

Guide to Set and Reset/Reset

Set and Reset was choreographed by Trisha Brown in 1983. She worked with her company of dancers to create the dance. She collaborated with the composer Laurie Anderson who made the music, and the visual artist Robert Rauschenberg who designed the sets and costumes.



The movement, sound, and design of the piece are based on a few simple ideas:

- Line Up
- Play with Visibility and Invisibility
- Travel the Edges of the Space
- Act of Instinct
- Keep it Simple

The piece you are watching Candoco perform, is Set and Reset/Reset. Set and Reset/Reset is Candoco's own version of Set and Reset.



The connections you see between the dancers, the costumes they are wearing and the sets on the stage are not the same as Set and Reset. But, Set and Reset/Reset is made from the same dance movement material and the same ideas as Trisha Brown's original Set and Reset.



So, you might wonder, “Is this or is this not Trisha Brown’s Set and Reset?” That’s a great question! Perhaps you can think of it as being a really close member of the same family. It has the same genes, the same building blocks that gives the piece its sense of identity, yet it expresses itself differently from the original.

How did Candoco make Set and Reset/Reset?

First, they learned the movement material, or movement language from the original piece.

What do we mean by movement language? Imagine that each movement is like a word. When you speak, you choose which words you want to use, and how you might like to put those words together.

Candoco's dancers use the same (movement) words as the original dancers, but they string them together to make different (movement) sequences or patterns.

Once they could dance the movement language, they began to improvise or play with the material in the same way Trisha's company using those five basic instructions:

- Line Up
- Play with Visibility and Invisibility
- Travel the Edges of the Space
- Act of Instinct
- Keep it Simple

Let's take a look at each of these instructions.

Line Up

Set and Reset/Reset is non-stop movement. But if you look closely, can you see the dancers lining up?



Sometimes the dancers stand in simple lines and it is clear to see. Most often, they line one part of their body up with the body part of another dancer – a shoulder with a breast bone, for example. It happens lots of times throughout the piece, but it is so quick, it disappears before you can even point it out.

Visibility and Invisibility

The lines the dancers are making appear and disappear. But do you see the dancers themselves appearing and disappearing as well? Perhaps, you see someone duck behind another person's back, or a head peak out over someone's shoulder.



You might also notice that even though the costumes cover their bodies, when you look really closely, you can see through the fabric to their bodies beneath. And, while the fabric hanging on the sides of the stage is usually meant to hide what is happening offstage, in *Set and Reset/Reset* these fabrics are see-through

and they invite you to look and see what's happening in that space too.

What about the sound? Though we don't typically think of sound appearing or disappearing, some of the sounds feel as if they are very close to us as if we could reach out and touch them, while some feel like they are calling to us from very far away.

Travel the Edges of the Space

The first thing you will see is a dancer “walking” on the back wall of the theatre. Trisha Brown liked to experiment with how people’s bodies move. In this moment, not only is she exploring what it means to walk tipped to one side, she is also asking us to notice the back edge of the theatre, a place that is usually hidden from the audience.





Next you will see a dancer run and dive and get caught by another dancer. Her head disappears offstage but her legs are sticking out into the space. She's half seen, half hidden. There's that idea of playing with visibility and invisibility again. The running dancer also turns our attention to the edge between on stage and offstage.

Now the piece really begins. A small group of dancers spills into one corner of the stage and the dancers go in and out of each other in a flurry, they don't stop moving.



If we watch closely, we'll notice that the whole group is gradually making its way towards the audience, staying close to the edge of the space, travelling like a conveyor belt.

Over the course of the entire piece, this conveyor belt of group movement delivers duets, solos and trios into the centre of the space. Until at the very end, the dancers tumble off the stage and get stuck half on and half off, much like the beginning of the piece.

Act of Instinct

How do you react when someone runs toward you? What would you do if someone bumped into you? Would you turn your head if someone darted past? Or laugh if someone surprised you? These are things we do without thinking too much about doing. They are just our reactions and responses to what happens in the moment. These are the things that make us Human. See if you can notice how the dancers respond to each other on stage. Do you start to see the dance as a conversation?



Keep it Simple

When you watch Set and Reset/Reset, you feel that it is not simple at all! In fact, it might feel like being inside of a kaleidoscope that it constantly moving. But like a kaleidoscope, even though it looks very complicated as a whole, each little piece that makes the whole is very simple indeed. Each single arm swing, leg toss and head nod adds up to make a universe of movement that is rich and complicated.



When you watch the piece, you might notice some of the ideas mentioned, you might not. There is no right or wrong way and either is perfectly okay.

Set and Reset/Reset invites you to have your own experience. That's the beauty of Dance!!!

About the music in Set and Reset/Reset

The music you will hear in Set and Reset/Reset is called, "Long Time No See" by Laurie Anderson. It is made of sounds like bells, percussion (these are instruments that make a sound when you hit them, such as a drum or a triangle), guitar, electronic keyboards and voice.

You might notice that the movement and the music do not follow the same rhythm. But this doesn't mean that they aren't connected. Trisha Brown's movement and Laurie Anderson's music both feel playful and light which makes them similar and work well together.

There is a constant rhythm in the music that you can hear all the way through. Then, other sounds are added on top.

You might hear the sound of whistles that feel like hollow pipes, blaring horns that make you think of lights in thick fog, and revving engines that give you the sense that something is about to happen.

Some sounds are very loud as if close by. Other sounds are more like echoes in the distance and we can only imagine where these might be coming from.

Robert Rauschenberg designed the set and the costumes for the original Set and Reset. He made the pictures you can see here.





When you look at the pictures, you might get the same feelings that you get when you listen to the music. This is because the music and the set and costumes are connected, just like the music and the movement are connected. They all work together to bring you Set and Reset/Reset.

We hope you have found this useful, please write to us with your feedback. Here is Candoco's email address: info@candoco.co.uk