

Guide to soft shell



soft shell is a dance work that has been created by choreographer Annie Hanauer in collaboration with 4 Candoco dancers.

Annie also collaborated with:

- Nic Conibere - Dramaturg
- Shanti Freed - Costume Designer
- Fran Lobo - Composer of the music
- PJ Davy - Lighting Designer

Themes:

soft shell is about challenging the rules and perceptions of yourself and how you are seen by others. There are themes of each dancer taking power of themselves and having fun with their dance.

The piece plays on both personal experiences and relatable experiences.

soft shell is about each dancer's movement quality, and how the movement can reveal our shared and personal histories.

soft shell plays with the boundaries of what the dancers want to show to the public and what they want to keep private. This is explored through solos, the connections between the dancers, lighting, costume and music.



How do you want to be seen, what do you want to share?

At the beginning of the piece the dancers are exploring ways of moving that they do not usually share, and that are meaningful to them.

For example, one of the dancers is exploring her endurance as endurance is one of her hidden powers. She does this by challenging her balance and how far she can stretch in those positions before changing.



Core Material:

The core material is made up of iconic gestures that the dancers recognise within sport, art and their personal lives. With these positions they then break the boundaries by changing the iconic gesture into something else.

For example, in the piece they use classical ballet steps and adapt their hands to make a different shape. This material is then used throughout the piece but adjusted.

They also looked at the private and the public. The dancers explored the following statements:

- This dance is just for me (keep it small, intimate, pleasure, a groove bouncing around)
- This dance is just for me but I let you in
- This dance is just for me but I give it to you
- This dance is just for me but I throw it to you

You can see this throughout the piece, the dancers move from tiny adjustment-like movements to dancing full out with high energy.



Flip Book Material:

The dancers also explore the ideas of these iconic gestures through a game which is like a relay race. They take turns passing through the iconic gestures, overlapping and taking over from each other in order to reach the end.

To do this they need to work as a team.



Sacred Relay - Contact Material:

The dancers explore the same idea of iconic gestures but instead of overlapping each other they are watching, observing and supporting each other as they perform this material.

This plays on how the same movement can look different, when it's done in a different way or by different people, just like people have many different sides of who they are.

Through this material the dancers become an even stronger group by taking turns supporting one person at a time.



Solos:

Celebration, joy, taking power

The solos in **soft shell** explore each dancer's individuality and were made from their personal experiences.

In **soft shell**, the dancers each perform a solo in the space, where the other dancers watch. This section is about the celebration of how each individual dancer moves. They are in control of what they are showing us and they take power in that.

In this section you also see elements of the beginning solos, but with more energy, covering more space.



Connection between the dancers: Relational work, eye contact, touch

Throughout **soft shell**, you will notice that there is quite a bit of eye contact, touch, and partnership work. The dancers work together using those ingredients to create harmony in their dancing, even as they are very different from each other. This connects to ideas of communication and caring for each other.

There is an ambiguity present in the work, that highlights the complexity of how we relate to each other and how we challenge perceptions of ourselves.

Costume:

The costumes were made by Shanti Freed. The costumes are designed to amplify each person's body. There were lots of conversations between the dancers and Shanti about what part of their body they would like to amplify.

The costumes look like armour and are made out of PVC with green and gold tones. The costumes are extensions of the dancers' bodies and contours their bodies.

Towards the end of the piece, the dancers put on their armour pieces to become even bigger and more fantastic versions of themselves. The costumes help increase the feeling of power as the piece builds momentum and energy.



Music:

The music and dance evolved alongside each other. There is a drive and power behind the music that makes you want to dance.

Annie and Fran wanted to carry on with the theme of power by using the voice. There are also club elements and beats which are paired with the use of the voice.

The music builds up gradually, to help create a feeling of celebration, joy, and high energy.



Lighting:

Annie and PJ worked closely to show the theme of being seen and being hidden. PJ was also inspired by the music and wanted to highlight the beats in the music by pulsing the lights, and changing the lights on certain musical changes.

The lights create a special environment for the dancers to live in while they dance, which adds to the sense of power.