

Interview

Isa López: "We perform shows with a social content to overcome prejudice and stereotypes around disabilities"



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Isa López from Fundació Estany / Photo: Fundació Estany.



DansCapacitats is an inclusive dance project with people who live with a disability and others who don't / Photo: Fundació Estany.



The role of volunteers is key in the project / Photo: Fundació Estany.

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One of the goals is about organising performances with a social content to overcome prejudice and stereotypes around disabilities / Photo: Fundació Estany.

From Fundació Estany they tell us about DansCapacitats, an inclusive dance project bringing together people with and without disabilities.

What is the mission of Fundació Estany? What does it do?

[Fundació Estany](#) was established in 2001 with the mission of creating **sheltered residence** for **people with disabilities** at Pla de l'Estany (Catalonia). At the time, the county had no sheltered residences for people living with disabilities who couldn't or didn't want to live with their families, meaning they had to move out of the county. That was when the foundation was created.

In a way, the Fundació Estany tries making life easier for people living with a disability and their family, in a social context that is not very tolerant with anything that is different. So we try giving the necessary support so that these people can live in dignity and **with equal opportunities** in society. We do all of this through projects for **housing, leisure** and **free time** involving their families, on the one hand, and on the other, through projects to help society change its views on **disabilities**, to look beyond the limitations and to understand differences as something that is enriching. And we do all of this with a great team of professionals, volunteers, people living with a disability and their family.

Which is the reality of people living with a disability in Pla de l'Estany? What difficulties do they face?

Well, I'm quite sure the reality of these people is no different from that of people living with disabilities in other counties. I think that, if we look back in time to establish a comparison, their quality of life has improved but much more is needed. We are stuck with a **model of care that is very general**, and is not very good at providing responses to the **individual needs** of these people. In this regard, they have few options when it comes to taking decisions on their project for life.

At the same time, we are living in a **social context that is not very inclusive**, that labels them as a "problem"

from the time they are born. These people have to fight every day to be treated and considered as PEOPLE; they do not have the same opportunities as the rest of people. For sure this is the biggest difficulty they live with every day.

Where did the Danscapacitats initiative come from and how?

[DansCapacitats](#) emerged in 2011, as a natural evolution of a **dance project** that started in 2008. The aim was to take it a step further and to create an **inclusive dance project** with **people who live with a disability and others who don't**. We wanted to show that differences are enriching and that, on stage, there are no limitations, but rather dancers that share the same goal: dance. Forget about discourses and simply allow the audience to experiment, first hand, the many other abilities of people living with disabilities. And this is the exact goal, besides that those participating in the project have a good time, it is about organising **performances with a social content** to overcome prejudice and stereotypes around disabilities.

In what way does dance benefit people living with disabilities?

Well, I think dance provides the same benefits to them as to any other person that enjoys dancing. **People living with a disability** are no different from the rest when it comes to doing something they enjoy. Everyone in this project has chosen this activity because they like to dance. Therefore, doing something you enjoy is always beneficial for your own personal development.

I might say that for people living with a disability, this is a greater satisfaction because when they put on a performance, people value them for what they are able to do, for their abilities and, contrary to what they experience in their day-to-day, they are not judged for their disability. This is a very important motivation because they see that people are enjoying what they are doing and give them a round of applause, congratulate them...and this is simply wonderful.

What is the role of volunteers when it comes to developing this project?

The role of volunteers is key in this project because they are part of the DansCapacitats group. Without these **volunteers**, DansCapacitats would make no sense, it wouldn't exist. The dancers use some of their free time to dance and create choreographies to **fight against prejudice and stereotypes** around disabilities. Valuing this voluntary action is priceless. None of these projects would be sustainable without volunteers.

Which are the future challenges for the organisation?

As an organisation, we hope to continue working to improve the quality of life of people living with disabilities and that of their family; we hope to be flexible enough to adapt to any changes in the environment and to new needs as they arise in this field; more importantly, we hope to do all of this with the hope and enthusiasm we have always had.

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