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**Candoco Dance Company announces new leadership model and initiatives to support more D/deaf, disabled and neurodivergent artists than ever before**

- Introduction of an Artistic Assembly replacing the traditional Artistic Director model
- Alongside a range of initiatives including:
  - A biennial Choreo Accelerator Programme to commission new work by disabled dance artists
  - Motion Shorts, an annual digital micro commissioning programme to platform short form videos by disabled dance artists
  - Candoco Fellowship, a 12-month salaried position to nurture the next generation of disabled creative leaders
  - Launch of Making Space, a podcast made by artists for artists
  - An artist development programme for aspiring disabled artists aged 18-30

**Candoco Dance Company** today announces a new leadership model and ways of working that will see the company better support more D/deaf, disabled and neurodivergent dance artists than ever before, as the organisation marks **35 years of pioneering inclusive dance**.

Candoco will introduce a new **Artistic Assembly**, a distributed leadership body which will draw on the deep knowledge and experience of a community of disabled dance professionals and allies, replacing the traditional binary model of Artistic Director-led organisations. This collective body will make curatorial and artistic decisions around each major project or programme. Its membership will have a minimum of 75% lived experience of disability.

Candoco's renewed Artistic Vision has been informed through information gathering sessions with groups of disabled and non-disabled

artists and leaders, to develop a **Curatorial Statement**. This will be used by the Artistic Assembly to uphold any decision made, supported by a new **Ethical Framework**.

This radical new organisational structure reflects Candoco's ambition to operate as a purpose-driven, impactful and sustainable company.

**Melanie Precious, Executive Director of Candoco said:** *"We are incredibly excited to be moving into a new chapter for Candoco, one that reflects not only where we are as an organisation, but where the wider sector needs us to go. This new model will allow us to embrace a more collaborative and inclusive approach, that values multiple perspectives and centres D/deaf, disabled and neurodivergent voices at every level of decision making. We truly believe that dance is better when difference is celebrated, and this new model, alongside our expanded programmes, will allow us to create the conditions for brilliance and better support more disabled artists while reimagining what leadership in dance can look like."*

**Sharon Watson MBE, Chair of the Board of Trustees said:** *"Candoco has always believed that disabled artists belong at the centre of dance, not at its margins. This transformation is about making our structures reflect that belief, creating genuine space for disabled makers, performers and leaders to shape the work, the decisions, and the future of this organisation. The Board has been deeply committed to getting this right, and I am proud of what this next chapter represents for the sector."*

**Sarah Howard, Member of the Board of Trustees said:** *"As a disabled person, Candoco opened doors I didn't know existed - into creativity, community, and a career where I could thrive. Those experiences gave me the foundation to grow, and build my own path. Now, as it evolves, Candoco has the potential to unlock even greater opportunities - empowering the next generation of disabled artists to lead, innovate, and transform our industry."*

Candoco will use its 35-year history to approach potential members of the **Artistic Assembly**, as well as inviting people to express their interest on its website. This approach will represent a multiplicity of voices and ensure that leadership is a distributed and democratic process. At least 75% of each Assembly will have lived experience of disability, ensuring disabled perspectives are central to Candoco's artistic leadership, with each member being remunerated for their time.

By moving away from hierarchical structures towards a more collaborative approach, Candoco aims to significantly expand its reach, and work with over 500 D/deaf, disabled and neurodivergent dancers, choreographers and creative leaders by March 2031.

As part of this organisational shift, Candoco will transition from a repertory dance company to a production company and artist development organisation. Under this new structure Candoco will operate within four pillars of activity: **Performance & Commissions**, **Skills & Leadership**, **Partnership**, and **Advocacy**.

Alongside this transformation, Candoco is launching several new initiatives to support artists and the wider dance sector.

The **Choreo Accelerator Programme** will commission and fully support a disabled choreographer to create new work with dancers of their choice to be performed in the UK and internationally. The tour, planned for Spring 2028, will be presented through a **new partnership network of venues** with a shared commitment to widening access to dance work created by disabled artists. To help artists prepare for this opportunity a **Commissioning Readiness Programme** will be launched in Autumn 2026 to support a shortlist of choreographers in developing their creative concepts into production-ready proposals.

Candoco will also introduce **Motion Shorts**, a digital micro commissioning programme, funding short format film content that celebrates the breadth and creativity of disabled dance makers. The selected films will be shared across the company's social media

platforms throughout its 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary year and form a collection of talent on its website for the wider dance sector to discover new choreographic voices.

The **Candoco Fellowship** will offer a 12 month full-time salaried position with additional funding available for a project of the Fellow's own to advance disability-led dance practice and discourse. The fellowship is designed to nurture the next generation of disabled creative leaders by developing skills in leadership and insight into how arts organisations operate.

**The Lab**, a year-round, inclusive artist development programme for disabled dancers aged 18–30 will include a programme of online and in-person workshops and learning opportunities, as well as open practice sessions at the company's base at Mountview Academy.

This will sit alongside our Learning Programme including Candoco's internationally recognised **Inclusive Practice Training and Workshops** for teachers, dance artists, and organisations.

Candoco also announces the launch of its first ever podcast, **Making Space**. Planned for release in autumn 2026, the podcast will host in-depth conversations with leading artists and creators. The series will offer an insight into different creative processes and offer inspiration for emerging artists and cultural leaders.

**Take the Floor** is Candoco's space to keep the conversation about disability and dance alive. It is an open invitation to D/deaf, disabled and neurodiverse artists to share their perspectives on the dance sector, disability and what's possible. Through this work, Candoco will become a more open organisation, one that listens, embraces differing viewpoints, and is not afraid to hold conflicting opinions.

Through these initiatives Candoco will build on its ongoing commitment to supporting disabled dance artists through practical development opportunities and by inspiring future generations of creatives.

- Ends -

For more information, images, or to arrange interviews contact Robert James on [robert@robertjamespr.com](mailto:robert@robertjamespr.com) or +447716258938

### **Callouts & Opportunities**

For detailed information, please see [candoco website link]

## **April 2026**

### **Artistic Assembly: Expression of Interest**

<https://candoco.co.uk/about-us/artistic-assembly/>

*Candoco is looking for artists to form a collective body, with membership of a minimum of 75% lived experience of disability, that will make curatorial and artistic decisions around its major projects and programmes.*

### **Take the Floor: Expression of Interest**

<https://candoco.co.uk/for-artists/take-the-floor/>

*Candoco is looking for disabled artists to contribute to ideas and topics on vital conversations to be shared across its platforms.*

## **May 2026**

Applications open for the Candoco Fellow

Applications open for a Podcast Host or co-hosts

Applications open for Motion Shorts - Digital Micro Commissions

## **Summer 2026**

Applications open for Choreo Accelerator

### **Notes to Editors**

As a registered charity, Candoco relies on the generosity of funders, trusts, foundations, and individuals to make its work possible. Candoco is beginning to build relationships with individuals who want to be more closely involved in its transformation. If that might be you, please get in touch. <https://candoco.co.uk/support-us/>

## **About Candoco Dance Company**

Founded in 1991 by Celeste Dandeker-Arnold OBE and Adam Benjamin, Candoco Dance Company has spent 35 years redefining what dance is and who gets to make it.

Candoco has redefined who can create and perform dance, building an acclaimed body of work, performed by disabled and non-disabled dancers, touring to major venues across the UK and internationally.

Now entering a new chapter, Candoco has evolved into a producing and artist development organisation, structured around four pillars: Performance & Commissions, Skills & Leadership, Partnerships, and Advocacy.

This evolution deepens the ambition that has always been at the heart of Candoco, to support D/deaf, disabled and neurodivergent artists at all career stages, expand the impact of disabled-led dance, and drive more inclusive practices across the sector.

At the heart of this transformation is an innovative Artistic Assembly model, replacing the traditional Artistic Director with a collective body that makes curatorial and artistic decisions around major projects and programmes. This approach reflects Candoco's commitment to a more collaborative, distributed, and democratic way of working that allows for a genuine multiplicity of voices.