



About ActOne ArtsBase

Information pack

An introduction to our work

ActOne ArtsBase is a thriving company and charity providing inclusive dance and performance training for disabled and non disabled people across Hertfordshire. Our work promotes tolerance and understanding; all of our activities have a unique atmosphere where difference and individuality are celebrated.

ActOne ArtsBase work with hundreds of children and young people every year many of whom have never attempted to dance before because of their disability. We have seen huge benefits in our participant's physical mobility, social confidence and performance potential. ActOne strive to create a community in which people of all abilities perform together and accept each other's differences. ActOne recognise that we are all different and that through performance we come together to share a common ground which does not allow for segregation. ActOne put ability not disability centre stage!

Our History

ActOne was started in January 2000 by freelance dancer and choreographer Suzie Birchwood who is herself a wheelchair user. Having worked extensively in both disabled and mainstream arts Suzie recognized the boundaries between disabled and mainstream groups and the lack of opportunities for disabled people to access training and professional work in the arts.

In January 2002 we opened the first of our regular projects 'DramaBase' in Potters Bar. A year later we launched DanceBase in Hatfield and at the same time formed partnerships with a number of community groups in the Hertfordshire area. The successes of our early work demonstrated a clear need for more accessible dance projects and lead us to establish a comprehensive programme of performance and training opportunities for people wishing to develop their creativity in an inclusive environment.



In August 2009 ActOne were awarded an Arts Council grant for to fund the Artistic Director's post and recruit a Development Director. With these 2 posts in place, ActOne were able to establish a sound working administration base enabling the company to plan and schedule long term, retain key staff on full time contracts, widen our scope of activities and meet a growing demand for our work.

Our weekly sessions now regularly involve approximately 150 young people from all over Hertfordshire; holiday projects and community and educational programmes reach around 500 participants per year. The company has 13 members of the team in full and part time roles and is governed by a board of 6 Directors/Trustees. All members of the team are highly skilled at drawing out the very best in each individual and are fully committed to the inclusive arts.

"My son was encouraged in a gentle way and not pushed into anything. This is very important for a child like him who has autism and understands the world in a different way"

Our Ethos

Creating Quality Experiences: ActOne is committed to providing its audience, performers and professional team with the highest quality experiences. Working inclusively sets new challenges in the delivery of performance training but does not jeopardise the excellence of the performance outcomes. Our work does not exist to segregate people of different performance abilities from one another, but rather to bring them together. The unique approach of ActOne is in the recognition that the skill of the Director is to have a sense of how two people are going to interact together and to know a group so well that you can tap into their specialism and make it work with others.



Committed to Inclusion: At the core of our work is the belief that everybody is capable of developing good technique. With this in mind the process taken to ensure that everybody is able to unearth this ability starts with the sound knowledge that it is achievable. Working with a team of professional performers who themselves have a variety of physical and learning abilities we confidently approach the delivery process by turning what may have previously been seen as a person's disability or limitation into their unique area of performance specialism. We find ways to create the space that each person needs to develop their technique.

Aesthetic of Vibrancy and Colour: The Artistic aesthetic of ActOne is one of vibrancy, colour and excitement. Our work reflects the passion and thorough enjoyment that our team of professionals take from dance and performance practice. By holding a mirror up to this passion we act to awaken our participants to their own abilities and in so doing provide them with the opportunity to explore their own creative potential.



The work of ActOne is such that often the team are witness to individuals making enormous creative, social, physical and emotional progressions, we believe that this is something utterly worth celebrating and the vibrancy of our work is a celebration of the achievements made and the fun had in the process. Likewise we believe that the journey made by each individual should be recognised for the poignant and transitional impact that it can have on their lives.

The Theatre of Dance: ActOne does not present itself exclusively within one art practice. The artistic aesthetic of ActOne draws upon the theatre of dance as a means to present vibrant performances, each unique in their creative makeup. We refer to the theatre of dance as a description of our approach towards using dance to tell stories, to speak to audiences and to utilise multidisciplinary performance techniques that are reflective of the diversity of our performers' skills.

The ActOne Family: ActOne's ethos towards inclusion places respect, equality and belonging at the heart of both our practice and our relationships with people. Our performance aesthetic demands trust in and of all of our performers and teachers, it is through this development of trust that we can physically support each other to go further in our performance practice.

"The interaction is subtle and not forced. The children are not expected to take part, they are gently guided. The staff are excellent."

Our Projects



ActOne has six core strands of work. The central element of our work is the delivery of regular dance training for disabled and non disabled children in and around Hertfordshire.

DanceBase: A weekly dance training programme for people aged between 5 and 19 years, supporting young people to explore dance theatre in a fully accessible, supportive environment.

ARC: ActOne's professional repertory dance company, ARC creates and delivers unique performance and workshop opportunities that reflect the quality and inclusive ethos of ActOne's artistic vision.

ActOne's Trainee programme: A year long training programme aimed at supporting emerging young dance performers and leaders to achieve their career and creative potential.

UV Nightclubs: An activity for young people aged 13+ that is focused around spending quality time with peers, dancing and socialising without the usual access issues that mainstream nightclubs present.

Holiday Projects: ActOne provide a series of holiday activities throughout the summer to engage with new participants and to provide existing DanceBase participants with the opportunity to take part in an activity that runs across a number of days.

Education and Community Partnerships: Making inclusive and inspirational dance performance and training available to as many people as possible. Including bespoke and off the shelf workshops for schools and community groups, training to share ActOne's model of inclusive practice with teachers and parents and presentations promoting inclusion and positive image of integration with disability.

Contact us

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“Its been lovely to find this kind of space for my son as he loves dance and drama and mainstream groups tend to overwhelm him.”