus on woodwork training. They love South Africa, and share a passion for practical capacity building and skills development, personal growth through learning on the job, and team building.

The very good news for Sihlalo in October 2022 was that Keith's travel ban was lifted and he was able to return to South Africa to take over the workshop. A lot of people were VERY pleased to see him! Keith's cardiac rehabilitation took on another form with the physical and mental challenges of being in a busy workshop every day and driving on Voortrecker Road! Many thanks to Rod at SAMI for his patience, support and intervention, and to Thea from Travel Counsellors in getting Keith on a plane so quickly!



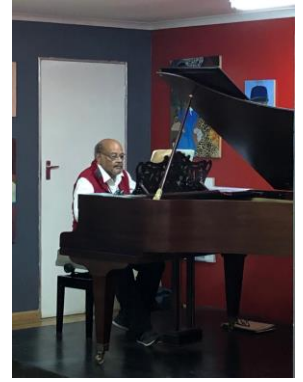
As for so many other South African business, 2022 has been a testing year for Sihlalo. The ongoing threat of Covid, the ever-present load shedding, finding good quality materials that are consistently available, and the increasing costs of power, services and materials continue. Moreover there is the challenge of recruiting the right people into the workshop who believe in our vision, who contribute willingly and take a long-term view, and value collegiality. Keith's presence in the workshop meant that he was able to focus on team building, working with suppliers to ensure consistent supplies, organising much needed workshop equipment repairs, stocking hardware and streamlining production schedules, and

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improving quality of product with valued clients. He had overseen the workshop activities by WhatsApp for nearly three years, and it was so good to have him on the spot, in real time, with his eyes on the things that needed fixing.

2022 has ended with many high notes and we are looking forward to 2023 with renewed enthusiasm. Notable among the 2022 achievements are the rising importance of our youth program. This has taken three forms.

**The first exciting area is the Sihlalo Trainees:** Baxolile and Mbasa (pictured right, with his commissioned pencil drawing of Chante the workshop dog) have benefitted from more exposure to woodworking and design, since Keith has been in the workshop. They exhibited an impressive array of their work at Sihlalo during a fund-raiser for the Sihlalo Youth Theatre program where Mbasa spoke eloquently to the audience about what motivates him, and Baxolile, when they produce their art. A couple of weeks later they exhibited their pieces at the Children's Art Centre at Zonnebloem High School end of year function. Their work was bought by several attendees, and it now graces the walls of people's homes. We hope that their ongoing exposure through Sihlalo will bring more commissions and experiences.



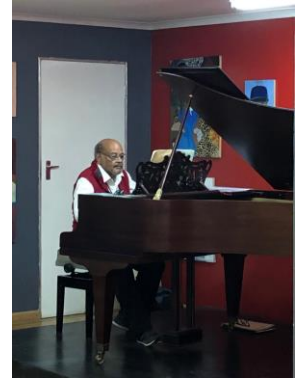
Both Mbasa and Baxolile will be returning to Sihlalo in 2023 to enter the next phase of their woodwork training program,. They will be learning more about product design and planning, choosing and preparing woods, measuring and cutting, and those pesky angles!

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**The second exciting area is African instrument making:** This is a collaboration between Kuda and Keith. Keith has over 45 years of experience working with wood, ranging from identifying species in the bush, to logging and milling it, to trading it around the world, and teaching about it. He is a skilled wood craftsman and woodturner. One of his passions is using wood for musical instruments. He has been able to spend valuable time with Kuda, the African instrument maker in charge of the Sihlalo Youth Theatre African music program, to work on his product design and improvement. Kuda makes instruments for the children he is teaching, largely using recycled materials to date. Keith and Kuda have been sourcing better quality woods for keys and sound boards, and better quality fittings to improve quality of sound. He now has an impressive array of different sized marimbas and mbiras, and most of the children have small marimbas to take home to practice on.

One instrument that is difficult to make easily is the drum. Kuda's African music group needed drums, and they cost money. So two very successful fundraising activities happened in November, generating much needed funds for drum purchase. Our last newsletter spoke about a very successful benefit concert, with generous soloists Jürgen Schwietering, and Kenneth Abrahams



**The third exciting area is fund raising for new instruments:** Kenneth generously returned to perform at Sihlalo in November, along with Karen, and leaders from the Sihlalo Youth Theatre group. Kenneth's picture during a wonderful performance of a Chopin nocturn is in the header to the newsletter. The Sihlalo trainees' art works were on display at this concert. Six leaders in the Sihlalo Youth Theatre performed at the concert. This was a practice for them as we anticipate that they will be performing programs in 2023 in their own right to raise money for their training.



Benefit concert for Sihlalo African Youth Theatre Group

**Pianists Kenneth Abrahams and Karen Grimmer**

Program includes: Chopin (Spring Waltz, four Nocturnes); Beethoven Sonata Op2 No3, Bach Partita No. 2, Schubert Impromptus Op 90

Join us 2pm Sunday Nov 6<sup>th</sup> at Sihlalo Upper Deck 54 Foundry Rd, Salt River  
Complementary glass of champagne and a snack, barista coffee available  
Ample parking with car guards

Art display by Sihlalo trainees (can be purchased)  
Guest appearance by senior members of the Youth Theatre Group  
Reserve tickets on [info@sihlalo.org.za](mailto:info@sihlalo.org.za) R100 adults, R50 pensioners and students, children under 12 free.  
Pay at the door



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Proceeds from this concert purchased five jemba drums, which the children performed on the following week at the Long March To Freedom, with generous support of Sarah Haines, the director. Kuda is pictured with three of the drums



A second successful fund-raising program was given by Karen in Adelaide, Australia, in late November, which raised enough money to purchase a set of 3 dunan drums. Kuda is busy organising purchase of these drums so the children can start learning in 2023.

The Australian audience was interested in hearing about the Sihlalo program, and in the challenges experienced by two Australians who are learning that running a not-for-profit organisation in South Africa is not for cissies. Very generous donations and expressions of interest in further supporting the Sihlalo program, were received. Of note was that Peter Bok, the owner of Bapea Gallery where the concert took place, and some of his students, have offered support and mentorship to the trainees in 2023. This should bring increased exposure for them, to people in other parts of the world.

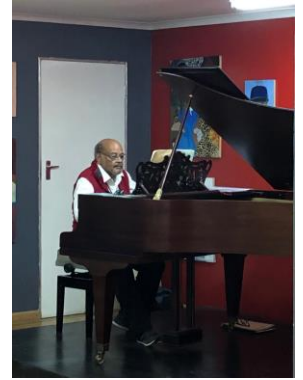


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**Thanks to our loyal clients:** The Sihlalo woodwork shop has been supported throughout 2022 by many loyal and patient clients. With Keith in the workshop, tighter controls on production, more attention to materials, and better communications in place, we look forward to faster production, and production of even more beautiful and innovative items in 2023.

The most exciting news to start 2023 however, is that one of Sihlalo's longest standing clients and supporters (**Sprung ZA**) is taking over the former Sihlalo coffee shop space for display and distribution. Nicola Polmans is the Sprung ZA director and designer. Sihlalo has been involved from the beginning in Sprung ZA research and development, and now many pieces in Nicola's beautiful product range are made in the Sihlalo workshop. Sihlalo is so proud to have been part of her journey. Nicola will take a greater role in the workshop in 2023, and will collaborate with Keith to source new and exciting woods, improve production processes and develop new product.



Thank you to our many Sihlalo supporters who have been part of our journey during 2023! We wish you a merry and safe Christmas break, and a prosperous and healthy New Year!!!!

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