

Integrated Dance

Disabled, learning disabled and able-bodied dancers are working together in numerous innovative professional dance companies, to create masterful work

We have taken a look at a selection of professional dance companies where able-bodied and disabled artists or artists with learning difficulties are

integrated to create wonderful work. These companies challenge conventional attitudes about disability in dance and realise the potential of their members through innovative and accessible work.

Amici Dance Theatre Company

The Company integrates able-bodied and disabled performers. Founded in 1980, its productions and workshops have had a major impact challenging conventional attitudes about disability and the arts. Amici are the resident community arts company at the Lyric Hammersmith (in London). The Company gives workshop residencies, student placements, and performances throughout the year and currently has over 30 permanent members, and a large number of past members and associates who meet for classes. **Anjali Dance Company**

For more information visit www.amicidance.org.



Above: Amici perform Tighrope at the Lyric Hammersmith in 2010

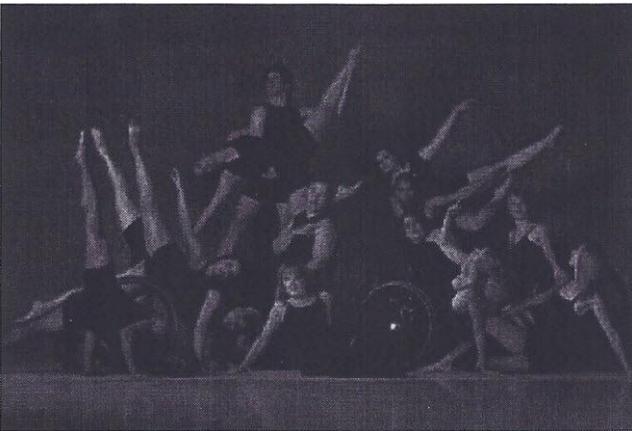
Above right: Candoco Dance Company 2011/12



The Company pursues its aims by creating and touring original contemporary dance works, developing professional training structures for its dancers and others and by running education and outreach programmes that employ and develop the skills of people with learning disabilities. The Company exists to change global thinking about who can dance and demonstrate new artistic possibilities by showcasing the creative potential of people with learning disabilities. See www.anjali.co.uk for more information.

Candoco Dance Company

At the heart of their work are their national and international productions, created by world class choreographers. Alongside these, through their Learning and Development projects and activities, they provide access to the highest quality of work for people participating in dance. The Company has been confirmed as a National Portfolio Organisation of the Arts Council England from 2012 onwards.



Tap: Corali's *Demonstrate* is run in partnership with Oval House Theatre

Above centre: *Dancing Wheels*

Above: *Found Reality*

This investment recognises the contribution Cando co Dance Company has made over the last 20 years by producing and presenting high quality, innovative works by disabled and non-disabled dancers. See www.candoco.co.uk for more information.

Corali Dance Company

Corali devise, present and tour performance work made by a core group of permanent company members who have learning disabilities and artistic collaborators (who do not have learning disabilities). Corali is best known for its unique site-specific performance in settings like shop windows, lift lobbies and foyer spaces and for its partnerships with high profile London venues such as Tate Modern and Sadler's Wells.

Members learn to express themselves as artists and to use this as a way to build confidence in their day-to-day lives and interactions with people. The performers want the focus to be on the artistic content of the performance, not the fact they have a learning disability. Visit www.corali.org.uk for more information.

Dancing Wheels

A US-based organisation of artists with and without disabilities that educates, entertains and advocates through inclusive dance worldwide. Mary Verdi-Fletcher, the first professional wheelchair dancer in the US, founded Dancing Wheels in 1980. Born with spina bifida, Mary wanted to offer others with disabilities full and equal access to the world of dance - an almost unimaginable concept at the time.

To date, the Company's inspirational mission has touched over 4.5 million people through performances, school assemblies, residencies and workshops. Millions more have enjoyed their artistry via appearances on CNN, *Good Morning America*, and the TV special, *Christopher Reeve: A Celebration of Hope*. See www.dancingwheels.org for more information.

Found Reality Dance Theatre

Found Reality is led by a disabled artistic director/ choreographer and specialises in collaborations. It aims to train, through performance-making, integrated groups of disabled and non-disabled performers.

Found Reality has developed systems for training participants to professional performance levels. Choreography is created for and on the existing bodies of the performers not for and on some idealised or 'perfect' body.

The company has received funding from the Arts Council of Wales for performance research works. See www.foundrealitytheatre.co.uk for more information.

Freefall Dance Company

The Company, led by former Birmingham Royal Ballet dancers and staff from Fox Hollies Performing Arts College, was established in 2002. Freefall was formed to provide a training and performing platform for highly gifted young people of school leaving age, with severe learning difficulties.

Freefall dancers gain accreditation for their skills and knowledge through Freefall's own Open College Network qualification 'Excellence in Ballet' and the Arts Council England's National Arts Award. The Company has created an extensive and varied repertory and they perform regularly at professional venues across the city. See www.brb.org.uk for more information.

FRONTLINEdance

The purpose of the group is to increase self-esteem, confidence, teamwork skills and inspiration, to raise awareness of what is possible and promote positive responses to disability.

FRONTLINE dance teachers and workshop facilitators have experience in planning and delivering high quality workshops, with some having additional experience in choreography and performance. The team can devise and create new and exciting dance performances for all ages, abilities and settings. They also work collaboratively with guest choreographers, visual artists, photographers, musicians and filmmakers. See www.frontlinedance.org.uk for more information.

Infinity Dance Theatre

Founded by Artistic Director Kitty Lunn in 1995, the Company aims to inspire people with and without disabilities, encourage their and Bromley. Founded in 1986 by Artistic

artistic and other professional aspirations,

Tap: Tony Jones, Rachael Lines,



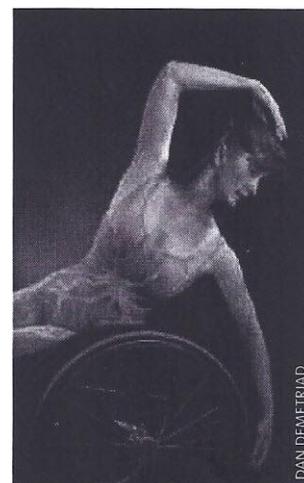
and empower them through meaningful educational and performance programmes.

Infinity is one of very few companies that has developed a transposition technique based on Classical Ballet and Modern Dance for dancers using wheelchairs. They perform throughout the New York City metropolitan area and New York State, across the US, and around the world. Notable performance appearances include the First Cultural Paralympiad at the 1996 Paralympics in Atlanta. For more information visit www.infinitydance.com

Magpie Dance

A contemporary dance company at the forefront of dance for learning disabled people. Magpie seeks to unlock individual potential and ability through delivering and developing high quality dance participation, performance and professional development, nationally and internationally.

Magpie's performances have ranged from Sadler's Wells, Laban, The Albany, Trafalgar Square and the Royal Albert Hall to local churches and the streets of Brighton



*Michael King, Amy Tomson,
Kevin Jewell and Emma Waller of
FRONTLINEdance*

*Above: Kitty Lunn of Infinity Dance
Theatre*

Above: David Nurse mentoring



a dancer on the choreographic mentoring scheme (Magpie Dance)

Above right: StopGAP



Director Avril Hitman, Magpie has extended its programme over the last 27 years and is proud to still work with some of the original Magpie dancers. See www.magpiedance.org.uk for more information.

PrefaceMorn

An integrated dance theatre company with disabled and able-bodied performers, PrefaceMorn aims to create innovative and accessible dance theatre.

Accessibility in the arts is of great importance to Director Niall Cullen. As dance is almost exclusively a visual medium and dance theatre still relies heavily on form and image, it is often out of reach for a visually impaired audience. PrefaceMorn have identified the need for a more accessible form of dance theatre. The integral use of audio description in the company's work aims to provide a way into dance theatre for a visually impaired audience.

By providing accessible workshops and professional training to dancers and theatre practitioners interested in integrated practice, PrefaceMorn intends to cover professional dance theatre training for

disabled people. See www.prefacemorn.co.uk for more information.

StopGAP

The Company makes engaging work for national and international touring and is one of Arts Council England's National Portfolio Organisations. StopGAP consists of dancers with learning and physical disabilities working alongside non-disabled dancers. The Company's creative inspiration stems from the rich movement and choreographic potential that comes from a diverse range of bodies and minds working together with honesty and integrity. Videos of past and current work can be found at www.youtube.com/user/StopGAPDance. See www.stopgap.uk.com for more information.

Please do write in to us if you have experiences of your own or stories you would like to share with other DANCE readers on the subject of disability in dance. We would love to hear from you! For a full listing of integrated dance companies, visit www.disabilityartsonline.org.uk/Organisations

Tamsin Moore

AND WHAT IF I'M A DISABLED AUDIENCE MEMBER?

There is a wide range of help available to disabled theatre-goers when they attend dance performances. Some things to look out for are:

- accessible parking spaces
- spaces in the auditorium for wheelchair users
- signed performances (using British Sign Language to interpret both the music and any dialogue in dance performances)
- captioned performances for hearing impaired audience members
- audio introduction (an aural complement to the printed programme, providing a detailed synopsis of the work, as well as description of the set, costumes and more)
- assistance/guide/hearing dogs welcome
- wheelchairs available for customers' use
- large print programmes for visually impaired customers
- wheelchair-accessible toilets
- audio described performances, relayed through headsets (enabling sound to be magnified through earpieces used without a hearing aid)
- touch tours (to feel the set, props and costumes)
- an induction loop, where hearing aids should be set to the 'T' position to enhance the sound
- a free seat in the auditorium for a carer, if required

We asked a range of London venues what they provide. Those that responded are listed on www.istd.org in a fuller version of this article. And, check out VocalEyes, a nationwide audio description charity, providing access to the arts for blind and partially sighted people at www.vocaleyeyes.co.uk.