Megan Brandel - Interview Audio

**SPEAKERS**

Molly Joyce, Megan Brandel

**Molly Joyce** 00:00

The first question is what is care for you?

**Megan Brandel** 00:07

Well as the director of Open Arms Dance Project, I really try to welcome everybody and look everybody in the eyes and see everybody and speak everybody's name throughout our rehearsals, and to me that's care to be acknowledged and seen. And I think that's kind of the gist, a baseline of care is kind acknowledgement.

**Molly Joyce** 00:51

And the next question is, what is strength for you?

**Megan Brandel** 00:56

Well, as I talked about, our group earlier, everybody comes in with different set of strengths. And some of them are definitely not what you would typically think of as a strength, not physical, or, you know, strength in that way. But when they welcome each other with a round of applause, and like shouting out their names, as people come in the door, like that ability to make people feel so welcome, is a real strength because as the director, I can only create, you know, a certain amount of wellness, but when everybody chips in, and is hugging, and clap and smilin' and patting each other on the backs, like that creates our feeling of, of community. And that's a huge strength. And then for, for other dancers, it's to see what other people need, and to be there for them.

**Molly Joyce** 02:20

And then the last question is, what is interdependence for you?

**Megan Brandel** 02:24

Yeah, so I think for this one, I'll read our commitment agreements. These have to do with strength, and care, and interdependence. But this is kind of a lot of them speak to the interdependence and how we rely on each other, to bring each other's strengths forward, and to care for each other, and how we can't create a dance without all of that. And I guess one thing I'll say about interdependence this past year, during COVID, like, we're just rehearsing online, and I'd be like, "Oh, here we go." And I get up my energy to turn the Zoom screen on and like, you know, create a dance in that format, which is not like it takes away space, and time and personal connection, like it takes away all the most beautiful things about dance and movement. But to see everybody's zoom screens pop up, and like they were depending on me to start the like to gather them all together. But then I can't even say how much it meant to me to see everybody's zoom screens pop up. And I depended on them to like, show up and be there. And afterwards, I always felt so good to just have at least that interaction during COVID. But I'll read these now. So our commitment agreement: everyone is welcome. As they are with Open Arms, we treat each other as equals, we celebrate each other, we lift each other up with kindness. We reject a rigid hierarchy of helper and those who need help. We all need help. Sometimes we all can offer help. Sometimes there are no volunteers versus participants. We are all equal members contributing everything we can. When we walk through the studio doors, we are ready to work hard at the edge of where we're comfortable. We are ready to be present and let creativity guide us and everyone is giving of their best self. All of us have unique personalities, experiences, skills, perspectives to contribute. We are here for reasons that are bigger than ourselves. We're here not only to be with friends and have fun dancing, but to also move culture forward by demonstrating acceptance and compassion and how we interact with each other.