

Media guidelines for discussing Candoco Dance Company's work and disability

Who we are

Candoco Dance Company is the leading contemporary dance company of disabled and non-disabled dancers.

At the heart of our work are our national and international productions, created by world class choreographers for audiences to enjoy. Alongside these, through our Learning projects and activities we provide access to the highest quality of work for people participating in contemporary dance for pure enjoyment, or as part of a developing career.

We are a passionate, dedicated team of people and we want to show you what dance can be, and who can dance.

The company should always be referred to as Candoco Dance Company in a first reference and then this can be shortened to Candoco.

Fundamental principles

Social Model of Disability

Candoco's inclusive approach to dance practice follows the Social Model of Disability.

Under the social model of disability, people are disabled by barriers within society, rather than being 'victims' of their impairments or conditions. (Graee: Media Language Guide)

The Social Model considers disability as the result of oppressive and discriminatory barriers of attitude, infrastructure and environment in society. This is in contrast to the Medical Model of Disability which views disability through a medical lens and considers the disabled person as the ("suffering") patient or recipient of treatment.

Disabled / non-disabled: we use the terminology as outlined in <http://www.equalitytraining.co.uk/> that states: Disabled people use the term 'impairment' to talk about their medical condition or diagnosis or description of their functioning, whereas 'disability' describes the social effects of impairment.

'Disability' is therefore not a description of a personal characteristic: A disabled person is not a 'person with a disability' as the person does not own the disability in the way that you might be 'a person with brown hair'.

Consequently, the opposite of 'disabled' is not 'able-bodied' or 'abled', but 'non-disabled'.

Inclusive Dance Practice:

Candoco Dance Company's dance practice is *inclusive*. Our approach is not to 'integrate' people into our company, as that would suggest individuals need to be made to fit into an existing structure. Rather, we try to ensure our approach is as accessible as possible in

order that people can 'come as they are' to access, engage with and participate in our work.

Creative Case for Diversity:

Candoco Dance Company believes that art and culture are made better and can reach new and exciting levels, if those participating and making art reflect the diversity of society at large. Working with 'difference' exponentially increases the artistic possibilities inherent in the creative process, making for art that is new, interesting and, above all, excellent.

As the Arts Council England puts it: 'Diversity and equality are crucial to the arts because they sustain, refresh, replenish and release the true potential of [] artistic talent regardless of people's background.[...] [Diversity] is an important element in the dynamic that drives art forward, that innovates it and brings it closer to a profound dialogue with contemporary society'.

(http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/pdf/What_is_the_Creative_Case_for_Diversity.pdf)

Focus on the art vs disability

Candoco is first and foremost a dance company with an inclusive vision. We work with a very diverse cast as we believe inclusive practice makes for more interesting, more exciting and excellent dance.

Our dancers often get asked quite specific questions around the detail of their impairment. As a company we are often asked how many disabled dancers we have and what their disabilities are.

We are very happy to talk about the social and infrastructural challenges faced by our disabled dancers in view of the social model of disability, e.g. around access to progression routes into the dance profession. We are less happy to talk about how they might "overcome" their perceived physical disadvantage in order to dance, as that reduces the scope of the conversation, bringing it back to the medical model of disability.

In summary, we are open to any questions but do encourage journalists to first consider their intentions when asking specific, personal questions about our dancers' impairments.

Other references

For a very short and simple language guide, please refer to:

<http://www.graeae.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/Graeae-Media-Language-Guide.pdf>

For further detail on 'Respectful Language', take a look at:

http://www.equalitytraining.co.uk/images/news/language_of_respect.pdf

If you have any doubts on what language is appropriate to use when discussing Candoco's work, please do give us a call on 020 7704 6845.