

Case study

# Developing video and photography to engage audiences

**Candoco Dance Company**

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Candoco Dance Company, January 2013. PHOTO: Branislav Stefanik

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## Background

Founded in 1991, Candoco is the company of disabled and non-disabled dancers.

The organisation has begun to focus its energies on developing digital content to reach a wider audience than simply theatre attenders. Increasing the amount of activity made available to audiences digitally is also a requirement of our funding agreement with Arts Council England.

## Key points for effective practice

Photo and video acquisition can be an extremely costly process. Even before you've paid a photographer, you must consider the cost of time your artists will potentially spend outside of rehearsals, location and possibly equipment. The expense is the main reason why so many companies are lacking quality materials. Candoco has made digital content acquisition a priority and has dedicated a substantial chunk of budget to it. We also strive to get the best value out of the content we produce. It is very easy to create something, post it once and then let it fall by the wayside. Creating content that has a long life and working to promote it via our social networks and website is a constant challenge.

We would also always advise companies to really consider why they are making the content they're producing. What are your objectives for the piece? Can it be used more than once? Where will it be used? Where will it be distributed? Will it be cost effective?

We recently did a photo shoot with a photographer who was building his portfolio. We set aside an entire day out of the dancers' schedules to do group shots and headshots. The resulting photos were useful, but not up to our usual quality standards. Even though we did not pay the photographer, the exercise showed that we must do more research into our photographers to ensure that a photo day is an effective use of the dancers' time.

## Objectives

We endeavour to make our content engaging and insightful and to inform on subjects that we feel are under-represented, newsworthy and noteworthy, while promoting our productions, programmes and projects.



Rick Rodgers and Kostas Papamatthaiakis in Javier de Frutos' *Two for C*, 2013. PHOTO: Benedict Johnson



Annie Hanauer in Lea Anderson's *Miniatures*, 2013.  
PHOTO: Hugo Glendinning

We recognise that nearly all of our activity – even one off projects – are a resource to those in the dance and disability industries and have begun to prioritise recording those experiences through photos, videos and case study to make them available to the public through our media outlets.

We strive to provide insight into our commissions, learning projects and creative processes and to challenge perceptions of what dance is and who can do it.

We, of course, also hope our content will be attractive to audiences and therefore of interest to promoters and programmers. Good quality marketing and supporting materials also help to keep promoters 'on message' and give them a good understanding of who we are in order to accurately and effectively represent the company.

## **Process**

We have designed and implemented a digital content schedule to ensure that content on our website and throughout our social media channels is fresh and replenished on a weekly basis. Our content comprises a careful balance of blogs, video, case studies, photos and relevant information about dance and/or disability from other organisations.

For our blog activity especially, we strive to include a variety of unique voices, from our dancers, artists and stakeholders to programmers at venues, teachers, practitioners, students, audience members, observers and experts in the field of both dance and disability.

We take great care in researching and hiring photographers and videographers to ensure that photos and videos are of the highest quality and exemplary representations of our commissioned works.

## **Target audience**

- Candoco attenders
- Dance audiences
- Promoters
- Programmers
- Disability advocates
- Arts Industry Decision Makers

## **Outcomes**

This year we have seen our content not only reaching increasing numbers of people, but perhaps more importantly, engaging more people than ever before.

The virality of a blog post by dancer [Susanna Recchia](#) about teaching inclusive practice was higher than any other post we've had to date, while a short video about youth dancer [Lauren Dockerty](#) created to promote Candoco's Youth Dance programme garnered over 1,000 views in just three months.

We have seen an increase of about 20% in followers of the main company's Twitter handle and have created a separate Twitter handle for our Youth activities this year, which has attracted a further 750 followers. Analytics show that [Candoco's website](#) has sustained considerably more traffic than last year. In April 2012 we had 2,612 'Likes' on [Facebook](#), to date we now have over 13,000.

## **Conclusion**

One of the reasons we've been so successful is because dance is such a visual medium. It lends itself extremely well to photo and video. Making photos and videos available online also helps us to reach audiences who are not able to see Candoco in live performance.