

THE TIMES

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DANCE: Nadine Meisner on wheelchair flight and, below, Portuguese pungency

CandoCo is not your average dance company, but mixes able-bodied professionals with wheelchair-users who have the words Can Do tattooed on their brain cells. CandoCo have come a long way since their last appearance at the Queen Elizabeth Hall. Seeking a more challenging repertoire, they have commissioned pieces from three choreographers. The result was gripping and humbling.

Inevitably, not every part of the programme succeeded entirely. Where Emilyn Claid in her rousing finale piece manages to use her cast as equal individuals, Siobhan Davies in *Between the National and the Bristol* seems stymied by the wheelchairs. Like Claid, she begins with a beautiful group pose that exploits the different heights and contours of standing and seated silhouettes. But her refined and dancey choreography, set to

Can dance, will dance

CandoCo
Queen Elizabeth Hall

Gavin Bryars's richly textured score of the same name, mostly relegates the wheelchair performers to the role of onlookers.

With *Back to Front with Sideshows* Claid has stomped in and rudely and loudly knocked over existing categories and received ideas. In their place she introduces the notions of character, aggression, speed and humour. Physical status miraculously ceases to be an issue. The performers are no longer divided accord-

ing to their ability to walk or not; instead, for once, they find themselves defined and separated by their gender. The able-bodied Kuldip Singh-Barmi intermittently inhabits a wheelchair; he is the disruptor of the cast, a twitchy feather-fetishist who annoys and tickles the others and breaks up their carefully assembled tableaux.

Singh-Barmi and the tremendous David Toole have a wonderful stage rapport which Jodi Falk brings to the fore in *To Please The Desert*. Where Claid offers exhilarating, punchy dynamics, Falk creates intense, still beauty in a duet which some enterpris-

ing film-maker should put on celluloid. The smallest, slowest gesture becomes high drama, set to the dark colours of traditional Spanish music; the dancers etch luminous outlines against Micky Mannion's atmospheric lighting. They dance in unison, brothers in a strange, optical game of sighs and scale: Singh-Barmi, tall and athletic; Toole, a third his size but no less athletic, using his arms and hands as the legs and feet he does not have.

Christy Don't Leave So Soon by Lea Parkinson and the company's directors, Adam Benjamin and Celeste Dandeker, does not achieve the same potency. But gentle and brief, the piece acts as a clever opener, easing us into the way CandoCo looks and works. And when Dandeker is lifted from her chair to become almost like her partners, that says a great deal about the liberating magic of dance.