

THE GREEN COFFEE GROUP - A Foot in Hand Initiative

developing professionals, developing the profession

“Green” coffee is the first stage of growth of the coffee bean. The stage it goes through before it is ready to be prepared for consumption. The beginning stage of something which, if nurtured, will ripen and flourish to become something hugely popular. It becomes known for it’s invigorating qualities and is a part of millions of people’s everyday lives....

THE GREEN COFFEE GROUP is

- a practical thinktank, a “physical forum” dedicated to the advancement of dance involving disabled and non-disabled people at the highest professional standard in the UK
- a safe, supportive “playspace” for final year dance students and dance professionals with a proven track record or genuine interest in dance involving disabled people
- a safe supportive “playspace” with expert disabled dancers for professional choreographers who would like to try working in this area
- run by disabled and non-disabled dance artists for disabled and non-disabled dance artists
- rooted in contemporary dance although it actively encourages professionals from all styles to share and swap skills with us
- free, voluntary, informal, diplomatic and unbureaucratic AND ALWAYS WILL BE
- NB We will need the support of dance organisations to give us free space, but basically, unless a session can be arranged by a round of text messages or email it is in danger of losing the low maintenance qualities which guarantee it’s survival, vitality and frequency.
- unabashed in it’s ambition to attract and develop an vanguard in this field so it becomes a pool of expertise for dance employers and the catalyst for the highest UK standards of education and community work, new companies and independent dance careers
- responsive to the needs of it’s members and to the needs of the profession as a whole
- a national networking possibility especially for disabled dancers - international maybe?

THE GREEN COFFEE GROUP is not and never will be

- a company - although we hope companies will appear and dancers will be invited to join companies because of us!
- a closed shop - once you have attended once you can invite/send along anyone else you think might enjoy, benefit or contribute to a future session NB as things progress we may have to have sign up in advance with priority given to disabled dancers.
- a source of employment - although it’s key purpose is that because people have passed through us they become more employable and/or meet future employers/employees
- a vehicle for any individual choreographer - although we hope people who meet at sessions will go on to work together and choreographers who try out ideas will be inspired to develop them into full blown projects

HOW DOES IT WORK?

The Green Coffee Group currently takes the form of a quarterly workshop held on a Sunday afternoon at East London Dance, where disabled and non-disabled dance artists share the leadership of four hour practical sessions. Sessions are currently facilitated by a leader, currently Louise Katerega, who initiated the project.

The group is not intended to be a constant. It will likely contain different people each time and each session is self-contained. This is in sympathy with busy professionals' difficulty of committing large amounts of time or to a regular session (especially unpaid). We hope the option of being able to "just dip in" will attract and whet the appetites of high level professionals unable to attend longer projects. On the other hand, we hope the opportunity to attend sessions through out the year will provide sustenance for dancers/teachers often working in isolation in this field and lacking regular professional development opportunities or opportunities at a more sophisticated level.

Attendance is by invite only, however once you have been to one session you can invite/send along any other advanced/professional dancer you think would benefit or benefit from a session. In this sense, it is self regulating. You can attend as many sessions as you like, although as we enlarge we may have to sign-up in advance to keep to appropriate numbers and ratios of disabled/non-disabled dancers (ideally approx. 50/50!) Priority must be given to disabled dancers.

WHAT DO WE DO?

Sessions aim to push the boundaries of what is currently being achieved in the UK in terms of:-

- technique
- teaching and workshop ideas
- choreographic ideas
- inclusive work in a variety of dance forms
- new work i.e. opportunities to show live or on video and discuss

We usually address at least three of these in a session. Each one will be led by separate people and there is no pressure to relate them. Content of sessions is negotiated with the group. Members are encouraged to volunteer to lead (with or without the support of the facilitator) or request activities. They can do this at the end of any given workshop or by phone at least a week in advance of the next one. Only people who have previously attended can initiate workshop ideas - although of course one of these might be to invite a colleague who is new to the group to lead something!

WHAT ELSE COULD WE DO?

The main idea would be to do what no-one else is doing and dancers wish existed!

Discussion events could take place twice in the year. These MUST be geared towards practical action NOT debate e.g. initial support surgeries to signpost artists thinking of working together to further opportunities or to simply think through an idea. We are about the doing, there are plenty of other organisations doing the thinking, talking and writing we can connect with. Other practical options which would have to be funded and where possible include bursaries for artists, help with individual applications for funding to attend

Intensives e.g. weekends, summer schools

Specialist Intensives e.g. working with lights in a theatre, working with music, working with other artists/artforms, leadership skills, self-management, choreography

One-to-one advice surgeries

Schemes for Learning Support Assistants i.e. coaches who work one-to-one with disabled students to help them access technique classes or dance courses.

“Few will have the greatness to bend history; but each of us can work to change a small portion of events, and in the total of all those acts will be written the history of this generation ... It is from numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is thus shaped. Each time (one person) stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, (he or she) sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.” ROBERT F. KENNEDY