

Hello, and welcome to Collage Conversations, an experimental Podcast Series. I'm Ben, Ben Ash and I'm a dance artist, currently a dancer, a newish dancer with Candoco Dance Company. I joined the company last September, in September 2020.

Collage Conversations - by way of introduction - is a project that I conceived during a period where we were working remotely, and beginning to do some research, in kind of an individual way, around can do Candoco's 30th anniversary, which is happening imminently. And it was also a period where we were just on the threshold of coming back to begin to work in actual physical spaces again with each other, as a way of coming out of the lockdown.

So, the project is conceived as a way of literally coming back together in actual locations in a particular situation; the situation being a recorded conversation with a dancer or company member, which would be shared in the format of a podcast, and this includes Toke the current rehearsal director, the company apprentice Anastasia, and Charlotte Darbyshire the Artistic Director of the company. It's an experiment in that it's the first time that I have done this, and its outcomes are unknown as we begin it, as is the content that forms each conversation. So, each conversation has two proposed actions, which I shared with each dance artist prior to their conversation with me. These are, that one theme is to contemplate Touch through the.. through the means, through the method of making a collage at home - just with whatever you had around in a kind of light hearted way - but to engage around the topic of Touch, and sensation in relation to touch, through the process of making a collage. The second theme is to consider a response, a response to.. a response that comes up for you from a question you imagine liking being asked. So those were the two provocations that I shared with each person individually in the build up to sitting down together and having an actual conversation.

The project is also conceived as a way of introducing myself I guess, to Candoco's close audiences, alongside the three other newest members of the company, one is the company apprentice and there are two other new dancers who started roughly around the same time that I did last September. Collage Conversations also looks to be a record of a moment in time, a threshold of coming back into practice from an abstracted virtual space, and a means to share that as material, as a piece of research. It's perhaps a one off, or maybe it's the first series of something that grows. It might change shape or get taken on in different forms. Later, I don't know yet, we don't know.

As an experiment Collage Conversations probably comes off the back of a practice that I began in 2018 called Wayfaring Encounters, which I began through some research with Dance 4 and Contemporary Art Gallery in Northampton, which also formed part of a summer research laboratory which I facilitated with Candoco through my collective that I share with Rachel Lopez and Henrietta Hale called Dog Kennel Hill Project. Wayfaring Encounters is about a kind of encounter where we don't yet know where we're going, how

we're getting there, and what's going on, but we encounter what we meet and move forwards together.

Collage first formed part of research that I conducted as a choreographer, back in 2011 I think, through *The Place and Moving East*, where I had a short period of research, and I used the repeated re-articulating of a collection of paper shapes overlapping on the ground to inform a graphic trace, an imprint of my body on the floor, and in the space. I remember the research being conducted alone, and I experienced periods of feeling quite out of touch, and a sense of solitariness and isolation. The touch of the shifting collage of paper shapes brought me back to a place of relationship to movement, purpose, action and response.

I hope you enjoy. Thanks for joining!