

candoco
dance
company // + asos

TRAINING INTENSIVE 2019 EVALUATION

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INTRODUCTION

This evaluation will present findings emerging from the Candoco Dance Company + ASOS Training Intensive (shortened to Training Intensive in this document) led by Candoco in August 2019. The residential 2-week programme was held at Warwick Arts Centre, University of Warwick, and teachers from Candoco alongside guest teachers and artists.

Candoco is a world-leading professional dance company. Bridging the mainstream and the experimental, its bold approach and powerful collaborations create distinctive performances and far-reaching learning experiences. The company celebrates different ways of seeing, of being and of making art, putting it at the forefront of conversation around dance and disability.

The company, founded in 1991 by Celeste Dandeker-Arnold CBE and Adam Benjamin, collaborates with some of the industry's most renowned choreographers and artists to create performance work that is presented at prestigious venues and festivals in the UK and internationally.

Throughout the year, Candoco runs Dancer Development Days, Open Company Class and International Labs for professional dancers and dancers in training. It also offers a youth class for 13-25-year-old, disabled and non-disabled, non-professional dancers in London. The Training Intensive was designed to reach disabled and non-disabled dancers between the ages of 18 and 30, looking to pursue a career in dance. Participants were invited to apply through a call-out and selected based on their experience and suitability for the training. This is an important note which marks a difference between Candoco's 'open' training opportunities which in contrast to the Intensive are not offered on an application basis. This distinction highlights the aim of the Training Intensive to be developmental and progressive, by offering professional level training to dancers with dance experience and interested in developing their career in dance, who will benefit from training in an environment where their individual needs are accounted for. The Training Intensive was also offered free of charge, through generous support from ASOS, usually participants pay a fee to train with Candoco.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Candoco Dance Company with support from ASOS devised and led a two-week intensive, residential programme held at Warwick Arts Centre. The Training Intensive offered a unique opportunity for emerging disabled and non-disabled dance artists at different stages in their dance training.

“The purpose of the Candoco + ASOS Training Intensive is to address a major gap in provision for disabled dancers unable to access inclusive training.”

Hannah Dye, Producer

This training differed from existing ‘inclusive’ training in that it was a bespoke programme aimed at creating space for individual development and progression, resisting a current training landscape within which disabled dancers are expected to ‘fit into’ an existing, often codified programme of dance training which does not account for diverse needs and experiences.

“This matters, that these genuinely inclusive approaches to dance training for disabled and non-disabled people are essential and that Candoco is expertly placed to offer them.” **Charlotte Darbyshire, Artistic Co-Director**

Following a national call out Candoco invited 16 artists to participate. They danced, trained and ate together for 13 days. The immersive nature of the residency is important because it acknowledges that learning does not begin and end in a classroom or studio space, through conversations with peers, teachers and mentors took a holistic approach to the training and the development of each participant.

“The training allowed us to expand our creativity and exploration of tasks without the feeling that we had to have an end product.” **Liam, Participant**

What is clear from observing the training and talking to the dancers and teachers involved is that this Training Intensive is important, it has offered a space of ownership and autonomy for dancers who are often marginalised by mainstream education and training. The dancers described feelings of ‘not being enough’ or ‘not fitting in’, it became more apparent that the Intensive was giving them room to grow their creative practice and to develop their dance skills across multiple areas in an environment where they felt genuinely supported by the programme, by the teachers and mentors and, by each other.

There continues to be a need for this approach to training to ensure there is provision for disabled dancers to access high quality training and pathways to professional careers in the industry. With further support and through learning and evaluation of this first iteration of the Training Intensive, this model has potential to influence both change in the inclusive dance sector and in wider arts training provision.

ABOUT THE TRAINING INTENSIVE

Map showing geographical spread of applications



The Candoco Dance Company + ASOS Training Intensive was a two-week, residential, dance training course for 16 disabled and non-disabled dancers aged 18-30. The Training Intensive offered a unique experience to take part in high quality, intensive dance training with Candoco and meet other like-minded dancers. Over two weeks, dancers worked with experienced teachers and artists on their technique training and took part in a creative experience with a choreographer.

When

The Training Intensive took place from 5-16th August 2019 at the University of Warwick.

Who

The Training Intensive was for

- Disabled and non-disabled people
- Aged 18 – 30 years old
- Living in the UK
- Some dance experience (all styles)
- Passionate about dance and interested in developing a career in dance

Recruitment

The recruitment for dancers opened on 14 March and closed on 26 April 2019. Dancers were asked to send a film of them dancing and a short statement or video about why they wanted to take part in the Training Intensive. Candoco received 153 eligible applications. 22% of applicants were disabled and applications were received from across the UK.

Auditions

Following a rigorous short-listing process, Candoco invited 51 dancers to audition, which included all disabled applicants.

Two auditions were held to recruit dancers for the Training Intensive; the first audition in Leeds on 1st June in Leeds at Northern School of Contemporary Dance and the second on 8th June in London at The Place. 23 dancers took part in the Leeds audition and 28 took part in London.

Selected Dancers

From the auditions, Candoco invited 15 dancers to attend the Training Intensive. Additional disabled dancer, Kris Saunders, was outside the age range of the intensive (35) but Candoco was interested in supporting his development as a dancer and subsidised his place on the course.

From our 16 dancers, there were

8 girls

8 boys

11 dancers identified as disabled

5 dancers identified as non-disabled

And from their equal opportunities forms, their ethnicities were:

12 White British

2 Black African

1 Black Caribbean

1 White and Black African



ABOUT THE TRAINING INTENSIVE

Training Intensive daily schedule

Time	Activity
07:00 – 09:00	Breakfast
10:00 – 10:30	Warm up
10:30 – 11:30	MORNING CLASS
11:30 – 11:45	Break
11:45 – 12:30	MORNING CLASS
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch
13:30 – 15:00	Creative/ Making Performance Workshop
15:00 – 15:30	Break
15:30 – 17:00	Creative / Making Performance Workshop
17:00 – 17:30	Snack
17:30 – 18:00	Individual meetings with optional writing support
18:00 – 19:00	Break / Free Time
19:00 – 21:00	Dinner
21:00 onwards	Free Time / Bed

Over the two-week Intensive, Artistic Co-Director Charlotte Darbyshire and Producer Hannah Dye programmed the schedule to include fundamental elements of contemporary dance training; technique development, choreography, improvisation and performance. Inclusion was built into the framework of each day from the first individual warm up session, where dancers took time to understand what they needed to warm their own bodies and offered optional sessions where dancers could choose to continue with class if they desired. In addition, a reflective practice was continuously encouraged over the two-week period with 1-1 sessions available for each dancer and dedicated time for reflection and journaling.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Candoco invited Dr Kate Marsh to lead on the evaluation of the Training Intensive. Other contributors to the evaluation include; Emily Robinson, Ellie Douglas-Allan, Charlotte Darbyshire, Hannah Dye and the participants.

“It is useful to briefly acknowledge my position as the producer of this evaluation, a disabled artist-researcher, I started my training in inclusive dance with Candoco in 1996, primarily as a trainee and subsequently as a member of the performing company. I am currently an associate artist with Candoco and sit on a disabled advisory group formed by the company in 2018, within these positions I lead workshops and advocate for the company alongside a consultancy role. This means that I have an insight into the practice and ethos of Candoco from both an historic and current perspective, additionally as a person with a disability I can align with much of the experiences of the participants of the intensive training”

Dr Kate Marsh

This report will employ a largely qualitative approach, using observation, interviews and participant feedback to examine the processes and impact of the Training Intensive. This is a response to the current landscape within which the voices of disabled students in dance is under-represented. They will be offered here as a means of presenting authentic lived experiences which will not only give insight into the Training Intensive, but will also speak directly to other aspiring disabled students.

The report will also include some statistical information relating to the Intensive itself and participant feedback.





CONTEXT

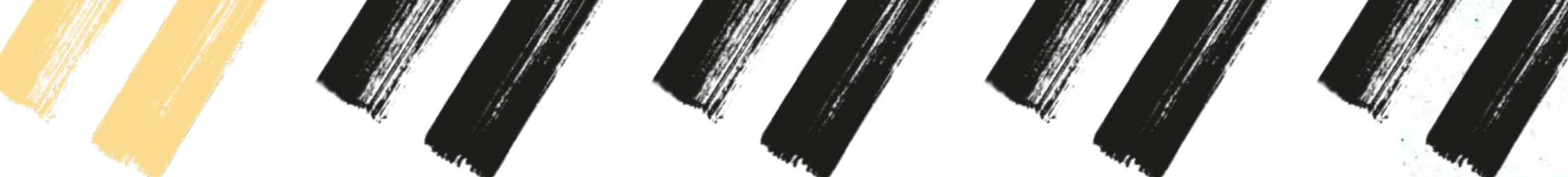
Since the mid 1990s a shift has occurred in the landscape of UK contemporary dance. There has been a clear increase in the presence of disabled dance artists both in performance and to a lesser extent in training contexts. Since the emergence of key instigators in the field of dance and disability in the UK (Candoco Dance Company, 1991; StopGap, 1995) the disabled body in dance has been the focus of much discussion. Within Higher Education and training contexts there is a body of work addressing issues of accessibility for disabled dance students wishing to pursue a dance or performing arts training (Aujla and Redding, 2012; Benjamin, 2001; Whatley, 2007). This research highlighted a number of obstacles facing dancers with impairments confronting a hegemony of ableism in contemporary dance training and education.

Subsequent debate, informed by this early research, meant that the disabled dancer had become more visible on stage. Training, however, was almost exclusively bespoke and took place within a limited number of companies including those featuring disabled performers. This 'on the job' learning undertaken by employed disabled artists arguably did much to raise the profile of the disabled dancer, but little to improve access into the sector and subsequent progression. In an environment where training opportunities were limited to a handful of individuals there followed problems of wider access for disabled people wishing to participate in dance. In response to limited training opportunities, Candoco launched a foundation course in dance for disabled students. The course ran from 2004 to 2007. The programme of study included choreography, technique classes and theoretical study. It is particularly relevant for this study to note the

short life of this initiative, which closed due to funding being redirected into Widening Participation projects to be run by Dance and Drama award (DaDa) schools (Verrent 2007:15). This gives a valuable insight into the long-term commitment to developmental opportunities for disabled artists. Following the termination of funding for the foundation course, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) issued the following statement:

In September 2005, the LSC – now responsible for the Dance and Drama Awards – indicated to Candoco that they would be changing the way they deliver training for disabled students from September 2007 focusing more on embedding the drive to widen participation within the Dance and Drama Awards themselves. (LSC 2007)

There is a suggestion here of a shift away from bespoke training opportunities towards training which is rooted in existing programmes of study. This is problematic for the disabled dance student; without appropriate acknowledgement of the diverse and changing training needs of disabled students there is an implication that disabled dance students should adapt to existing models of dance pedagogy. This is also troubling in terms of leadership progression and development for disabled artists. The probability that existing provision will be delivered by non-disabled teachers and practitioners means that disabled students will not see themselves represented in authoritative positions, furthermore potential leadership roles for disabled artists are reduced through the removal of specialised or alternative training routes.



Existing research has asked questions about the place of the disabled dance artist in both training and professional contexts (Aujla and Redding 2013; Kupperts 2000; Whatley 2007). Investigation in this area has brought attention to the need to improve access into training and participation in dance practice. Theory and practice emerging from this research has impacted on how the impaired dancer is viewed and placed within an existing framework in dance (Kupperts, 2000; Pell, 2012). Important changes have occurred as a result of this initial research: there is a greater 'acceptance' of the disabled dancer on stage within the context of 'mainstream' dance. In addition there are 'formal' networks, which have evolved from this research that aim to continue to debate and support dance and disability (NIDN*). This evaluation acknowledges the existing body of work in this area and the integral role this has played in continuing to question and encourage discussion around dance and disability.

Since its creation in 1991, Candoco Dance Company has been a pioneer in the field of dance, providing ongoing training and artist development opportunities for disabled artists and students. This has taken the form of an extensive programme of education designed and delivered by the company and associate members, ranging from workshops in structured educational environments, bespoke training in alternative contexts, long and short-term choreographic residencies, mentoring for groups and individuals and professional development programmes.

The company's current vision for Learning covers four main strands of activity:

- Provide systematic training pathways and tailored routes into the profession for young disabled people (18-30)
- Deliver high quality learning, training and participation programmes to develop disabled dance artists and increase opportunities for people to engage with inclusive practice
- Develop and sustain partnerships with vocational dance training and Higher Education institutions
- Provide specific artist development opportunities for professional artists

The Training Intensive sits within the first strand of activity, looking to directly address the fundamental lack of provision for young disabled dancers to access professional level training.

Candoco has led inclusive training since its formation as a company, historically these opportunities have been a means of supporting apprenticeships with the main company of dancers and teachers, additionally the company has invited new, aspiring dancers to experience its work.

It is useful to understand that a primary rationale behind Candoco's training opportunities is an acknowledgement by the company that there are few opportunities for disabled people to gain skills in dance in professional, inclusive settings. This not only impacts a broader context of dance and disability, but more specifically on a potential 'pool' of dancers and teachers for Candoco as the UK's leading inclusive professional dance company.

*National Inclusive Dance Network (no longer in existence)

HISTORIC CASE STUDY

Welly O'Brien

In 1996, Welly, a recently disabled woman with very limited experience in dance participated in a Candoco workshop and was subsequently invited to attend a Candoco summer training programme held at Stoke Mandeville hospital in July of the same year. Following this week of training, Welly became an apprentice with the company learning all aspects of the company's work, from teaching to performing in small scale works alongside the main company.

In 2001, Welly joined Candoco as a full-time dancer and teacher, touring and teaching extensively in the UK and internationally. After leaving Candoco in 2006, Welly maintained a relationship with the company as an associate artist continuing to teach as part of the company's programme of training and education. Alongside this role Welly has developed a long-standing and varied career including making and performing in her own work and working as a dancer with other companies and choreographers.

Welly cites her participation in the summer training as an integral part of her development in dance, not only did this encounter introduce her to professional training and enable her to embark on a career in dance, it also served as a key opportunity to connect her with a community of artists working in the area of inclusive dance.



Photography: Rachel Cherry



OBSERVATIONS

Dr Kate Marsh observes Day 4 of the Training Intensive.


I arrive and the dancers are about to start a warm up, there is a tangible sense of 'togetherness' that comes from long and intense days of shared exploration. Voices are gentle, quiet, eyes move around the room noticing each other taking things in. They develop the warm up to moving around the space, they begin throwing a ball to each other, suddenly the space is changed with the shift in the air as they move quickly with intent around the space, the quiet is punctuated with excited noises as they pass and drop the ball to each other.

I am struck immediately by a sense of shared practice and learning, there are supportive words spoken, reassuring glances and small moments of contact. I also note, as is often the case in observations of this sort, the diversity in the room. There is, as one might expect, a diversity of bodies in the space, alongside this I sense also a diversity of experiences and this feels somewhat different from how I feel observing dance training in more 'mainstream' contexts. It seems that the environment being created by Candoco is one of permission and exploration. Although this Training Intensive is framed by many questions and aims, I sense a genuine openness to what might emerge from the process.

Following the warm up, the participants take a short break, during which they chat together easily, it is clear to me in my observer role that they are sharing something important and making room for each other to develop.

The subsequent session is technique class. For the 'non-dancer' reader this is an integral aspect of a dance training where dancers practice a series of tasks to develop the skills and principles necessary for different aspects of dance practice; codified techniques, improvisation, performing. Traditionally, technique class has involved the learning of codified techniques and has followed a series of set exercises designed to help students to replicate the teacher and existing movement language. These set movement sequences are often learnt and re-produced in unison.

Though Somatic and more exploratory approaches to dance training have helped make dance training more inclusive, technique class is historically problematic for the disabled student, as they are informed by systems of codified language and movement based on 'normative' physicalities. This part of dance training can be alienating and inaccessible to a dancer who may not fit these codified norms, although there are often adaptations offered, there still seems to be a hierarchy or a 'right' version and 'other' versions. The morning class offered in Candoco's Training Intensive followed a clear set of principles that were delivered in a diversity of ways to ensure that they were relevant to each individual: The teaching had inclusive practice at its core, offering multiple 'ways in' to the learning based on individual needs and appetite. In this way all participants develop their physical skills and creative potential; not only permitting different manifestations of dance but recognising that different and individual experiences enrich our art form.



The afternoon session offered improvisational practices and choreographic enquiry, facilitated by Kathy Crick. Crick is a recognised artist and pedagogue, having taught a multitude of dance-related subjects in various Higher Education institutions for nearly two decades. She was invited in to lead two morning Improvisation classes and three Choreography sessions during the Training Intensive.

“Vulnerability and comfort can sit together, boundaries can be porous, but you need to know where your edges are – we can’t take it for granted and change is inevitable” - Kathy Crick

The following section includes feedback gathered from the participants at the end of the teaching sessions. The students were asked to reflect on the session and to share their feelings and observations.





Participant feedback for Kathy Crick's session on Day 4.

Feeling Extraordinary Hot Excellent
Moulding Powerful Trust Disorientated
Contact Materials Tapestry of Worms

"It felt really calming and at times vulnerable,
in certain sections you could feel everyone's vibe"

"It felt quite different to where we were when we started,
we were more comfortable with each other,
more able to linger and interact"

"It's been really rich to create something individually,
but also as a group"

"Everyone had their own creative ideas,
we weren't all the same"

"I liked creating something that was so distinctly me"

"I felt an expansion towards everyone,
borrowing from others to expand my own practice"

"I didn't feel pressure to take anything specific from the work,
I felt permission to take as much or as little as I liked"

"It was a great feeling to learn from someone else,
like taking inspiration"

"I loved seeing different interpretations –
a difference, but also a sense of unity in the group"



DIARIES AND INTERVIEWS

Interview 1

Charlotte Darbyshire

Artistic Co-Director at Candoco Dance Company

Can you tell us a bit about your role at Candoco?

I am Candoco Dance Company's Artistic Co-Director alongside Ben Wright. We have been in post since 2017.

Can you talk a little bit about the history of Candoco's training opportunities?

Throughout Candoco's nearly 30-year history we have offered training opportunities for disabled and non-disabled dancers at every stage of their career; taster workshops for beginners, choreographic research or residencies, residential summer schools, Teacher Training Intensives and International Labs to name a few...

In 2004 we designed and ran our own foundation course in an attempt to address the huge gap in training provision for disabled dancers. This is evident not only within Higher Education and vocational training but also opportunities leading up to that or post-training into the profession.

Candoco's foundation course was very successful in that most participants are now working in the profession; however, the funding was withdrawn and the course was forced to close. This is the first two-week residential Training Intensive that Candoco has provided.

Can you talk about Candoco's relationship with ASOS? How did this collaboration come about?

Candoco and ASOS met at the 2018 Paralympics in Seoul where ASOS was an official supporter, responsible for designing and creating the formal and ceremony wear for ParalympicsGB, and Candoco performed as part of the Cultural Olympiad celebrations. It quickly became clear that there were synergies at the heart of these two considerably different organisations that offered an exciting opportunity. Candoco and ASOS developed a partnership to bring to life their shared values around promoting inclusion and celebrating diversity.



What are your views on existing training provision for disabled artists?

Despite all the efforts and strong political agenda, the existing training provision is failing disabled artists. Change is needed at every stage, from primary and youth opportunities right up to and through professional level training. Disabled professionals have never been in such demand but there are still too few and many holding these leadership positions could not access existing training provision and had to (chose to) forge their own bespoke training path or learn 'on the job'.

Existing training models need to be reimagined. Traditional approaches to dance training are inherently exclusive and yet dance is a form of expression and art form that is strengthened by a diversity of voices, bodies, perspectives and experiences.

How did you select the teachers for the Training Intensive and plan the content of the training in general?

Being our first two-week Training Intensive and a pilot, it was essential to me that that I could work with artists that I knew well and could confidently engage in creative conversation. I was able to utilise my connections from working in different inclusive contexts and across Higher Education Institutions for 20 years, to create a team and curriculum that offered a variety of inclusive approaches to technical, improvisational, choreographic and performance training of the highest quality, and delivered by a wide representation of experienced artists; a mix of gender, age, disability and also from Candoco's past and present, and from within mainstream Higher Education. To integrate these worlds of experience was important to me and felt important for the participants' learning.

Equally important was how one subject/class or approach connected with another and a lot of creative energy and thinking went into considering how to support the participants to connect their learning and feel met in their individual needs and appetites. The teaching assistants and pastoral staff were key bridges or conduits for this process and it was important to me that these staff were also experienced artists and practitioners in their own right and therefore understood the depth and nuance of the work and the demands of intensive training. What is exciting for me is that we know of many, many more artists than we were able to invite this year so I am already planning for the future.

What have you taken away from the intensive?

That this matters. That these genuinely Inclusive approaches to dance training for disabled and non-disabled people are essential and that Candoco is expertly placed to offer them.

Yes, we cannot do everything and it is not our sole responsibility. We need to continue to advise, support, educate and challenge existing training providers but we can also demonstrate what is possible and lead the way with our own training programmes that I firmly believe will have long lasting effects on all who participate and so in turn impact on the wider dance ecology.

What were your favourite moments?

I can't say. Every single moment. Being there was like co-creating and inhabiting a world in which we all want to live – one of diversity, permission, respect, creative engagement and learning.

Can you think of anything you would have done differently?

Yes, I think there is always lots to learn... Next time, I would ensure more connection between the first week and the second, so that the learning could be more consciously carried over. I would not necessarily have the public sharing on the last day. I would definitely invite a disabled choreographer to lead any future performance project and I would like to secure funding for 3 years at a time so that we can offer something even more substantial and long lasting for a few individuals and to track their progression over 3 years and into the profession.





DIARIES AND INTERVIEWS

Participant Diary 1

Aby Watson

Aby is a dancer based in Glasgow, she identifies as a dancer with dyspraxia. Aby is currently undertaking a PhD exploring the perception and experiences of dyspraxia in dance performance and training. This is her first intensive training with Candoco.

Aby makes and performs in her own work. This case study presents excerpts from diarised notes kept by Aby over the period of the intensive.

Monday 5th

I felt it again. The familiar lump in my throat as people travel through the space. I felt that weird shame feeling. I said 'Aw. messed it up' I just walked to the side and accepted that it wasn't my time. But then, we had to watch our partners dance and look for feedback - so I had an opportunity to just look, witness. I saw other people going on similar processes - having similar experiences, and I held no judgement. I understood their experience but felt no shame because it wasn't me, and I accept their way of doing it. Their time. People going in their own time. Not everyone is effortlessly swooping by. Ruben wasn't doing it perfectly - but he was so confident and was having a great time. This feeling - this shame filled lump in my throat that appears - is not directly apart of my dyspraxia. Yes, my dyspraxia means

I need repetition and time - but the overwhelming sense of it, the feeling of failure, the shame - that is how I (and my experience) twist it. In those moments where I don't do it perfectly, or at a level I'm happy with, I'm carrying a whole load of something else. There's a big dissonance between what I know I'm capable of and what I'm doing. It's something about my expectation of myself. The way I see or understand myself in these moments that taints the whole thing. It weighs me down. It might even stop me from learning. It definitely stops me from feeling joy.



Tuesday 6th

Today was a good day. We were working with Kathy Crick on improvisation so everything was more aligned to my strong suit - creativity and improv. We were working from a place of fidgets, to begin something but not follow through, "random" "impulses". Everyone's quality of movement was frenetic, quick shooting limbs with a frenetic messiness - limbs flying, shooting, popping - constant and frantic - I felt at home - located, not travelling. We went on a process of playing with movement, exploring, improvising, and then setting two short "bits" "material"- loosely held terms for setting something which I enjoyed. "Phrase" or "sequence" can set off some paranoia or anxiety - they feel close as terms to traditional notions of choreography. I set things, but lost them in time - that felt OK. I didn't feel a need to clamp on. I felt comfortable in the messy - frenetic - wildness and enjoyed the lack of ballet / dance terminology or structure. It felt more like exploration of movement. "Crunchy peanut butter", "smooth peanut butter". We did some instant composition. Right now, Rob, Annie-Rose, Dermot and I are talking about uncomfortableness with choreography - set material presents one 'right way' of doing it, and lots of wrong ways of doing it. It can weigh you down when your experience solely occupies the 'wrong' way of doing it - my experience of following set material is usually a sense of wrongness - I don't want to feel wrong. It's all well and good saying "don't hold judgement, be kind to yourself" but at the end of the day - there is a right way and a wrong way. There are many wrong ways; wrong direction, coordination, memory, pacing, lefts, rights, bumping into others. It weighs you down being exposed as 'wrong' when trying very hard to do it right.

Wednesday 7th

It happened. "The truth" as I said it to Charlotte Darbyshire. The reality of my experience in these sorts of environments, in these sorts of tasks. Or the depth of my truth here. The mask slipped. It became too much. Information overload. Deep down berating. Dissonance with my desires, expectations deep down pressure to succeed in what happens in the room. In the learning, I give constant effort. The age-old strategy of effort = output becomes incorrect. I apply all my effort: my gaze traces the dancer's body, their shape, direction, texture, speed, I focus on the 'elements' of the dance. Giving each move attention in the hope to string it all together. I follow but it doesn't stick. It feels as if I am trying to hold something, gripping tightly with all five fingers but it turns out there is nothing there. It doesn't slip out - like one of those water toys from the gift shop, the 'snakes' - because it was never there. Instead, I am just gripping - gripping as hard as I can to hold on - giving it all of my energy, a clenched fist that shakes and is red with white knuckles, but I open my eyes and my hand and there is nothing there. Just the imprint of my own tight grasp and a sadness that feels deep and hollow. And then there's tears and I have a desire to withdraw and bury that feeling even further.

Usually there is a shame. A sheepish shame with all this. I leave the space, allow for the burst of whatever comes and hide away until I can bury it deep enough that a smile can surface again. Then, I shrug it off and come back again eager to learn. I was going to write like a puppy after being scolded by its master. But, it's more complicated than that because I am both the puppy and the master. For the sake of this analogy, the kennel I am in doesn't care if I master the tricks that it is trying to teach me. I am stuck in a psychological panopticon, which I have both built myself and am trying to desperately pull apart brick by brick.



This time I left and people followed - Kate Marsh was there - she knows me, she gets it, she understands. She's on this journey with me. A conversation occurs, an intimate conversation in a relatively open space with new people. A conversation arises about the micro situation (me crying in the dressing room) and a conversation about the macro situation (my experience, my wider experience, trauma, my research, the stuff I'm unpacking academically, practically, over years of time). People dribble into the room and the openness and honesty and the 'normalness' of this breakdown that was held with Kate disperses into my interactions with others - I have a red face, tears on my face, snotty tissue in hand - guard down, mask slipped.

This is normal for me. This doesn't mean I am sad or emotional - this is overwhelming - this is my body, mind, emotions processing a lot. I am working through some long-term stuff. Usually, I hide away, and I am hoping that I can just be open and in front of people and this is normal, and hopefully I will just begin to get bored with it and being open with this will normalise, and perhaps it will wither away, until I can just get on with my shit.

I think this group, the quick bond we've formed, the inclusive atmosphere and approach we have developed (and has been instigated by Candoco) allowed me the confidence to come to that place. I'm glad I did. However, I 100% know that this would not comfortably be the case in 'normative' and traditional dance environments. I can guarantee I would fight myself to keep the mask on, even if it meant walking away from the dancing.

Thursday 8th

We revisited Anne-Gaelle's sequence with a bit added on. For the first time in over ten years I enjoyed doing set rep. We had a great spacious warm up and I felt the movement in my body - I carried the sensation of the body into the movement. We began and she made comments about how we will lightly trace, watch first then begin to trace, follow through the sequence and not seek for perfection. I gave my attention to looking, following and feeling - the dance followed. There were bumps and wrong directions, but all were met with good humour and warm reception, and there was also fluidity and a trust of myself. As I was following, I told myself that there was no need to hold on to anything. Hollow the grasp. Feel the weight. If it slips, it slips. Move with. Trust myself. When there is an ease, things will be easier.

Friday 9th

I felt slightly anxious and resistant about performing our comedy duet - as it was neither comfortably set or responsively improvised. It felt intimidating to watch everyone's pieces, which were long, detailed and wonderfully comedic. I was comparing a wee bit and felt the impulse to ask not to do it. I think if it wasn't a duet, and I didn't want to let Dermot down, then I wouldn't have done it. I can be pernickety about what I share - when I feel like my work isn't finished or I don't know it - or I feel it isn't as good as other people's. I challenged myself by doing it. I couldn't let Dermot down. And I'm glad I did it. I'm a performer, and I can take confidence in how I can make something work.

Observations of Aby's Diary by Dr Kate Marsh.

There is something very useful in Aby's mention of a sense of shame in working differently from other dancers in a class situation. What is clear from her observations is that the unique provision of space and time in the Intensive in addition to the presence of other disabled artists in some way enables her to reflect on her own training journey. In talking to Aby during my visit to the Training it becomes clear that the week is bringing thoughts and feelings for her that are present in her dance training, but that this programme of teaching is a more comfortable environment to reflect on them in a way that is beneficial to her and her development as an artist.

Aby is clearly identifying the value of improvisation in training, specifically in the session with Kathy Crick and how this mode of learning makes room for "mistakes". There is also a sense emerging here of drawing from others in the group, for creative ideas but also for peer support. This is a key aim of the Training Intensive, that the learning is holistic and produced collectively by teachers and participants.

It is apparent from Aby's notes that the Intensive has given space for her habitual patterns of dance training to emerge, feelings of shame and not being 'enough'. It is interesting however in the context of the aims of this Training Intensive that she goes on to express that she also has the space within the Training to allow these feelings to emerge and to explore them in a 'safe' environment' within which she knows she is not the only one. This process is a fundamental aspect of self-development and often lacking in the traditional frameworks of 'normative' training.





DIARIES AND INTERVIEWS

Interview 2

Hannah Dye

Producer, Training Intensive

Can you talk a little bit about your role?

I was Producer for the 2019 Training Intensive. My role was essentially to pull the various strands together to ensure everything was communicated effectively and carried out as smoothly as possible. Key responsibilities included:

- Audition organisation, selection and invitations to final dancers
- Participant communication; information packs, accommodating access needs, parent/ carer liaising when required
- Liaising with Warwick Conferences team and Warwick Arts Centre
- Ensuring all staff were briefed and felt supported throughout
- Ensuring dancers were supported throughout and addressing any issues raised, in collaboration with other Candoco staff
- Administration; budget management, staff contracts etc

What was the process of inviting and selecting participants for the Training Intensive?

Participants were initially selected from application forms including video submission by Candoco's Artistic Co-Directors and Rehearsal Director. They worked to agreed selection criteria, from which 55 dancers were selected for audition. We then held two auditions - one in Leeds and another in London. I was on a selection panel with Artistic Co-Director Ben Wright and our audition teachers (Candoco artists and company dancers), together we made the final list of 16 dancers. The 16 who were offered a place each accepted and completed the two weeks.

How did this Training differ from previous Candoco training opportunities?

The purpose of the Training Intensive is to address a major gap in provision for disabled dancers unable to access inclusive training. Unlike previous Candoco 'Labs' which have been aimed at professional artists, this offers an opportunity for dancers to engage in artistic and technique training.



What were your initial thoughts at the start of the Training?

I was very excited by the prospect of seeing the 16 dancers we had selected together in the studio. It's always a little unknown as to how dancers will engage with each other, what their expectations might be and fears.

I also thought this was an exciting step for Candoco – meeting and working with a range of dancers who were mostly new to the company and starting this dialogue with the next generation of dancers. The company is taking a step in trying to address this issue in accessing training which still isn't prioritised by training institutions. So, it was a satisfying feeling to be in a room with dancers who, for their own reasons, haven't been able to access or don't feel comfortable with full time training.

Were you surprised by anything throughout the period of the Intensive?

I was surprised at how supportive the group became to each other. It reminded me how much further/ deeper a group can go creatively when engaging in a two-week project like this. I think this was partly due to the explorations within the studio but also due to the residential setting.

I was also surprised by their openness. For many, some of the teaching approaches/ practices were completely new ways of working and yet they embraced everything that was suggested or proposed, no matter how challenging or alien for them. There wasn't one day where a dancer had to have the day off – a huge sign of their commitment to the opportunity.

What were your favourite moments from the Training Intensive?

So many! But to pick a few....

- Seeing the group explore the grounds outside of the studio – this was new territory for many but it added another layer of creativity, excitement and possibility.
- Annie Hanauer's morning classes were brilliantly pitched. The dancers responded really well and appeared to enjoy being pushed. The changing dynamic throughout the two weeks with a range of teachers was key to keeping the dancers engaged and challenged.
- Seeing individual dancers overcome personal hurdles. For example one dancer started the Intensive with a barrier to any form of touch but he ended the two weeks performing a beautifully sensitive, physical duet with another dancer. I think the entire group noticed this big change.
- The residential setting at the University of Warwick worked particularly well to give dancers independence. The safe setting (with minimum roads), facilities on site including a leisure centre, choice at meal times and access to the studio before/ after set times all added to allowing dancers to make their own choices, enjoy free-time when/ how they wanted to and for some, to experience independent living for the first time.

What would you do differently?

As with any project, there are small tweaks to take forward from this pilot year to future residential Training Intensives. One key thing I would do differently is re-consider the 'pastoral/support' team role. We made a conscious decision to bring in experienced dance artists who could offer essential support to dancers within the studio. This ensured not only dancers had clear people to support them but that facilitators/ class teachers knew they also had this support. Their role was also to support dancers outside of the studio – morning wake ups/ ensuring dancers were happy with free time or gave dancers who needed it company. The role was broad and demanding. I would consider whether these roles are different or whether a different structure could still allow the same staff to fulfil both roles. Either way, it is essential that the support team remains bespoke to the needs of each cohort of dancers.

How do you think the Training Intensive will contribute to the development of the participants and wider inclusive dance sector?

I hope the Intensive has offered new ways of working, new possibilities and a deeper sense of working for the participants which they will each take forward into their own practice in some way. I hope the experience has given many dancers the confidence to access future opportunities both with Candoco and within the dance sector as a whole. From hearing feedback from the dancers themselves, I think the Training Intensive demonstrates that an inclusive model is one where they can flourish and I hope they manage to find similar settings so they can continue to develop.

Having seen these 16 dancers work in the studio over two weeks, I can confidently say the inclusive dance sector has some talent out there! They will have huge amounts to contribute to the ever-evolving dance sector.



DIARIES AND INTERVIEWS

Participant Diary 2 Liam Bone

Something I notice when I arrived and throughout the Training Intensive was 'time'. Candoco members and practitioners had this presence that made me feel I had all the time in the world for the Training. We had time in sessions, group and personal time. I had come with the mindset that because of the word 'intensive' Training that we would be pushed to our limits but this wasn't the feeling. The Training allowed us to expand our creativity and exploration of tasks without the feeling we had to have an end product. Most tasks throughout the training presented endless opportunities from which we created and learnt from our peers and mentors. Due to the 'time' effect we had during the tasks, we pushed our own abilities to new heights, the trust developed between one another and the discovery of new approaches to delivering and learning.

The way I want to approach and take lessons has changed, I feel I can now choose between fast and slow paced sessions and still be able to get great results from individuals. This was a challenge for me to accept the slower approach as before the Training my field of work was always fast paced in both the creation and delivery.





ANALYSIS OF PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Expectations

There were a variety of responses from participants as to what they expected from the Training, with many of the dancers wanting to gain different skills and experiences.

‘The Intensive went beyond my expectations, it not only provided me with what I had anticipated, offering a better understanding of dance, but it also taught me a lot about myself as a person.’

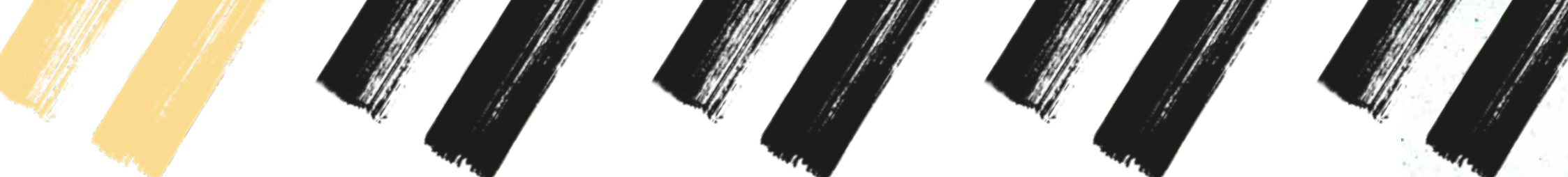
At the beginning and end of the Training Intensive, all participants were asked a series of questions including what their expectations were for the programme. Through this data, it is clear that Candoco has selected a broad and diverse range of dance artists to take part in the Intensive, as their individual experiences, hopes and aims differ quite considerably. In the pre-Intensive questionnaire, participants included hopes of:

- Participant A Gaining a **‘wider knowledge in an inclusive setting’**
- Participant B **‘To feel re-inspired by dance and the different ways I can move [and]... to learn about and understand other people’s experiences in dance’**
- Participant C **‘Strategies, ways in, scores, to take into my personal practice. A greater knowledge and experience of my body, of moving, of dance environments. It also might be a big expectation, but I hope I can have a positive experience that will help counteract the trauma of dance training environments’**

In the post-Intensive, it became apparent that many of the participants felt that they had gained new approaches and tools. Participants spoke about how this new understanding supported them in the Intensive and is also valuable and useful in their work outside of the programme.

Did taking part in the Intensive meet your expectations?

- Participant A **‘Yes it did, it created a whole new perspective around creating, training and working with others’**
- Participant B **‘I didn’t really have any clear expectations other than hoping to learn more about myself as a mover, and possibly other people as well. That was definitely met. I also came away from the experience with new techniques to approach my practice with which, while I didn’t necessarily expect, I am very grateful for’**
- Participant C **‘Yes, completely. I expected to be led through a diverse programme of training activity and that is definitely what I experienced. I think in a few ways the Intensive exceeded my expectations. I was a little anxious about the emphasis on the ‘intense’ nature of the two-weeks... I was expecting it to be a tough and overwhelming experience, well as full of learning and enjoyment. Even though it was challenging, as I was surprised at how comfortable I felt - everything felt ‘allowed’, even overwhelm, even rest - and I appreciated that’**



It is clear how important the use of terminology is in setting expectations for the Training Intensive. Including, the use of the term ‘intensive’ some individuals were unsure how to interpret this word. One participant commented, ‘**I was expecting it to be a tough and overwhelming experience...I was surprised at how comfortable I felt**’. Another participant also spoke about this; ‘**I wasn’t quite sure what to expect**’ and further proceeded to speak about the balance between technique, improvisation and creation. ‘**There was a lot of improvisation which I find more difficult and would have liked more direction sometimes**’. Another participant spoke about his pre-Intensive expectations, ‘**I didn’t really have any clear expectations other than hoping to learn more about myself as a mover, and possibly other people as well**’. However, having said this, he elaborated on his experience, confirming that the expectations that he did have were ‘**definitely met**’.

Content

Through Candoco’s programming of the Intensive, the dancers felt ‘**encouraged and supported**’ and that an array of learning styles, preferences and experiences were supported in a way which was ‘**special, nourishing and safe**’. The longer duration of the programme allowed participants ‘**to understand what was being taught, enabling [them] to absorb, use and engage with what was being offered**’.

In reviewing the participants’ responses to the content of the two weeks, many individuals chose to speak about particular individuals involved in the teaching team. Candoco provided approximately 9 teaching artists across the two weeks who each explored new themes and approaches to movement in line with the programme’s overall aims and objectives. Along with the

appreciation of diverse content, participants spoke about the different approaches that each teaching artist brought. For example, one participant speaks about their highlights which gives an insight into the breadth of the programme and skills of the teaching team.

‘Anne Gaelle’s choreography and way of delivering it. Rob’s warm ups and use of martial arts technique. Kathy’s facilitation skills and use of simplicity. Sue’s choreographic style and ways of using individuality in groupworks’

Through the continual change of teaching artists over the two-week period; the participants imply how Candoco was sensitive and considerate about this and also ensured that although each the teaching artist ‘**brought their own unique style, ideas and interpretations...all tutors had a similar approach**’. 84% agreed that the structure and timetable worked well for them.

The Training Intensive lasted 13 days in total and 100% of the participants agreed that the ‘**length of the Intensive felt right**’. Some participants commented on the benefits of this durational project, including how they were able to overcome challenges. One participant spoke about her challenges;

‘I sometimes found it challenging to do group tasks, but throughout the two weeks developed my understanding and I am now confident in contact tasks with anyone I dance with’

Another participant spoke about the influence of time on the Intensive, including how he ‘**enjoyed the time given to understanding what was being taught, enabling you to absorb, use and engage with what was being offered to you**’. This particular person is a wheelchair user who speaks openly about a revolutionary point in the Intensive where he started ‘**appreciating [his] own unique abilities... rather than trying to be like everyone else... interpretation**

rather than adaptation'. Many individuals shared their experience of different learning styles and what works for them and how this was supported by Candoco.

'Generally, we were pushed to work and learn, but were also encouraged and supported to know that it was ok when and if we couldn't and this... made the whole Intensive such a special, nourishing and safe space'

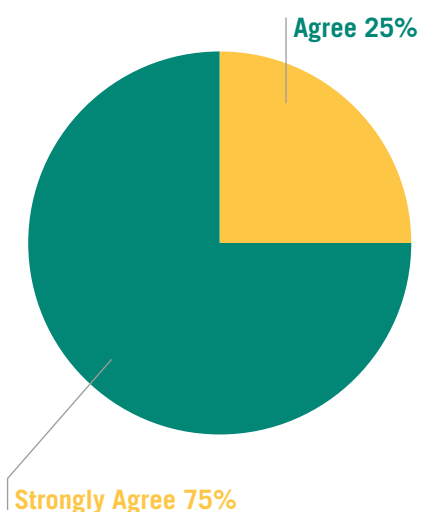
Inclusive Setting

Participants spoke about their previous experiences in an inclusive environment and 50% agreed that their perceptions on inclusive dance had positively changed, 40% agreed that they had not changed but had been enriched and 10% agreed that their views had not changed. Individual participants spoke about their relationship with inclusive dance, including, **'I feel like I have been able to validate my own place in inclusive dance and how my disability fits into that'** and **'it has changed my approach from feeling I have to adapt to fit in, to interpretation to shine as an individual.'**

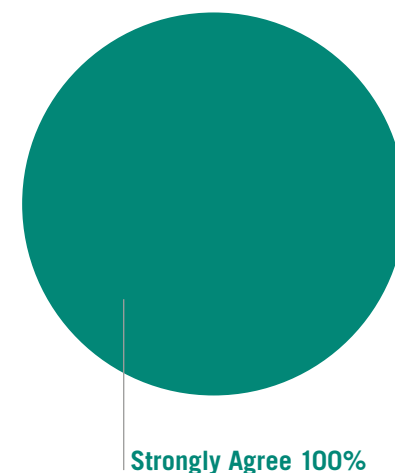
Prior to the Training Intensive, 70% of the participants had experienced an inclusive dance setting and 30% had not. The chart demonstrates the change in attitude that the dancers experienced on how comfortable they felt in an inclusive setting.

'I feel confident in an inclusive setting...'

Pre Training Intensive



Post Training Intensive



This is a positive and successful outcome for Candoco as the company was able to improve the dancers' confidence levels through an 'enlightening' two-week experience. Participants were also asked whether their perceptions of inclusive dance had changed in the post-Intensive evaluation; 50% agreed that their perceptions of inclusive dance had positively changed, 40% agreed that their perceptions had not changed but had been enriched and 10% said that their perceptions had not changed.

Aby was one of the participants who experienced a positive change in her perceptions of inclusive dance. Aby spoke about her experience in inclusive settings and how they 'haven't been the most inclusive to [her]'. Aby continued to elaborate on the happiness she felt with regard to the 'opt in' sessions that weren't compulsory and the open attitude regarding taking time out'. Candoco introduced these 'opt in' sessions from the beginning of the Intensive which allowed participants to observe rather than participant if they so wished.

Candoco also provided a pastoral team that was present throughout the whole Intensive, in and outside of sessions. A few participants spoke about how they felt supported by this team, including, 'I asked for their assistance quite a few times - so I didn't have to process it all myself'. The pastoral team assisted in many ways including, practically (warming up, learning dance phrases, creating), in writing tasks (journal-writing time, feedback), social environments (playing games, attending gym/ pool) and everyday tasks (waking up, walking to and from the studio and at meal times).

'Everything felt welcome and that all was allowed, it actually felt inclusive - in the material taught, in the attitude of the facilitators. That was a very new thing for me in a training environment'

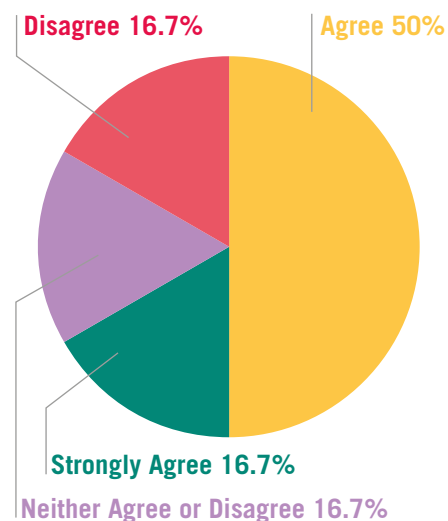


Pre and Post Intensive Statements

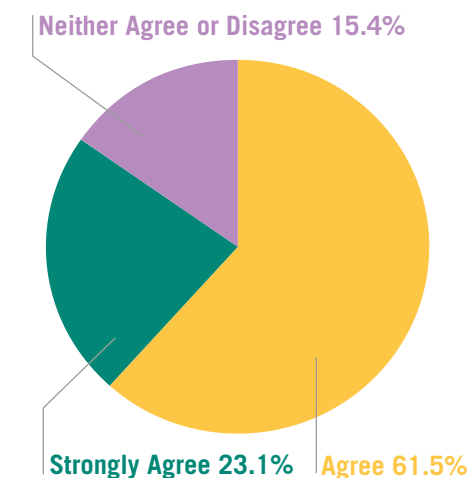
'I feel confident with my dance technique...'

11.5% agreed that they were more confident with their dance technique post Training Intensive. Increase of 6.4% in strongly agree and no participants selected 'disagree' after the Training Intensive.

Pre Training Intensive



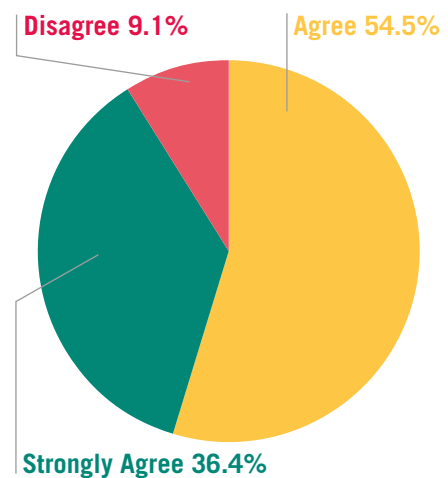
Post Training Intensive



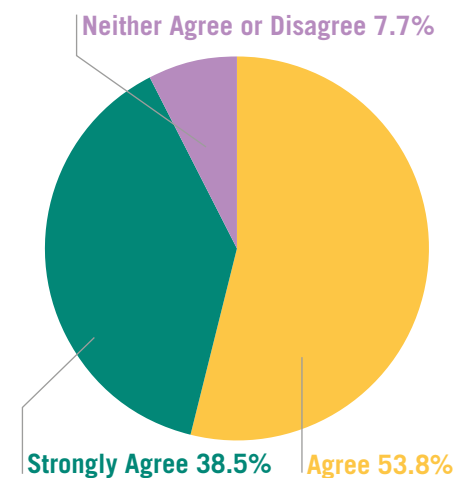
'I feel confident with creative tasks...'

Whilst there was only a slight increase in 'strongly agree', more positively there was an elimination of the 'disagree' selection to 'neither agree nor disagree'.

Pre Training Intensive



Post Training Intensive





Additional Participant Comments

Enlightening

Phenomenal

Inspiring

An inclusive future

Life-Affirming

Enriching

Validation

‘THANK YOU for giving me such a fantastic opportunity, for caring so much about us and for supporting us on our journeys. I have taken so much from the two weeks, worked with some fantastic people. Nothing has been wasted on us, we came in eager to learn, but what we learnt has gone far beyond just dance’

‘Thank you very much for a wonderful and very special experience. It was of great benefit to my personal artistic practice and, more holistically, to my existence as a person! The group formed a very special bond and I’m sure we’d all love a structured opportunity to meet again. Thank you for having me!’

CONCLUSION

There is currently a significant lack of high-quality training opportunities for disabled dance artists in the UK, this has impacted on progression into the professional sector meaning that fewer disabled artists are taking up positions as leaders in the dance sector.


The Candoco Dance Company + ASOS Training intensive aimed to address this deficit through the planning and provision of professional training specifically designed to meet the needs of a diverse cohort of participating artists.

This report set out to highlight the voices and experiences of participants of the training, this is in recognition of the fact that these experiences will make space for future aspiring artists to train in dance. By gathering these reflections Candoco is able to create future opportunities that meet the needs of a range of individuals.

What has emerged from observations and participant reflections is that there is great need for continued training of this kind, as a community of disabled artists grows the sector must adapt to address this. This has been a key aspect of this Training Intensive in its resistance of existing models where the individual is expected to adapt to mainstream training, a scenario which is clearly part of the experience of many participants on this Intensive, and the offer of a mode of training which has the inclusion and a preparedness to listen and learn at its core.

It is essential that this Training Intensive does not stand alone, by developing on this first year and learning through evaluation and participant, teacher feedback, this model has the potential to bring about tangible change not only in the inclusive dance sector, but also into wider arts training provision.





“The experience of working in the studio every day. I feel empowered. My body feels really, really in motion. I enjoyed the system of coming to the studio and working. I feel really happy I’ve been able to be far away from home for the length of time.”

“I enjoyed the variety of ways we can work. Sometimes that can be so simple to create an idea. The huge connection we’ve all made – as a group, the artists, it’s opened up a lot”

“Even though I move differently to everyone else. It is not about fitting in and being the same, it’s about being yourself. Move as an individual”

“The support everyone has given is how it should be”

“Be open to everything. I might learn something new or keep finding reasons to keep going, keep living and to enrich my life. Take every day as a bonus”

“I’ve learnt to be kinder to myself, especially in my mind. We all take up space, I’m learning to realise I deserve to take up that space. In this environment, I’ve been able to say what comes to mind without needing a fully formed thing. To not feel judged by that”

“I will always love specific dance moments like choreography different warm ups and different things to take part in”

“A change of movement exploration. Working with a diverse group has made me work in different ways and feel confidence with that”

“This is the first time in a contemporary dance context where I’ve felt I can be myself”

“Learnt to appreciate the time allowance to explore in one simple task with one simple idea. We can really dive in and explore the diverse pathways it will take. Builds into self-character to give that time instead of being rushed. Normally the word trust can take a long time to develop. It’s been astonishing how quickly we’ve developed and built that trust. I think it relates back to time we’ve been given”

“Take forward a little of Kathy Crick – a real sense of spaciousness and trust. She held the space to allow everyone to come to each task in their own way and find lots of things, it felt rich but was held in a light way. I’ve never seen anything like that – how to create space for people”

“I liked making new friends. My moves are new and different”

“There is a lot to learn. How I perceive myself from the inside isn’t how others see me from the outside. Reciprocal learning always happening”

“I’ve appreciated the environment to dance, explore, discuss. It’s been a confidence boost for me. It’s been a really good environment to work in”

“I’ve learnt so much from the morning classes and choreography. It gives so much change to how I dance and how we dance. In an environment that allows us to develop. I used to not know what to do but working together has built a new confidence. I feel the friendly environment in the space. I feel so much improvement in the two weeks”