

FOCUS ON DISABILITY & DEAF ARTS IN CANADA



A Report from the Field by
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to
Canada Council for the Arts
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Cover image:

Two workshop participants try out Discovery Dance's ES Dance Instruments at the Kickstart Festival, 2001. Using the technology created by B.C. choreographer Sven Johansson, the instrument consists of a seventeen-foot, counterweighted lever that allows a performer to fly in all directions as well as cartwheel and somersault through space. Johansson designed and built these unique dance machines which he uses as interactive therapy by incorporating the movements of people with all levels of mobility to form an aerial ballet.

Photo courtesy of Kickstart Disability Arts and Culture.

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1 Introduction

During the inaugural KickstART! Celebration of Disability Arts and Culture in Vancouver, August 2001, (then) Her Excellency, the Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson, Governor General of Canada, boldly announced that disability culture has become one of the fastest growing influences on the world's contemporary arts scene.

Certainly since 2001 an international explosion of expression in all art forms has arguably made Deaf and disability cultural self-determination a frontline issue for the 21st century.

What are the essential components of this remarkable movement, in particular, disability arts? More than 50 disability/Deaf arts festivals and hundreds of organizations, producing companies and projects currently populate the international circuit.

Disability arts – a vibrant and richly varied field in which artists with disabilities create work that expresses their identities as disabled people – needs to be contextualized within the larger movements that gave birth to it. We will situate disability arts within the Independent Living (IL) and Human Rights (HR) movements, which include a broad coalition of people with disabilities who have come to boldly – and bodily – challenge prevailing attitudes and stereotypes of disability in media and popular culture.

Deaf culture enjoys its own distinct legacy and artistic development (see Deaf Culture Centre, Canadian Disability Arts Scene). Deaf and disability cultures share supportive and often collaborative relationships but are rooted in different histories and trajectories, aspiring to compatible but different paths towards self-determination. Moreover there is a divergence between Deaf artists per se and De'VIA (Deaf View/Image Art) artists.

De'VIA represents Deaf artists and perceptions based on their Deaf experiences much as Disability Art contains and expresses the experience of disability. De'VIA uses formal art elements with the intention of expressing innate cultural or physical Deaf experience. These experiences may include Deaf metaphors, perspectives and insight in relationship with the environment (both the natural world and Deaf cultural environment), spiritual and everyday life.

Deaf artists are those who use art in any form, media or subject matter, and who are held to the same artistic standards as other artists. De'VIA is created when the artist intends to express their Deaf experience through visual art. De'VIA may also be created by deafened or hearing artists, if the intention is to create work that is born of their Deaf experience (a possible example would be a hearing child of Deaf parents). It is clearly possible for Deaf artists not to work in the area of De'VIA.

These emerging forms make our overview essential to looking at Canada's place within the international community. We have cited key historical developments and how they have impacted on the Canadian environment. Attitudes, access, legislation and pioneering art all play a part in describing the field.

But basic questions remain. Why are disability arts still not on the map within Canadian cultural discourse? Why are there virtually no statistics available regarding Canada's Deaf and disability arts sectors (e.g. number of individuals working as professionals, employed by cultural industries, trained and graduated from post-secondary arts programs, funded by arts councils)?

How will public and private funders, policy makers and others begin to track and confirm the presence and impact of this sector and the pioneers who contribute daily to Canada's cultural communities and industries? How can these same agencies accommodate, nurture and sustain the artists and practices that constitute disability arts?

With the hope of clarifying how Canadian funding and cultural support networks can better serve the art regionally and nationally, we will introduce readers to the basic language used in current discourse around disability arts. We'll provide examples of culturally-specific and integrated projects and organizations that constitute the sector, and some of the art forms that require resources, technologies and capacity-building to flourish. We conclude with some basic recommendations for change to funders, art service organizations and producers/trainers.

2 The Context in Which Disability Arts Began to Develop

Historically, the predominant images of disability have ranged from sinister through pitiable to overly-heroic. The ubiquitous telethon evokes a needy, childlike passivity, while the TV movie-of-the-week portrays heroic triumph over tragedy, with emphasis on the tragedy. These popular images of disability are created by well-meaning (but non-disabled) people about the lives of people with disabilities.

Historical Depictions of Disability Arts and Culture

Stereotypes surrounding disability have dominated the worlds of art, myth and historical imagery. Twentieth century depictions alone remind us of the tasks that lie ahead for those working to change attitudes and representations.

What does integration mean in a society where the disabled are still largely seen as 'freaks'? I've become a radical. I believe that nothing short of revelation can transform the collective mindset of my non-disabled brothers and sisters. Fear is the biggest obstacle to freedom and I am no longer afraid to be seen. I'm not asking you to like me, only to see me as I am. Prepare for relationship, not symbols. That is what I have to offer.

– Kazumi Tsuruoka, co-creator and performer, *Samson's Hair* and *CP Salon*

Wordpress.com, an open source publishing platform that enables the free exchange of cultural views, has compiled 10 main stereotypes, citing examples of each. While we cannot fully reproduce them, below is a telling sample:

1. Pitiable and pathetic; sweet and innocent; a miracle cure
 - Tiny Tim in *A Christmas Carol* (1938, Edwin L. Marin, USA);
 - David Merrick, the 'saintly sage' exhibited as a freak in *The Elephant Man* (1980, David Lynch, UK);
 - Clara, who uses a wheelchair, but walks when she gets to the mountains in *Heidi* (1937, Allan Dwan, USA).
2. Victim or an object of violence
 - Deaf Christine, cruelly deceived by two men in *In the Company of Men* (1997, Neil LaBute, USA);
 - Wheelchair-using Blanche, victimized by her sister in *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?* (1962, Robert Aldrich, USA);
 - Blind Suzy Hendrix, terrorized by drug smugglers in *Wait until Dark* (1967, Terence Young, USA).

3. Sinister or evil

- *Dr. Strangelove* (1963, Stanley Kubrick, USA) features a mad, wheelchair-using scientist;
- Evil Dr. No, with his two false hands in the Bond film, *Dr. No* (1962, Terence Young, UK);
- Bitter and vengeful Mr Glass with his brittle bones in *Unbreakable* (2000, M. Night Shyamalan, USA).

4. Atmosphere - curios or exotica in 'freak shows', and in comics, horror movies and science fiction

- A whole cast of genuinely disabled people was used to create horror in *Freaks* (1932, Tod Browning, USA);
- All the 'baddies' who have tics and disabilities in *Dick Tracy* (1990, Warren Beatty, USA);
- Cousin Lyman, a short hunchback who causes trouble in *The Ballad of the Sad Café* (1991, Simon Callow, UK/USA).

5. "Super-crip"/ triumph over tragedy/noble warrior

- Physically-impaired Douglas Bader walking without sticks and flying in *Reach for the Sky* (1956, Lewis Gilbert, UK);
- Christy Brown writing in *My Left Foot* (1989, Jim Sheridan, UK);
- The last item on the TV news, e.g. a blind man climbing a mountain.

6. Laughable or the butt of jokes

- All the men who are short people in *Time Bandits* (1981, Terry Gilliam, UK);
- *Dumb and Dumber*, featuring two men with learning difficulties in laughable situations (1988, Charles Crichton, USA);
- Lee Evans feigning cerebral palsy in *There's Something About Mary* (1998, Peter Farrelly/Bobby Farrelly, USA).

7. Having a chip on their shoulder/ aggressive avenger

- The Claw, who is twisted and evil, in *Dick Tracy* (1947, John Rawlins, USA) because he has lost a hand;
- Laura in *The Glass Menagerie* (1987, Paul Newman, USA);
- The vengeful, hook-using, black ghost in *Candyman* (1992, Bernard Rose, USA).

8. A burden/ outcast

- The disabled child whose parents consider euthanasia in *A Day in the Death of Joe Egg* (1971, Peter Medak, UK);
- The 'In-valids' who are not of perfect genetic design in *Gattaca* (1997, Andrew Niccol, USA);
- The TV series *Beauty and the Beast*, set in subterranean New York, the Morlocks in the X-Men comics or X2 (2003, Bryan Singer, USA), in which characters with impairments live apart from society.

9. Non-sexual or incapable of a worthwhile relationship

- Marlon Brando's disabled veteran in *The Men* (1950, Fred Zinnemann, USA);
- Clifford Chatterley is impotent in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1981, Just Jaeckin, UK/France/ Germany);
- Paralyzed Jan in *Breaking the Waves* (1996, Lars Von Trier, Denmark).

10. Incapable of fully participating in everyday life

- The absence of disabled people from everyday situations, and not being shown as integral and productive members of society. When they are shown, the focus is on their impairments;
- Deaf people in *Children of a Lesser God* (1986, Randa Haines, USA);
- The true story of the prince hidden from society and his family in *The Lost Prince* (2002, Steven Poliakoff, BBC TV).

Changing Attitudes and Self-Determination

People with disabilities were one of Canada's last minority groups to organize, in the 1970s. Inspired by the women's, black and war veteran's movements of the 1960s, disabled people realized that they, too, had the same rights as other citizens. A conference held by the Canadian Rehabilitation Council for the Disabled (CRCDD) in Toronto in 1973, provided an opportunity for disabled people from across the country to meet for the first time. In reaction to professionals' patronizing and discriminatory attitudes and practices, a sense of solidarity was born, planting the seed for a national network. The Coalition of Provincial Organizations of the Handicapped (COPOH) was founded in 1976 to create "A Voice of Our Own" and to engage primarily in global (as opposed to individual) advocacy activities.

COPOH has since coordinated many public information and political lobbying campaigns in areas such as housing, transportation, employment and independent living, through its Open National Forums and meetings of provincial umbrella group representatives. COPOH had input into recommendations to the Federal Special Parliamentary Committee on the Disabled and Handicapped that was struck in 1980. The Committee released the Obstacles Report in February 1981 (the year declared by the United Nations as the International Year of Disabled Persons), which listed 129 recommendations to the federal government in areas of concern to disabled people.

The Independent Living (IL) Movement began with the establishment, in California, of a consumer-controlled, self-help centre in 1972. The Berkeley Centre for Independent Living was started by a group of students with disabilities, notably Ed Roberts, the "Grandfather of IL," at the University of California.

COPOH, now called the Council of Canadians with Disabilities (CCD), introduced the IL concept to Canada when it invited Gerben DeJong, an influential American IL theorist, to speak at its Defining the Parameters of Rehabilitation Conference in Vancouver in 1980.

Canadian Independent Living (IL) Centres, which now number 28 across Canada, are self-help, non-profit, community-based organizations established and operated by disabled people to assist people with disabilities to gain and maintain control over their lives. To legitimately carry the IL Centre name, an organization must establish constitutionally that people with disabilities make up at least 51 per cent of the centre's board of directors. Canadian IL Centres banded together to form the Canadian Association of Independent Living Centres (CAILC) in 1986. The Canadian definition of an IL Centre includes the following principles: consumer controlled, cross disability, community based, non-profit, promoters of integration and full participation.

CAILC, now called Independent Living Canada, states in their literature: “Independent Living is premised on the philosophy that all people with disabilities have skills, determination, creativity and a passion for life...” – an apropos introduction for a nascent cultural movement.

Toward the end of the last millennium, the disability movement for equal rights recognized that the pursuit of equality and inclusion is a cultural task as much as it is a political one. Dissatisfied with relegation to therapeutic settings and inspired by the work of artists in other parts of the globe, artists with disabilities began staking their claims to space – on stage, in galleries and in arts institutions.

Supported by the self-help movement, and contributing greatly to a sense of community pride, artists with disabilities are creating authentic images directly from their own lived experience. In both content and form, they are taking risks which only they can take.

SOURCES

- Kickstart backgrounder, *Society for Disability Arts and Culture*, 1999
- Kazumi Tsuruoka, artist's statement, *Samson's Hair*, 2002
- Diane Driedger, “Speaking for ourselves: A History of COPOH on its 10th Anniversary,” published in *Dialogue on Disability: Volume II*, University of Calgary Press, 1987.
- April D'Aubin, *History of the Independent Living Movement: Power to the people*, COPOH. www.independentliving.org/toolsforpower/tools3a.html
- Victor R. Willi, “Independent Living in Canada: An Overview,” published in the *Research Network for Social Participation Bulletin*, Vol. 1, No 4, Dec 1995, pp 2-3. www.cilt.ca/il_canada.aspx
- Independent Living Canada (www.ilcanada.ca)
- <http://wordpress.com/>

3 The Aesthetics of Access

Art, as an offering of relationship, has the potential to individualize and liberate human expression from the restraints of stereotypical, xenophobic, de-humanized depictions. For those who live with disability, personal and public control of one's presentation of self is essential to the negotiation of one's human, individual and creative rights.

Deaf and disability cultural activism have breathed new life into the representation of people who are Deaf and disabled. This, in turn, has supported artistic depictions of Deaf and disabled persons by Deaf and disabled artists who describe and celebrate the authentic and the real.

Aside from the obvious power which self-determination engenders, it is producing a stunning canon of work; films, stories, performances, books, plays, installations and entirely new art forms created through the prism of disability. These works are gaining recognition and currency in the public realm. As author Simi Linton says, "Disability studies...[and arts] have 'crossed over' and entered the public consciousness."

Documentary and indie films are becoming powerful outlets for these stories, as evidenced by the proliferation of film festivals worldwide. Mainstream movies like the *Station Agent*, starring Peter Dinklage, and TV series like *Sue Thomas F.B. Eye* are also changing images bit by bit. Live theatre and comedy producers have begun to recognize the voices of creators like Julie McNamara, Alex Bulmer, Alan Shain, David Roche, Kazumi Tsuruoka, James Sanders, Victoria Maxwell, Siobhan McCarthy, Liz Carr, Phil Patson and the collective creators of Back to Back Theatre, InterAct Centre and No Strings Attached – to name just a few – indicating that the 21st century will in fact stretch all our cultural boundaries.

Owning the "Ideal": Body Language

What we bring to the world is a perspective shaped by [our] social positioning and by our own quirky means of talking, hearing, moving, etc. It is what I like to call the vantage point of the atypical.

– Simi Linton

In dance, theatre and other art forms rooted in the physical, disability arts continue to push the envelope, challenging and redefining accepted notions of movement, voice, speech, body, strength, beauty and language. Artists with disability are re-evaluating traditionally held standards of professionalism and artistic merit by creating works that deliver both new images of bodies in motion, at rest and at play, and clearly articulated (or not so clearly, which challenges us to pay attention), compelling performances. Disability often injects live performance with an urgency and power that can never be produced under strictly formal conditions. The stakes for artists with disability are high, keeping work edgy, visceral and replete with "universal" messages.

Contributing to the discourse is a concept known as the “aesthetics of access” which declares access to be an integral part of creative content and the artistic process from inception to presentation. Access becomes part of a holistic process shared by creators, directors, performers, presenters and access providers in the development of the work. Whether it manifests through non-conventional shadow-interpreting of a Deaf theatre show or the integration of avant-garde technologies, prosthetics and captioning into a performance, the aesthetics of access create new freedoms, realities and imaginative zones for artists and audiences to inhabit.

Select Examples

Creeps (1971), is an original play by David Freeman, who has CP. It premiered at the Factory Theatre in Toronto on February 5th, 1971. It was subsequently performed at different venues across the country. The play follows the conversation of four disabled men who work in a sheltered workshop and go to the bathroom, the setting for the play, whenever they need some privacy from the supervisor. It was directed by Bill Glassco, featuring Victor Sutton, Robert Coltri, Steven Whistance-Smith, Frank Moore, Len Sedun, Kay Griffin, Bert Adkins, Christina Zorro, Bernard Bomers and Mark Freeborn. In 1973, David Freeman won the Floyd S. Chalmers Canadian Play Award and the Drama Desk Award for Outstanding New Playwright.

Alan Shain, a comedian, speaker and disability activist originally from Toronto but now based in Ottawa, has a repertoire of solo work in theatre that blends comedy with a strong flavour of honesty and truth while drawing from the lived experience of disability. He has been touring his first original play, *Still Waiting for That Special Bus*, across Canada, the United States, England and Australia since 1999. Alan has performed this solo work for over 350 audiences, receiving both national and international critical acclaim.

Skydive is an innovative theatre production developed by the Realwheels theatre company of Vancouver, in collaboration with Discovery Dance of Victoria. It features two performers – one of them quadriplegic – soaring above the stage floor for the length of the approximately 90-minute play. Following its introduction as a staged reading at the kickstART2 Festival in 2004, *Skydive* went on to receive the Canadian Institute for Theatre Technology’s 2007 Award of Technical Merit. *Skydive* also received three Jessie Richardson theatre awards: Outstanding Direction, Roy Surette & Stephen Drover; Outstanding Sound Design, Alessandro Juliani & Meg Roe; and Significant Artistic Achievements, Sven Johansson for Aerial Choreography. The show was also nominated for Best Production and Critic’s Choice for Innovation.

CP Salon (2006/2008), featuring Kazumi Tsuruoka, who has CP, and pianist Sageev Oore, is about love, cerebral palsy and a man with a disability. Co-created with vocalist Fides Krucker, it travels through a roster of well-known rhythm and blues songs, interwoven with personal stories, sung and told by Kazumi, whose unconventional voice and stylings are complemented by Sageev's melodic accompaniments on a baby grand. Staged as an authentic salon, the intimate space enables audiences to clearly connect with Kazumi's voice and to interact with the intimate narrative, delivered in short, whimsical bites.

Common Criminal Theatre Project, (November 2008, Toronto) is an original work based on the true and terrifying experience of a blind woman working for the prison system in London, England. Featuring an integrated cast and crew (sighted, blind and vision-impaired), this production is collaborating with a team from Ryerson University's Centre for Learning Technologies, to develop an integrated point-of-view audio description to enable blind audience members to enjoy the show. This audio description, called Live-Describe, is committed to description that is an integral, artistic and expressive feature of the overall production, rather than an add-on information and access tool/service.

Back to Back Theatre (Australia), founded in 1987, has an ensemble made up of actors considered to have intellectual disabilities – people who, in a culture obsessed with perfection, are considered outsiders. This position of marginality provides them with a unique and at times subversive view of the world. With Bruce Gladwin as artistic director, Back to Back has nurtured a unique process of research, improvisation, scripting, and collaboration between the ensemble, the artistic director and invited guest artists. *Small metal objects*, which recently toured Canada, explores the “financialisation” of our culture. Its theme has particular relevance for those who are traditionally perceived as less “productive” – people with disabilities, the unemployed, outsiders and citizens of the third world. *Small metal objects* delivers theatre to the mass public, lifting a seating bank from an auditorium and placing it within everyday experience (in Toronto at the Eaton Centre). The audience becomes an installation for the general public; the general public becomes the extras of a dramatic narrative.

Sign Language Interpretation for the Theatre: Depending on the degree to which access is part of the creative content, a theatrical production has several options for working with interpreters. The director plays a big role and will decide where to place interpreters and how to light them. The director can choose from two different interpreting locations:

Zoned: Interpreters are located within the acting space but perhaps behind the action, up higher on a bench or a balcony. They usually move only during a change of scene or act.

Shadowed: Interpreters are located in the acting space but move around freely, shadowing the movement of the actors for whom they are interpreting. They may develop characters to explain their presence in a scene and can interact with the other performers on stage.

Pre-mounted Shows: Some theatres host productions that are touring. Therefore, it is not possible to block the interpreters because the show format is already determined and running. A traditional position will have to suffice. Interpreters stand on the house floor, in direct eye line between the patrons and the actors and they communicate from there. However, the stage manager will know if any extreme left or right positions on stage may be available and the interpreters can work in that limited position.

SOURCES

-Simi Linton, Opinion Pieces, National Diversity Forum, 2002.
<http://inclusioninthearts.org/>

4 Access to the Arts - Pioneers in English Language Centres

Arts and culture agencies in other countries, backed by Human and Equality Rights Commissions, have created strong policies, services and funding programs to support the development of disability culture.

Canada's disability arts movement is much younger, less developed and still only nominally recognized and supported by the country's arts and culture agencies. Its links with the international movement began in the late 1990s prior to which activities were scattered and intermittent, organizations few, and artistic practice rooted in stereotypical and old-school representations of disability.

The international field is broad and impossible to describe fully within this context. What can be identified are landmark legislations, events and groups in the history of Deaf and disability arts. Canada will be situated within the international network.

During a single decade, the United Kingdom, Australia, and the US, where the IL and HR movements were strong, helped catapult disability arts and culture onto the world stage. This "triangle" of activism pulled countries throughout Europe, Asia and Africa and the Americas into its magnetic field. Many countries in the EU now also adhere to access standards and recognize the field through many kinds of programming and support.

Key Legislation in the United Kingdom

England: The *Disability Discrimination Act* (DDA), 1995, gave real teeth to access-related policies and requirements within the public realm and specifically at arts venues and institutions. Its passage as a parliamentary act supported by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, shifted the onus from consumer or plaintiff to employers and service providers, requiring them to provide reasonable adjustment or accommodation in situations where barriers exist. The Act continues to incorporate amendments that respond to changing need.

Northern Ireland and Ireland: Exemplary legislation also exists in Northern Ireland since the mid-1990s, enforced by the Northern Ireland Equality Commission. The arts councils of both Ireland and Northern Ireland have been leaders in the creation of access policies, terms of reference, training, programming, awards and grants that support its Deaf and disability arts constituents. Their materials and terms of reference are cited worldwide in the formation of policy and programming.

Scotland and Wales: In addition to the UK's umbrella policies and initiatives, the Arts Councils of Wales and Scotland respectively have been developing access provisions and policies since the year 2000.

Key Legislation in the USA

Twentieth-century developments in biotechnical medicine meant that by the 1950s more and more people survived formerly fatal injuries and diseases. Efforts by a growing population of military veterans and young adults to participate fully in society gained momentum. They were energized by the struggles of African Americans whose quest for equality, inclusion in public affairs, and sometimes simply the right to live, resonated deeply.

Signed into law in 1990, the *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)* is one of the most significant civil rights documents of the 20th century. Its purpose is to end discrimination, reduce barriers to employment, and ensure access to education for people with disabilities. The ADA has increased the visibility of people with disabilities and led to the reshaping of the physical environment and improved communications access.

Key Legislation in Australia

By the beginning of the 1990s the Government turned its attention towards formulating legislation that would eliminate discrimination against people with a disability.

In 1992 the *Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)* was passed by the Commonwealth Government. It was an extension of the *Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Act* of 1986 and represented a step forward in the development of policies to support people with disabilities in Australia. The Act aimed to eliminate discrimination, ensure equality before the law and promote recognition and acceptance within the community of the fundamental rights of people with a disability.

The Act was similar to legislative developments in other Western countries, in particular the *Americans with Disabilities Act* of 1990. It is similar to other Australian legislation created to protect the civil rights of other groups open to discrimination namely the *Racial Discrimination Act* of 1975 and the *Sex Discrimination Act* of 1984. The DDA represented a further step in the gradual process by which disability has come to be viewed as a civil rights concern and a community responsibility rather than a charity and later a welfare issue.

Key Legislation in Canada

Canada has several pieces of federal legislation that aim to remove barriers; the two most important and far-reaching being the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1981) and the Canadian Human Rights Act (1995). The Employment Equity Act (1995), the Canada Transportation Act (1996), the Broadcasting Act (1991) and the Telecommunications Act (1993) regulate more discreet areas of concern to people with disabilities.

However, there is no single piece of legislation directed solely at removing systemic barriers faced by persons with disabilities. The systems controlled by existing legislation (with the possible exception of the Employment Equity Act) continue to rely on an individual, complaints-based approach, which does not have the capacity to make sweeping improvements for the larger group of similarly situated people.

Though there is some disagreement, even among people with disabilities, many believe that a Canadians with Disabilities Act should be enacted as a means of garnering the political support necessary to address systemic issues. In fact, as recently as 2007 Prime Minister Harper stated his government's intention to move forward with a Canadians with Disabilities Act but there has been no apparent action. Many others believe that the real challenge is not to enact yet another piece of legislation – that may or may not work – but to affect change in the existing laws and the ways they are administered and used.

Ontario is the only province that has legislation dedicated to combating discrimination against people with disabilities. The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005) built on existing legislation – the Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2001) – to include a private as well as a public mandate.

SOURCES:

A Canadians with Disabilities Act? by Lana Kerzner and David Baker. Council of Canadians with Disabilities, May 1999

A Federal Disability Act: Opportunities and Challenges. Phyllis Gordon. Council of Canadians with Disabilities and Canadian Association for Community Living. October 2006.

5 History of Dis-Arts “Firsts”

Disability and Deaf Arts and cultures can now claim more than 30 years of international activism and achievement at the grassroots, professional and artistic levels.

History is crucial to any culture, and it is essential to Disability Arts. It is through a sense of history that we define who we are, what journey we have undertaken and how far we have come. We also, implicitly, map out the future. This process is particularly important for us as disabled people, because mainstream society devalues and marginalizes so many of our achievements and struggles.

– Allan Sutherland, UK artist/ activist, for the Edward Lear Foundation, May 2005

The UK/England

At the turn of the century, the Labour government took action to forward their agenda regarding social inclusion within the cultural industries. As part of the movement to bring its own workforce into alignment with the general population, the London Arts Board (now the London Regional Council of the Arts Council of England) created the position of Disability Arts Development Officer and introduced a set of policies and actions that led to the creation of access services across the Arts Council of England’s nine regional councils and linked to the national standard.

In 1976, SHAPE Arts was founded to become the first and largest disability and arts organization in Britain. In 1992, its Deaf Arts program and Deaf Arts Officer position were introduced. In a single decade, Graeae Theatre (1980); Artsline, a unique organization that provides online Disability Access tools and searchable information on 1000 arts venues across London (1981); and London Disability Arts Forum (1983) had all been formed along with several smaller producing companies including Strathcona Theatre Company, Basic Theatre Company, Path Productions, Common Ground Sign Dance Theatre and Oily Cart.. Advocacy events like the International Day of the Disabled (1981) and Disability Arts Forum Day (1986) had gained prominence. Many other events, publications and groups have since broadened and diversified art practice, services and opportunities in the field.¹

¹ For detailed descriptions of the organizations above and other key groups in the UK, download The Picasso Project Report © 2004 [PDF, 68 pages] at <http://www.picassopro.org/>.

United States of America

VSA Arts (originally, Very Special Arts)²

VSA Arts mobilized the disability and Deaf cultural communities and engaged the nation when it constituted as an international, non-profit organization in 1974. Founded by Ambassador Jean Kennedy Smith, it is committed to a society where all people with disabilities learn through, participate in and enjoy the arts.

VSA Arts is an affiliate of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and offers multiple programs, including:

- Arts in Action, which showcases the accomplishments of artists with disabilities and promotes increased access to the arts.
- Education Programs, which provide educators, parents, and artists with resources and the tools to support arts programming in schools and communities.
- The Playwright Award, which recognizes young adults who promote awareness of disabilities through creative playwriting. Award recipients receive scholarships, a professional production of their script at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, and a trip to Washington D.C. to see the performance. Artists with disabilities remain VSA Arts' key advocates and exemplars of the significance of the arts in people's lives.

Within the US, VSA Arts programs are conducted by a network of state organizations with their own 501-C-3 status or in collaboration with an affiliated organization.³ Organizations in the network maintain strong connections to the home office in Washington, D.C. in a relationship that includes funding, participation in conferences, networking, the use of resources, technical assistance and programming, as well as sharing best practices and strategies among peers. Domestic organizations apply annually for affiliation and funding in a process designed to ensure that they meet with fiscal and operational standards and as a way to gauge and encourage growth in all areas. International affiliates do not receive funding from VSA Arts.

There are over 60 countries worldwide with VSA Affiliates including Albania, Argentina, Austria, Austria, Australia, Bahamas, Belgium, Brazil, Canada-Ontario, Canada-Quebec, Chile, Colombia, Cyprus, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Hong Kong, Iceland, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Latvia, Lithuania, Malawi, Mali, Mexico, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, St. Lucia, Sweden, Taiwan, R.O.C., Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Uruguay.

² www.vsarts.org

³ 501 (c) is a provision of the United States Internal Revenue Code (26 U.S.C. § 501(c)), listing 28 types of non-profit organizations exempt from some federal income taxes.

In all of English Canada there is one affiliate group: Creative Spirit Art Centre in Toronto. Visions sur l'Art in Montreal represents French Canada. Both are visual arts organizations.

National Endowment for the Arts Accessibility Checklist⁴

This list, produced by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA), has proved instrumental in helping organizations make their existing facilities more usable for people with disabilities. The checklist does not cover all of the ADA's requirements but is consistently updated. It refers to several "Guides" including *Arts and 504* and *Design for Accessibility: An Arts Administrator's Guide* (NEA, NASAA). Both are available at the Arts Commission office of the NEA.

National Arts and Disability Center⁵

The National Arts and Disability Center (NADC) in California is the national information dissemination, technical assistance and referral centre specializing in the field of arts and disability. The NADC is dedicated to promoting the full inclusion of children and adults with disabilities into the visual-, performing-, media, and literary-arts communities. Its resource directories, annotated bibliographies, related links and conferences serve to advance artists with disabilities and accessibility to the arts.

Art Education for the Blind, Inc. (AEB)

Headquartered in New York City, AEB leads and facilitates an international, multi-disciplinary collaboration of sighted and blind museum professionals, artists, educators, scientists, scholars, rehabilitation professionals, and blind and visually impaired advisors. Its partners include museums in New York and around the world, including the Museum of Modern Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art, El Museo del Barrio, Whitney Museum of American Art, Studio Museum in Harlem, Guggenheim, Art Institute of Chicago, Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Miami Art Museum, Victoria and Albert Museum in England, and Musée du Louvre in France. Accessible art and art education programs created by AEB are provided by many museums to their blind and visually impaired visitors.

AEB also coordinates the activities of the **Art Beyond Sight Collaborative⁶** and its annual **Art Beyond Sight Awareness Month**. The Collaborative provides a forum for ongoing interdisciplinary dialogues among researchers and practitioners who share expertise and materials. The annual awareness month includes a series of special exhibits, demonstrations, and conferences at museums, schools, libraries and other educational and cultural institutions, along with online discussion groups and a unique interdisciplinary telephone seminar. The goals of Awareness Month are to raise awareness and to bring together professionals, educators, researchers, the media, sighted and blind artists, and art lovers from around the world.

⁴ <http://www.nea.gov/resources/accessibility/index.html>

⁵ <http://nadc.ucla.edu/>

⁶ <http://www.artbeyondsight.org>

Deaf and Disability Arts Companies: Theatre and Dance

In the US there are at least 12 Deaf theatre companies which offer professional productions, seasons, tours and performance training. The National Theater of the Deaf: Hartford Connecticut through its almost 40-year history has given over 100 national tours, performances in all 50 states, on all the continents and 31 international tours.

The International Center on Deafness and the Arts, founded in 1973 in Chicago, provides educational training and appreciation of the Arts to children and adults who are Deaf and hard of hearing through high quality professional artistic endeavors.

Deaf West Theatre (DWT) was established in March of 1991 in Los Angeles as the first professional resident Sign Language Theatre west of the Mississippi to directly serve the 1.2 million Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals who live in the Los Angeles area. DWT provides exposure and access to professional theatre, presenting adaptations of classics, contemporary and original works, in American Sign Language with simultaneous translation in English.

Other companies include **CenterLight Theater**, Chicago; **Cleveland SignStage Theater**; **Toys Theater**, Brooklyn; **Creative Access Philadelphia**, an advocacy, arts-service and presenting organization; and **Rochester NTID Performing Arts**, established in 1974.

Disability specific and integrated theatre companies too numerous to mention train, cast and present performers, writers, etc. with a diversity of disabilities across the country. e.g. **Theatre in Motion**, New York City; **The Uppity Theatre**, St. Louis; **Kids on the Block**, Columbia, MD; **Express Theatre-Northwest**, Spokane, Washington and **Dionysus Theatre**, Texas.

The Theatre Development Fund [TDF], New York City⁷

This organization created a range of access services in 1968 to help strengthen Broadway and Off Broadway, in particular serious dramatic plays. TDF has subsidized more than 800 plays and musicals and has developed a wide-ranging variety of programs to serve audiences and theatres. TDF's twofold mission is to identify and provide support, including financial assistance, to theatrical works of artistic merit, and to encourage and enable diverse audiences to attend live theatre and dance in all their venues.

⁷ www.tdf.org

TDF provides orchestra seating at a 50% discount to people who are hard of hearing, Deaf, low-vision or blind, and also to people who cannot climb stairs, require aisle seating or need wheelchair locations. TDF is committed to lowering the barriers to access for all theatre-goers. For people who are hard of hearing or Deaf, blind or low-vision, or whose physical limitations or lack of language proficiency can interfere with a satisfying theatre-going experience. These services are provided through a TDF Accessibility Membership, and tickets are at a 50% discount to members. Open- and closed-captioning, sign language interpreting, audio description, assisted listening devices, preferred seating, and access for young audiences are all made available through membership.

To help train the nation's next generation of theatre interpreters, TDF also sponsored a one-week institute at the Juilliard School, taught by New York's top theatre interpreters and offered for credit through RID (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf). Unfortunately the program was discontinued in 2010.

South Australia

For many years, South Australia has been recognized as the “festival state” and a centre of artistic excellence in Australia. Within the disability sector, the arts have and continue to play a significant role in providing individuals with disabilities major therapeutic, vocational and recreational opportunities.

Broughton Art Society:⁸ In 1965, what was probably the State's first arts and disability organization, The Broughton Art Society, was established by the late Ian Broughton as The Arts Society for the Handicapped. In 1966, classes began at Bedford Industries. Then in 1971, thanks to the City of Unley, they were able to relocate to an historic tram-barn which they are still using. Some 38 years later, South Australia is transformed. Along with the Broughton Art Society, Arts Access SA began life as Arts in Action, which in turn emerged from its umbrella organization, the Recreation Association for People with Disabilities SA.

Arts in Action/Arts Access SA: In 1989, Arts in Action (now Arts Access SA) became an incorporated association, with a charter to create and extend arts opportunities to all people with disabilities throughout the State. During its first decade, Arts Access SA (AASA) helped and encouraged the formation of four significant and ongoing performing arts organizations, Restless Dance Company (1991), No Strings Attached Theatre of Disability (1993), Tutti Ensemble (1997) and The Jam, The Mix, The Gig (2003). One of the key projects of Arts in Action was the establishment of the High Beam Festival. During 2004 and 2005, Arts in Action undertook significant consultation within the arts and disability sector to consider its long term future. This process resulted in a confirmation of the organization's role as the peak association for the sector with an endorsement to advocate for the sector.

⁸ www.communitywebs.org/BroughtonArtSociety/

Disability Arts Advocacy Project 2007 (Reins, Rope and Red Tape): A program of Arts Access SA, it is a new advocacy and cultural action project designed to mentor disabled artists, creating a place for exploration and experimentation looking at the relationships between arts, leadership and disability activism. The first cycle included nine participants from varied arts backgrounds in an 18-month program of artistic opportunity, applied research and employment.

High Beam Festival: This festival was conceived and produced by Arts in Action through the direction of Tony Doyle, with its first Festival occurring in 1998. Originally it was a directed Festival which featured a mix of events, including: parades, comedy, dance, theatre and concerts with big name artists such as Adam Hills and David Helfgott. From the outset the High Beam sought to be of international significance. In its inaugural year the Swedish Disability Theatre Company Mooms Teatern presented a production and conducted workshops with a disability-led Australian theatre company, No Strings Attached, at the festival. In 2006, following a number of reviews, Arts in Action became Arts Access SA (South Australia). High Beam, rather than a festival entity, has devolved into two programs “to service and promote the disability and arts sectors with a fresh and sustainable model.” *High Beam Local* was to coordinate the program of arts events for the International Day for People with a Disability in South Australia., while *High Beam Global* would work with the Adelaide Fringe and Festival, to “offer the potential for disabled artists to present their work on a truly international stage.”

Back to Back Theatre⁹ was founded in Geelong, Australia in 1987 to create theatre with people who are perceived to have an intellectual disability. It has gone on to become one of Australia’s leading creative voices, focusing on moral, philosophical and political questions about the value of individual lives. Its tour of *small metal objects* was part of Harbourfront Centre’s World Stage Series (Toronto) and the PuSh International Performing Arts Festival (Vancouver) in early 2008.

Venues

Adelaide Festival Centre – Patrons Reference Group: In the early 2000s, the Adelaide Festival Centre, established the Patrons Reference Group to assist the Centre with becoming a more accessible and disability-friendly building. In 2003, the building underwent major redevelopments to the tune of \$23 million which allowed for many improvements in terms of the buildings accessibility and seating.

⁹ <http://backtobacktheatre.com>

Club Cool: Originally called Club Contagious when it was established in 1999, Club Cool remains Adelaide's only ongoing socially-inclusive event featuring performances of contemporary music and comedy. A partnership between Arts Access SA and the Governor Hindmarsh Hotel, Club Cool won the South Australian Small Business Award from the 2006 Prime Minister's Community Business Partnerships Awards and was selected as one of three finalists for the National Small Business Award. Club Cool provides performance opportunities to musicians and artists with a disability – at least 25% of performers are from this group. It is an outlet for disability arts products that require a “stepping stone” approach to mainstream opportunities. It is a healthy, friendly and integrated environment with a mix of disabled and the general public. It establishes and builds social contacts and personal confidence to promote healthy lifestyles in a supportive community network.

Other International “Firsts”: A Taste of Tomorrow

Festivals: An international network of more than 50 disability arts festivals – film and mixed media – representing artists with physical disabilities, Deaf culture, madness and mental health, bespeak of the richness and breadth of art being produced by the Deaf and disability arts movements.

FilmPRO, a cutting-edge umbrella organization in London England that supports the work of digital and film-based artists with disabilities, lists many of these festivals on its website (www.filmpro.net). They include: the **Breaking Down Barriers Festival/Perspektiva**, Moscow; the **Dis THIS! Film Fest** in NYC; the **Emotion Pictures Festival B** in Athens; Brazil's **International Film Festival** in Rio de Janeiro; the **One World Human Rights Festival** in Berlin and **Tähdententoja Disability Film Festival** in Finland, to name only a few. **The Giant Leap International Disability Art, Performance and Culture Conference and Festival**, in existence since 2004 in Auckland, New Zealand, was inspired by the Kickstart Festival and to allow artists to make the most of being “down under.”

A smattering of international performance and producing companies below also illustrates the diversity of creation-based groups coming into prominence.

Pamoja Dance Group:¹⁰ A project spawned by a German-Kenyan collaboration in 2006 has led to the formation of Pamoja Dance Group, a company of Kenyan dancers, with artistic support by Miriam Rother (Kenya-France). The company is intended to provide real integration of dancers with and without disability into the arts community and most important into society at large. At Pamoja, dancers with and without physical disability come together to share creative work in an open and inclusive environment. They have presented six full productions since 2006, including *Revolutionz*, which opened in 2008 in Nairobi.

¹⁰ <http://www.myspace.com/pamojadance>.

La Manga Video & Dance Co.: Founded in 1994, La Manga is a company based in Mexico City and New York that produces installations, video and dance-theatre productions, as well as movement and dance research projects involving diverse sectors of society. La Manga has developed the Integrated Dance Theater Methodology to incorporate diverse community populations, including the physically disabled, professional wrestlers, homeless children and youngsters, former professional dancers and actors, women and men between the ages of 30-60 years, blind and visually impaired people, performers and children of diverse nationalities and economic backgrounds. La Manga integrates their participation in the artistic processes, thereby offering other possibilities for creation and opening new paths of expression and communication with society and the environment.

Tyst Teater of the Deaf, Sweden: Tyst (silent theatre) is a Swedish theatre company that has been operating since the 1970s. It is part of Riksteatern, Sweden's national touring company, and specializes in producing quality theatre in sign language for Deaf people. Tyst Teater's vision is to become a centre and meeting place for Deaf stage arts.

Theatre from Shakespeare and new writing, youth work and international collaborations, creates inspiring productions and continues to push the boundaries of Swedish sign language on stage. With its own Young Tyst Teater, it aims to support young Deaf artists to ensure education is available, linking to the main company through workshops, youth seminars and projects, and helping to create new networks for information and inspiration. Tyst Teater also offers practical training in three areas: theatre, technical and interpretation.

Tyst promotes international dialogue with fellow Deaf and hearing arts institutions, exchanging knowledge and creative ideas, and welcoming international collaborations and guest performances to promote, celebrate and inspire Deaf and hearing audiences here in Sweden. Working alongside science and technology organizations (e.g. Tekniska Museet - technical museum) Tyst also conducts research to develop the latest media and film techniques that affect and can inspire better and new productions on stage, such as film, animation, cyberspace audiences, Internet performances and arts sites.

SOURCES

- Allan Sutherland, *The Chronology of Disability Arts*, © Edward Lear Foundation, May 2005
- Peter Tregilgas, Arts Access Australia Annual Report for 1 July 2005 – 30 June 2006

6 Examples of the Canadian Disability Arts Scene

British Columbia

Artists Helping Artists (AHA!)¹¹

In 1998, the Burnaby Association for Community Inclusion (BACI) sponsored the establishment of a grassroots, non-profit organization called Artists Helping Artists (AHA!) Since that time, AHA! has continued to provide artists with space, affordable materials and the opportunity to pursue their artistic aspirations. The majority of the membership is artists with special needs, but membership is open to any person over the age of 16 who is an artist or who would like to support artists in the production and marketing of art. Members' work is available for exhibition in restaurants, shopping centers and other venues, and the artists will accept commissions. The Co-op retains a 25% commission on sales or artwork; the remaining 75% going to the artist.

Cool Arts¹² was founded in the spring of 2003 by Sara Lige, who was convinced that everyone should have the opportunity to express themselves through the arts. Since that time, Cool Arts has continued in its dedication to providing fine arts opportunities for adults with developmental disabilities living in the Central Okanagan region of British Columbia. The first full day workshop was held in Kelowna in September 2003 and non-profit status was obtained in August 2004.

Cool Arts offers regularly scheduled workshops, and links artists with community art projects locally and internationally. Themes for the workshops have included painting, collage, sculpture, mixed-media, music and mask-making, among many others. Workshop instructors are either professional artists or art educators.

Cool Arts has also published an expanded catalogue for the exhibit "We Are Artists" a very successful multimedia exhibit presented in partnership with the Kelowna Art Gallery from November 2009 to March 2010.

Gallery Gachet¹³

Named after Vincent Van Gogh's homeopathic doctor, Paul Gachet, Gallery Gachet was founded in Vancouver in 1992. Run by a collective as an artist-run gallery, it occupies a storefront heritage building in the Gastown area of Vancouver, and contains a gallery, studio space, framing and wood workshop, and pottery studio. The Gallery provides artists informed by mental health issues with opportunities to exhibit, curate, perform, read, teach and develop their leadership skills. It offers a place for support and community, providing a focal point for dialogue amongst outsider/dissident artists.

¹¹ www.aha-artists.ca

¹² www.coolarts.ca

¹³ www.gachet.org

Gachet also offers regular classes and workshops, and provides solo and group exhibition opportunities primarily for members, with select exhibitions from other groups with similar goals.

Kickstart Disability Arts and Culture¹⁴
(formerly Society for Disability Arts and Culture)

Founded by filmmaker, academic and activist Bonnie Klein together with activist/artists Catherine Frazee and Geoff McMurchy, Kickstart started as the Society for Disability Arts and Culture in 1998. Its purpose is to encourage the integration of people with disabilities into the creative, artistic and social life of Canadian communities by presenting festivals celebrating disability arts and culture; organizing information sessions, workshops, classes, performances and exhibits for and by Canadian artists with disabilities; and fostering communications and a vibrant creative practice among Canadian artists with and without disabilities.

Kickstart was originally formed to produce the KickstART! Celebration of Disability Arts and Culture (2001), and was Canada's first international festival of disability arts and culture. As such, the need to demonstrate what Kickstart was about was fuelled by a strong belief in democracy in art, and Kickstart remains adamant about supporting the local/regional community in the creation, production and dissemination of art. Renamed Kickstart Disability Arts and Culture in 2009, the Society offers a balance of professional and community art, with a commitment to artistic excellence and innovation.

The Kickstart festival embraces mixed disciplines that include film, video, theatre, dance, choirs, music and comedy. As well as engaging proactively with national and regional networks, Kickstart connects with the international network of disability arts groups and festivals.

Start With Art Nanaimo (SWAN)¹⁵ is an organization whose stated aim is to present opportunities for artistic expression that can inspire and encourage new and emerging artists to bring their art to life.

In 2006, Paul Best and Denise MacNeill brought together people who were using art in various forms, in their work in support of people with disabilities. Thirty people came out to talk, network and get inspired, and they all agreed that they wanted to create a project to keep the group together and moving forward. A smaller group was designated to coordinate efforts and in the fall of 2006, the first *Coffeehouse*, featuring entertainers with disabilities, was held. This event was very successful with over 100 people in attendance. In the spring of 2007, they organized an *Art Show and Film*, an opportunity for local artists to display their work, and for public screening and discussion of a film related to disability arts. This event was also very successful, and the *Coffeehouse* and *Art Show and Film* are both now regular, annual events held by SWAN.

¹⁴ www.kickstart-arts.ca

¹⁵ <http://www.startwithart.ca/>

As well as developing these projects, SWAN was registered as a not-for-profit society. In September of 2009 SWAN opened the doors to Studio 366 and in the past year, the studio has grown in use with art shows, classes, open studio times, rentals, and more. The studio is open 5 to 6 days a week.

Theatre Terrific¹⁶ is Western Canada's oldest disability theatre company. The organization was founded in 1985 by Connie Hargrave, to provide theatre training and performance opportunities to disabled persons in the Vancouver region. In its early days, Theatre Terrific aimed to bridge theatre training and public education concerning people with disabilities. Founding artistic director Sue Lister, and other instructors, taught courses across the Lower Mainland to hundreds of disabled and non-disabled students, across a broad spectrum of theatre arts.

Theatre Terrific also staged performances through its Direct Access performing troupe, a range of school shows which toured the province, as well as Fringe and mainstage productions. Often developed in collaboration with award-winning professional artists, many of these shows focused on disability themes and sought to engage and educate audiences. With a growing body of work, Theatre Terrific gained increasing professional recognition in the Vancouver theatre community. In 1994, Theatre Terrific Society received a Jessie Richardson award from the Vancouver Theatre Alliance for "Distinctive Mandate" and was nominated in 1996 for "outstanding ensemble cast" for its production of *Breeding Doubts*. The company has also been a key contributor to the local disability arts and culture scene, hosting international disability arts and culture performers and events.

Since 2005, under the artistic direction of Susanna Uchatius, Theatre Terrific has continued to thrive and innovate, garner critical praise for its ensemble performance group, and to support various training programs and Fringe summer camps.

Alberta

The Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts¹⁷ is a non-profit community arts organization that was founded in 2003 by Wendy Hollo, Curtis Gillespie and Paul Freeman. Initially a project of Edmonton's SKILLS Society – an agency that supports people with developmental disabilities – the Centre provides a supportive place where people with developmental disabilities can become practicing artists. Through its on-site public art gallery, the Stollery Gallery, it also provides opportunities for the exhibition of work by artists who face barriers, including the Centre's artists' collective.

In order to work in the studio at the Nina Haggerty Centre, artists commit to regular attendance and pay a nominal membership fee. They then become members of the Artists' Collective and receive materials, a place to work, mentorship by paid professional artists and the opportunity to exhibit their art work.

¹⁶ www.theatreterrific.ca

¹⁷ www.ninahaggertyart.ca

Artists have the opportunity to work in various media, including printmaking, dance, drawing, painting, digital, photography, ceramics, fibre, sewing and video. The Centre also offers free and low cost family and community art classes.

Stage Left Productions / Balancing Acts¹⁸

Founded by Michele Decottignies and incorporated as a non-profit society in 2003, Stage Left Productions has become Calgary's most accomplished performance company engaging exclusively in artist-community collaboration and in professional production with marginalized artists. Stage Left is also Calgary's Centre for Excellence in "Theatre of the Oppressed" practices.

Stage Left works extensively with marginalized artists and community members, such as people with physical, sensory, learning and/or developmental disability, brain injury, chronic illness and/or mental illness; lesbian youth; street-involved youth; politically motivated youth; culturally-diverse youth; Ethno-cultural communities; First Nations; and other marginalized communities and their allies.

Stage Left has developed a highly-specialized, interdisciplinary performance practice modeled on a combination of "Popular Theatre" and "Theatre of the Oppressed" genres with interdisciplinary "Performance Creation" techniques.

Balancing Acts¹⁹

Stage Left produced ten disability arts festivals in eight years in two cities, representing more than 1,200 artists under the banner of *Balancing Acts: Calgary's Annual Disability Arts Festival*. Until it ended in 2010, Balancing Acts was a celebration of creative self-expression by emerging and professional artists with a broad range of disabilities. *Balancing Acts* articulated distinct explorations, representations, and declarations of disability identity, highlighting the creative ability of disabled artists and offering aesthetic expressions that celebrate and challenge both the ethos and the perception of disability culture.

Instead of a disability arts festival, Stage Left will focus on the presentation of diverse artists within one multidisciplinary event that fosters a greater knowledge of, and appreciation for, diversity. *The Other Festival* will showcase dynamic examples of Disability Art, Feminist Art, Queer Art, Aboriginal Art, Culturally-specific Art and the intersections that exist between and among diverse identities.

Manitoba

ArtBeat Studio²⁰ is a mental health consumer-initiated, peer-directed, and recovery-oriented program in Winnipeg. Founded in 2005 by Nigel Bart, its vision is to enable consumers of mental health services to engage in artistic expression that promotes recovery, empowerment and community.

¹⁸ www.stage-left.org

¹⁹ www.balancing-acts.org

²⁰ <http://artbeatstudio.ca/about>

The community-based studio accommodates artists whose mental health, social connection, and income make it impracticable for them, individually, to acquire a workspace where they might advance their artistic technique safely and securely. The artists are supported and mentored in managing their own workplace, production, and marketing within the operating parameters of the studio. They also receive assistance in organizing and attending gallery exhibitions, marketing artwork, development fundraising ventures and developing a professional portfolio. The studio accommodates a group of nine artist applicants per six month period.

University of Manitoba MA/ M.Sc in disability studies²¹

First in the country, this program allows students to examine the policies and practices of all societies in order to understand the social, rather than the physical or psychological determinants, of the experience of disability. This focus shifts the emphasis from prevention, treatment, remediation paradigm to a social, cultural, political one.

University of Manitoba offers an interdisciplinary Master's Degree Program in Disability Studies. They also offer a graduate level Option in Disability Studies that is available to both Master's and Doctoral students. Students in the Master's Program will have the opportunity to apply their undergraduate degrees and work experience to pursue advanced interdisciplinary research and scholarship. Students taking the Option in Disability Studies will complement their major program area of study with coursework which analyses the social construction of disability.”

Ontario

Abilities Arts Festival²²

Since 2003, Abilities Arts Festival has been adding new dimensions to Toronto's diverse arts scene. A disability arts organization and forum for creative and artistic excellence, it serves as a leader, catalyst and resource to bring together artists, arts and cultural organizations and a diverse public by:

- Showcasing and promoting artists with disabilities and the visual, performing and media arts, film and integrated art forms
- Fostering partnerships and collaborations that provide creative expression opportunities for artists with disabilities and forums for the public
- Cultivating and empowering artists, emerging artists and diverse audiences through learning, networking, and outreach, while also fostering critical understanding of the public
- Effecting increased support for access to the arts so that all can participate, experience and enjoy art
- Building on-going commitment and support for an inclusive arts and culture sector.

²¹ http://www.umanitoba.ca/disability_studies/contents/documents/brochure.pdf

²² www.abilities.ca

Abilities produced a full festival in 2005 and 2007 at the Columbus Centre and other venues in Toronto, showcasing international artistic and cultural events. “In Celebration of Our Children and Youth” (2006) reflected the growing response to Children’s Programs by students with disabilities and their teachers and aides, across the Greater Toronto Area and beyond. “Projections” (2007) and “Insights” (2008) took place over three consecutive weekends and presented exceptional and award-winning films along with Q & A’s with some of the filmmakers. Between September 24th - October 24th, 2010 the festival presented a series of live performance, film and visual arts events for adults and families.

Creative Spirit Art Centre²³

Ellen Anderson founded Creative Spirit Art Centre in 1992 as a studio and gallery space where artists with disabilities could come and create, exhibit and sell their artwork. Over the past seventeen years, Creative Spirit has welcomed over 40 artist members in the Greater Toronto Area who use its studio space and gallery to bring their artwork to a wider audience. One of its founding directors, Michael Seary opened a sister organization in Halifax, Nova Scotia called Creative Spirit East. Although the two organizations operate separately, both strive to achieve the same goals. A unique organization in Canada, Creative Spirit Art Centre celebrates the achievements of individuals living with disabilities while bringing the challenges they continue to face to light. They believe that their programs allow people to look beyond preconceived notions of disability and honour the creative spirit of each artist. The 2010 three-day Creative Spirit Festival featured presentations by organizations working in disability arts, an integrated art exhibition as well as music and dance performances with participants from Toronto, Ottawa, and the Atlantic Provinces.

Creative Spirit was invited to be the Ontario representative for VSA Arts, an international non-profit organization founded by Jean Kennedy Smith which aims to “create a society where people with disabilities learn through, participate in, and enjoy the arts.”

DEAF Culture Centre and the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf²⁴

In 1970 Forrest C. Nickerson, a Deaf person, realized his dream to create a Deaf cultural organization dedicated to enhancing the cultural lives of Deaf people across the country. Today, the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf (CCSD) represents over 450,000 Canadians and serves many more with its programs, cultural activities and Deaf heritage resources.

Incorporated in 1973 as a non-profit charitable organization funded through private donations, the CCSD preserves, encourages and advances the cultural interests of Canada’s Deaf population. It is the parent organization of the Deaf Culture Centre, which features a museum, art gallery, gift shop, research and archives, state-of-the art virtually rich technology highlighting Deaf historical artifacts, Sign Language literature and multimedia production studio.

²³ www.creativespirit.on.ca

²⁴ www.deafculturecentre.ca

Open to the public and rooted in the Deaf community; it is a celebration of Deaf life for all to enjoy. Set in the culture, arts and entertainment Distillery Historic District in the heart of Old Town Toronto, the centre provides programs on culture, history, visual and performing arts with ongoing workshops, permanent and traveling exhibits, school tours and virtual displays.

Picasso PRO²⁵ was formed to facilitate genuine opportunity and integration for artists with disabilities and Deaf artists in the performing and media arts. It springs from the passionate conviction that artists with disabilities and Deaf artists belong on Canada's stages and screens, among our audiences, professional and cultural leaders. Picasso PRO has grown from a core of eight to over 70 practitioners who participate in skills development, networking, creation and presentation activities and services. All programming is grounded in a strong commitment to the artists' creative, professional and human rights.

Mandate:

- To promote and facilitate direct engagement among Deaf, disabled and other arts practitioners in all facets of live performance and media creation, production and presentation
- To provide an umbrella of support and inter-connection to individual artists and groups working alone or in clusters throughout Ontario
- To foster integrated and culturally specific collaboration and exchange in which artists define their own practice, develop their own voices and create distinct works
- To deliver accessible, professional skills training, strong artist support, career development and employment to artists at various levels of experience
- To introduce young or emerging artists to theatre, dance, film, etc through basic skills training and exposure to plays, films and existing bodies of work
- To share tools and expertise with the broad artistic community regarding disability-related access and cultural inclusion while advocating for audiences and artists who are Deaf or live with disabilities.

Propeller Dance²⁶

Based in Ottawa, Propeller Dance is the only organization in Ontario with the sole mandate of providing dance programming to children, youth and adults with and without disability. Although a new organization (incorporated as a not-for-profit in 2007) the staff - Shara Weaver, Renata Soutter and Alan Shain - have been innovators in the field of mixed-ability dance in Canada since 2001. Prior to Propeller Dance's birth, they were co-founders or co-directors of the DanceAbility program and Performing Group at The School of Dance.

Led by Co-Artistic/Co-Executive Directors Shara Weaver and Renata Soutter, the Mission/Vision is to:

1. Promote artistic diversity by removing obstacles that limit access to the arts.

²⁵ www.picassopro.org

²⁶ <http://www.propellerdance.com/>

2. Encourage the evolution of dance through mixed-ability performance.
3. Provide classes, seminars, workshops and other instructional programs in mixed-ability dance that are relevant to children, youth, adults and seniors; and
4. Provide training for, and assist in, the placement of persons with disabilities in employment by creating work, mentorship and peer support opportunities in the arts.

They also provide outreach programming to those who are unable to take advantage of public dance programming due to barriers related to travel, income, accessibility, and exclusive dance teaching practices. Propeller Dance's Performing Group was voted "Best Dance Show of 2009" by Ottawa Xpress newspaper and "Best Group Show of 2005" by Ottawa Xpress newspaper.

**Ryerson RBC Institute for Disability Studies Research and Education,
Ryerson School of Disability Studies²⁷**

In 2001, Ryerson's School of Disability Studies received a grant to establish the Ryerson-RBC Institute for Disability Studies Research and Education. The Institute's mandate is "to enhance and strengthen the education of students, graduates and professionals committed to the rights, inclusion and full social participation of people with disabilities."

Among the Institute's activities, it promotes broader recognition and respect for a growing cultural identity among people with disabilities, and has done much to promote disability arts and to showcase the work of artists with disabilities. It hosts two regularly scheduled performance events: Art with Attitude and Culture Cauldron. Art with Attitude is a staged, emceed presentation of high-quality contemporary works in a variety of artistic modes, while Culture Cauldron is an open-mike, cabaret-style series of short performances of disability-inspired creative work.

The Institute's website offers information about exhibitions, the annual showcase "Art with Attitude", "Culture Cauldron" cabarets and other presentations, some of which are available as streaming videos.

Institute activities include:

- Creating a space for the identification, exploration and debate of emerging issues in the field of disability studies;
- Supporting focused and innovative research involving students, faculty, practitioners and community partners;
- Profiling visiting scholars, researchers, community and cultural leaders;
- Providing an ongoing opportunity for information and knowledge sharing among students, faculty, community leaders, professionals and service providers;
- Providing a focal point for creativity and innovation in the field of disability culture; and
- Promoting broader recognition and respect for a growing cultural identity among disabled people.

²⁷ www.ryerson.ca/ds

Ryerson School of Disability Studies

Disability Studies program builds on the experiences of its students, and is designed with flexibility to meet needs of adult learners:

- Students can enrol on a part-time basis, completing course-work that is the equivalent of two years of full-time study.
- Three two-week intensive courses are offered on the Ryerson campus
- Other required courses are offered through distance education or on the Ryerson campus.
- Students may also take elective courses at Ryerson or other universities.

Workman Arts / Rendezvous with Madness Film Festival²⁸

Workman Arts (WA), formally known as the Workman Theatre Project, is guided by the principle that the creative process is integral to the quest for personal and spiritual development. WA's aim is to promote a greater understanding of mental illness and addiction through the arts, and to support the artistic pursuit of individuals with mental illness and addiction.

In the various artistic media, WA has produced more than 16 original Canadian plays, 13 Rendezvous with Madness Film Festivals, seven Annual Being Scene Art Exhibitions, four multidisciplinary festivals and one international festival.

Rendezvous with Madness Film Festival²⁹ is an annual film festival that presents features and shorts touching upon the facts and mythology surrounding mental health and addiction. Each program focuses on a different theme. Post-screening panel discussions involve filmmakers, artists and people with professional and personal experience with mental illness and addiction. Rendezvous with Madness is produced by Workman Arts.

York University (Toronto) MA and PhD Programs in Critical Disability Studies³⁰

Critical Disability Studies explores disability studies from a *critical perspective*. It is unique in that it contributes to emerging research examining the systemic social, political, legal and economic barriers to the full societal inclusion of persons with disabilities. The PhD Program (Critical Disability Studies), which is a pioneer in Canada, offers a comprehensive curriculum covering major scholarly perspectives.

The program's interdisciplinary approach is informed by various academic fields including law, anthropology, health studies, geography, economics, education, labour studies, political science, social work, sociology, identity politics, gender studies, refugee and immigration studies, history and aging studies. Theories of human rights form the basis for understanding how existing legal, economic and social rationales for inclusion relate to systemic inequality and oppression.

²⁸ www.workmanarts.com

²⁹ <http://www.rendezvouswithmadness.com>

³⁰ <http://www.yorku.ca/gradcdis/ma/index.html>

Quebec

Corpuscule Danse³¹

The first professional integrated dance company in Quebec, Corpuscule Danse was born out of the France Geoffroy's long-term passion for exploring contemporary dance as a quadriplegic dancer. The mandate of Corpuscule Danse revolves around creation, production and education and includes the integration of people with disabilities into society through two interrelated teaching and performance components.

Entr'actes³² is a community and cultural organization in Quebec that has a mission to develop, create and disseminate unique art by persons with functional limitations, in collaboration with other artists throughout the community. The model they use provides a unique experience that brings 'craftsmen' together to develop their artistic skills in an environment that positions the meeting of differences as an engine for creativity. Its activities include public presentations, performances offered on tour and workshops.

Folie/Culture³³ was founded in 1984 as a non-profit organization seeking to inform, raise awareness and undertake promotion in the area of mental health. It organizes multidisciplinary events that follow unusual research directions while motivating reflection on questions relating to critical social issues. In concentrating its actions in the field where the cultural and the social meet, Folie/Culture allows for innovative cultural expression and broadens the social discourse on madness by encouraging artistic work based on personal research.

Joe Jack et John³⁴ was founded in 2003 with the goal of creating socially relevant and avant-garde theatre and exploring boundaries between theatre and performance art. The company's mandate focuses on challenging the notion of casting by including *diverse* actors from various backgrounds. The aim behind this choice is to take unusual paths creating the effect of strangeness necessary for reflection and poetry. Joe Jack et John strives for creative theatre creation and collaborative writing with actors and designers.

Les Muses: centre des arts de la scène³⁵

Founded in Montreal in 1997 by dancer Cindy Schwartz, Les Muses: Centre des arts de la scène was created to fill a void in the artistic education for disabled individuals. Initially oriented toward the arts and recreational activities, the project has expanded and now offers a full-time professional program in the performing arts.

³¹ <http://www.corpusculedanse.com>

³² www.entractes.com

³³ <http://folieculture.org/iii/x/home/>

³⁴ <http://www.joejacketjohn.com>

³⁵ <http://www.lesmuses.org/english/html/mission.html>

The organization has a team of well established teachers, who have to date trained about a hundred students. Each student is auditioned to verify his or her artistic abilities in order to offer a program that will allow him or her to gain the technical abilities required by his or her art. The organization creates new bonds with Montreal's artistic scene in order to grant its students the opportunity to participate in professional productions and become a part of the artistic community.

Les Productions des pieds et des mains³⁶ is a dance/theatre company that blends professional actors, dancers as well as artists with intellectual disabilities or other special needs on stage. The company was founded in 2004 by choreographer Menka Nagrani with a desire to create "differently" while seeking to explore both artistic and social issues. Selected artists with developmental disabilities benefit from the creation and rehearsal processes tailored to their level of integration. These artists contribute to the promotion of Quebec arts and culture at home and abroad.

La Société culturelle québécoise des sourds³⁷ is a non-profit organization whose mandates are to preserve, promote and develop the cultural interests of the Deaf in Quebec; encourage and develop new ways to create, research, participate and generate interest in the arts, social sciences and the humanities; and promote better understanding between Deaf and hearing people. The organization also promotes bilingual and bicultural education for Deaf children.

Théâtre aphasique³⁸ is a non-profit organization focusing on the rehabilitation and social reintegration of people with aphasia through drama. The activities include the creation and presentation of plays to the general public and the drama workshops. All activities are offered free to people with aphasia in the Montreal metropolitan area.

Visions sur l'Art Québec (VSAQ)³⁹ joined the Very Special Arts (VSA) affiliate network in 1986 and is dedicated to promoting artists with disabilities and limitations in the visual and performing arts, as well as art trades. VSAQ partners with corporations, rehabilitation and activity centers, as well as artists and trainers involved with all inclusive performing and visual arts, to further promote community disability awareness and to showcase the artistic excellence of people with disabilities.

Working with these local partners, VSAQ arranges art exhibitions, workshops, and demonstrations, and participates in international festivals and educational symposia. VSAQ encourages the inclusion of artists with disabilities and duly recognizes them for their contributions to the cultural life of the community.

³⁶ <http://www.productionsdpdm.com/artistes.html>

³⁷ <http://www.scqs.ca>

³⁸ <http://theatreaphasique.org>

³⁹ www.vsaq.org

Atlantic Provinces

The Atlantic Provinces continue to be less developed in the areas of Deaf and disability arts and culture. We have identified two specific arts and cultural groups at present and we are unaware of any producing companies – dance, theatre, film – which are specifically mandated to create or present disability arts related or Deaf arts/De'VIA. The Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and most colleges and academic institutions make basic access resources and social services available to students and staff.

Veith Street Gallery Studio Association⁴⁰ is an educational organization based in north-end Halifax that supports artists with disabilities and related challenges. The association supports these artists through several programs and services such as the Creative Spirit East artist collective. Creative Spirit East started in 2003 and is sister organization of Creative Spirit Art Centre in Toronto which was founded in 1992.

The artworks of Creative Spirit East members are exhibited in two exhibition spaces - Veith Street Gallery in Halifax and the Pedway Picture Gallery in Dartmouth. Artists from CSE are also eligible to participate in the Veith Street Gallery Studio Association Artist-in-Residence Program. The Artist-in-Residence program provides studio space and a flexible support structure for emerging artists with disabilities or artists wishing to explore aspects of relationship between disability and the arts.

Terms for the residency program have been established to ensure flexibility with regard to each artist's individual requirements, and to provide a stable and supportive environment within which the artist may explore his or her unique directions in art.

⁴⁰ <http://www.veithstreetgallery.org/VSG.HTML>

7 Development of Networks - National and Regional

The development of associations of arts practitioners and presenters like CAPACOA (Canadian arts Presenting Association), CANDANCE, (the Canadian Network of Dance Presenters), Fado Performance Inc., PACT (the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres), PCC (Performance Creation Canada) and others, is evidence of the need for those engaged in similar pursuits to band together to share information, support and, potentially, resources. Indeed, it is for very good reasons that both Canadian Heritage and the Canada Council for the Arts support the development of such networks.

National Network Model

Performance Creation Canada (PCC) is a nationwide network formed in 2004 to nourish, manage and study performance creation in Canada, and the ecology in which it flourishes. Modeled loosely on the successful Informal European Theatre Meeting, PCC invites the participation of artists, administrators, educators, funding institutions, presenters, agents, archivists and critics from the fields of theatre, dance, performance art, music and interdisciplinary work who are interested in the well-being of the Canadian performance creation milieu.

PCC provided the primary networking model adopted by Canada's fledgling disability arts presenters network formed in Western Canada in 2006.

Canadian Network of Disability Arts Presenters

First National Meeting in Calgary, March 2006

Inspired by her experience with Performance Creation Canada, Michele Decottignies of Stage Left Productions in Calgary brought together disability arts presenters for the first time, with support from the Department of Canadian Heritage.

By invitation, representatives of the Abilities Festival (Toronto), Art with Attitude (Toronto), Balancing Acts (Calgary), Kickstart (Vancouver) and the Madness and Arts World Festival (Toronto) met for three days of discussion and mutual support. They covered many issues, including:

- the balance of professional and community-based art
- audience development
- sustainability and lack of operating funds
- burnout and coping with success
- relations with mainstream arts organizations
- research and documentation
- marginalization
- assimilation and cultural appropriation
- regional disparities
- lack of colleagues/support
- competition and cooperation within the network

A key agreement reached at this first session was the definition of “disability artist” (as opposed to “artist with a disability”).

Disability arts is a specific arts practice which involves **disability artists** creating work that expresses their identity as disabled people. Disability arts carry an additional dimension of meaning: that as disability arts practitioners move their work forward – individually and collectively – they are contributing to the expression of a distinct “disability culture” with unique experiences and perspectives, and shared values.

Disability arts can be described more poetically and with greater nuance:

Not all of Disability Art is explicitly about the disability experience. But all of it, I would suggest, springs from disability experience, and to be fully appreciated, must be seen and heard with all of its historic and biographical resonances.... in our encounters with the Art of Disability, we are called upon to know the heart of the matter, to hold up the mirror, hear the overtones. What social histories are embedded in the installations of Persimmon Blackbridge? What struggles and exclusions backstage the croonings of Joe Coughlin? What are the defining contours of the universe that Ryan Knighton narrates? Where have our artists come from? What have they endured? What have they survived? These histories, once excavated, enrich every experience of disability art.

- Catherine Frazee, *Unleashed and Unruly: Staking Our Claim to Place, Space and Culture*, 2008

Artists with a disability include those artists whose work does not, in form or content, reflect their experience as disabled individuals.

Second National Meeting in Toronto, February 2007

This three-day meeting was attended by eight presenters and generated a draft vision, mission and membership criteria.

DRAFT Vision: A flourishing canon of disability art that is actively sought out and valued within the Canadian cultural landscape.

DRAFT Mission: To stimulate the quality, development, dissemination and context of disability arts and culture presentation in Canada.

DRAFT Membership Criteria

- 1) Producers and artistic directors of professional multidisciplinary disability arts events
- 2) Those who have made a scholarly contribution to the field of disability arts and culture
- 3) Other individuals whose expertise is deemed relevant or necessary by the network may be invited to meetings as guests.

Canadian National Disability Arts Presenters Network (CNDAP) – Regional Meetings

Since its inception, the CNDAP has hosted three regional meetings: Vancouver (April 24, 2006), Calgary (November 30, 2006), and Toronto (February 21, 2007).

Fifteen to 20 individuals attended each of these meetings, where a panel of presenters summarized activity to date and their thoughts about the value of a network. Participants discussed the definition of disability art, the value of festivals, integration into the mainstream and identification of local stakeholders.

The BC Regional Integrated Arts Network (BRIAN)

The impulse to form a regional disability arts network came out of a gathering of individuals working in the field held in Vancouver on September 15, 2006. The meeting was organized by Geoff McMurchy, Artistic Director of Kickstart, who described his thinking at the time this way:

S4DAC [Kickstart] thought it would be a good idea to convene a meeting of local and regional creators and presenters of disability art to develop a collective agenda to address our needs for capacity-building and our desires with regard to our involvement in 2010 Olympic/ Paralympic cultural events, as well as legacies thereafter.

A significant number of seminal and useful ideas came out of this meeting. An advisory group was created once it was agreed to move forward, even if only on an ad hoc basis. When 2010 Legacies Now (a not-for-profit organization established by the Province of B.C.) and the Vancouver 2010 Bid Corporation, agreed to provide funding to advance the project, it was possible to engage a consultant and develop a strategy.

Richard Marcuse was engaged to conduct a needs assessment and developed a document entitled *A Plan for the Development of Integrated Arts and Culture in British Columbia* (2007), which recommended that Kickstart take on the work of BRIAN.

At the Art of Engagement Conference in Vancouver (October 2007) the steering committee, consisting of Geoff McMurchy, Kickstart; Irwin Oostindie, Gallery Gachet; and Cathy McDonald, Theatre Terrific, formed a small discussion group around network structures.

In January 2008 a third gathering was held at Gallery Gachet during a symposium with guest speakers from the Back to Back theatre company, Australia and the Nina Haggerty Centre, Edmonton. The segment of the meeting concerning BRIAN was mainly a history review, a discussion of governance and identification of committee work to be done.

In May 2008 the Kickstart Board of Directors conducted a strategic planning session facilitated by Sandra Thompson. When the customary SWOT analysis identified the lack of human and financial resources as a weakness at that time, it was determined that the organization did not have the capacity to take on the leadership of BRIAN.

However, the aforementioned Kickstart strategic planning process resulted in strengthening Kickstart's Board governance and resources – both personnel and funding – so that the Society has resumed a leadership role in BRIAN. Small grants from 2010 Legacies Now and the BC Arts Council have enabled Kickstart to hire an organizer to do some community development work.

At a meeting organized to coincide with Kickstart 2010, BRIAN's mandate was reaffirmed:

“...to facilitate opportunities for:

- members to present their work
- networking between members, and arts communities
- collaboration on projects, commissions or research
- advocacy for disability arts in BC
- sharing information about events, funding, calls for work”

Kickstart is seeking all “disability artists” and “artists with disabilities” in British Columbia – as well as “non-profit disability or integrated arts organizations that provide arts support to children and youth, art students, or to pre-professional, emerging and professional artists” – to become part of the BRIAN community. To this end, a networking site has been established.⁴¹

Picasso PRO/Creative Trust and Regional Networks in Ontario (2009-2012)

Picasso PRO's partnership with Creative Trust (CT) focuses on network building in Ontario and with national/international associations which strengthen regional networks. Along with the Sun Life Financial Performing Arts Access Program, they are creating peer-to-peer exchanges among CT's member companies and Picasso PRO associate artists, researching and advocating for resources to improve barrier-free access to Toronto's arts facilities.

This collaboration is based on trust and an awareness of overall social goals which go beyond any one organization's efforts. It requires knowledge-sharing and mutual support in dealing with complex problems.

- ideas drawn from *Nonprofit Networking: The New Way to Grow* by Martha Lagace, excerpted from a lecture by Harvard Business School professor Jane Wei-Skille, May 2005.

Concurrently Picasso PRO is linking with artists in communities outside Toronto via traveling delegations or invited artists in Toronto-led programs. Communities include: Ottawa/Gatineau/Montreal corridor, Thunder Bay, Peterborough, Hamilton, London, Milton, Port Hope, Oakville, Kingston and Barrie.

⁴¹ <http://brianonline.ning.com/profile/BRIANHQ>

The SPARK Arts and Disability Network, Manitoba⁴²

The SPARK Arts and Disability Network was launched in March 2008. This group of artists with disabilities and stakeholders is advancing accessible arts in Manitoba. The network is being developed by a steering committee of dedicated visual, performing and literary artists at varying levels of professionalism, arts administrators and other professionals. Membership in the network is free. Members receive e-newsletters, notice of exhibition calls, as well as information on artistic opportunities, educational workshops, conferences, and networking events, funding programs and news on disability arts and culture around the globe.

SOURCES

- Catherine Frazee, “Unleashed and Unruly: Staking Our Claim to Place, Space and Culture,” presented to the inaugural Unruly Salon, January 12, 2008 at Green College, University of British Columbia, Vancouver
- *Nonprofit Networking: The New Way to Grow* by Martha Lagace, quote is from a lecture by Harvard Business School professor Jane Wei-Skillem. May 2005

⁴² <http://sparkartsanddisabilitynetwork.blogspot.com/2011/01/discussion-paper-for-made-in-manitoba.html>

8 Ghettoization and Integration

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the disability rights movement of the 1970s was inspired by the women's and black movements of the 1960s. The first preoccupation of these movements, as well as those of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people and other minority groups, has been the quest for rights, equal opportunities and inclusion.

Paul Longmore, Professor of History and Director of the Institute on Disability at San Francisco State University states:

As they spurned devaluing non-disabled definitions, Deaf people and disabled people began to celebrate themselves. Coining self-affirming slogans such as 'Disabled and Proud', 'Deaf Pride', and 'Disability Cool', they seized control of the definition of their identities. This has been not so much a series of personal choices as a collective process of reinterpreting themselves and their issues. It is a political and cultural task.

The quest for collective identity arises out of a common history of oppression and a common bond of resilience. Like other sociological minorities, people with disabilities have begun to generate art, music, literature and other expressions of their lives and culture, infused from their lived experience. These expressions are defining a new culture.

In 1987, Vic Finkelstein posed the following question:

...There is a great deal of uncertainty amongst disabled people whether we do want 'our own culture.' After all, we all have had experiences of resisting being treated as different, as inferior to the rest of society. So why now, when there is much greater awareness of our desire to be fully integrated into society do we suddenly want to go off at a tangent and start trying to promote our differences, our separate identity?

Indeed, more recently in Canada, Kickstart Festival organizers were asked: If your ultimate goal is integration into the mainstream arts sector, are you not just creating another ghetto by bringing together artists with disabilities? Their experience, however, has borne out their belief that there was, and continues to be, a real need for supportive, safe environments in which to develop confidence, inspire one another, share ideas, learn new methods and develop individual as well as collective voices.

Finkelstein addresses this issue by further stating:

Firstly, we must be clear that it is essential for us to create our own public image, based upon free acceptance of our distinctive group identity, before we can participate in the multicultural world. Such a cultural identity will play a vital role in helping us develop the confidence necessary for us to create the organizations which we need to promote the social change that we all want.

...Secondly, it is essential that all disabled people join together in our own organizations so that there is a creative interaction between disabled people who are involved with the politics of disability and disabled people involved in the arts. It is this interaction which can be particularly fruitful in helping us to take the initiative in developing a new disability culture.

Clearly, it would be the wrong approach to always and forever confine artists with a disability to specialized festival venues. In fact, many have broken into the mainstream and this is to be celebrated.

It should be noted that, historically, festivals of disability arts have welcomed integrated groups of artists, as long as it is evident that people with disabilities play a significant role in the conceptualization and/or implementation of the work. Given their inherent interest in exploring new perspectives and methods, and in many cases in collaboration, (non-disabled) artists in general are natural allies for artists with disabilities. Our experience has shown that there is no lack of goodwill and interest in exploring new territories together.

The real issue for artists with disabilities is a lack of options that most non-disabled artists take for granted. Our collective goal in this sector must be to create a range of opportunities, so that an artist with a disability can attend disability arts festival and nurture or be nurtured; develop their own practice or company; choose to collaborate with non-disabled artists; access appropriate training; and, compete in the mainstream for roles, studio space and performance opportunities.

Arts should provide disabled people with ways of confirming their own identity and as a secondary gain inform, educate and attract the non-disabled world. Until recently the arts have placed too much emphasis on educating non-disabled people rather than providing a media for communication with each other. What is needed is that disability arts (and the disability movement) does not simply imitate the view of the world that pleases white, middle class males. The arts, and the new cultural development, can provide space for reflection on disability life from the rich variety of experiences of different groups of disabled people. Helping disabled people to ensure an integrated role for disability arts and culture in the nation's repertoire of cultural life can provide an opportunity to challenge narrow thinking, elitism and dependency on others. Introducing disabled people to the social role of artistic creativity and opening a debate about disability culture is a dynamic way of assisting disabled people to challenge their assumed dependency and place in mainstream society.

–Vic Finkelstein

SOURCES

- Longmore, Paul K. 1995. "The Second Phase: From Disability Rights to Disability Culture." First published in *Disability Rag & Resource*, Sept. /Oct. 1995.

www.independentliving.org/docs3/longm95.html

- Finkelstein, Vic and Morrison, Elspeth. 1993. "Broken Arts and Cultural Repair: The Role of Culture in the Empowerment of Disabled People." First published in Swain, J., Finkelstein, V., French, S., and Oliver, M., *Disabling Barriers – Enabling Environments*, 1993. www.independentliving.org/docs3/finkelstein93a.html

9 Public Support and the Role of Funders

Binding legislation does not exist, nationally or regionally, to enforce universal access and disability rights in Canada. By extension, arts and cultural agencies also lack access policies and services to accommodate Deaf and disabled artists, clients and potential clients. Stella Palikarova, a filmmaker and graduate in Film (Screenwriting) and Psychology at York University (2007), wrote:

... I have been feeling very depressed of late because of a recent paper I have been writing on disability employment accommodation in Canada, and specifically, Ontario. My research has uncovered the gross oversight in physical/environmental accommodation in Ontario. Thirty per cent of Ontarians are individuals with some form of a disability that are of working age. Of those employed, the average income is \$13,000 per year, and less than six per cent have a post-secondary school education. For people with a severe physical disability, like me and some of my friends/colleagues, these numbers are even lower.

To a very large extent, these disheartening statistics can be attributed to the ghastly negligence of the Canadian government in imposing universal physical access laws. While the U.S.A. has very clear policies addressing environmental accessibility in their Americans with Disabilities Act (1990), Canada has yet to impose similar laws. For a country that prides itself on social equality, we are lagging behind in the very basic human right to full physical and environmental access.

Our research focuses on funders, arts agencies and arts service organizations (ASOs), the frontline policy setters for producers and presenters. Academic institutions observe baseline access delivery through their special needs departments. However, accessible training for performers and practitioners at theatre/film schools and/or art departments is an entirely different matter. We do not focus here on disability studies programs at universities, or Deaf and disability arts producers, who obviously dedicate their resources to access-related work.

Below is an overview of a sampling of arts councils, service organizations and producers who have taken the lead in creating access. We also include the websites of two Deaf and disability arts producers to illustrate the possibilities for effective and imaginative communications access.

A Template for Access

Perhaps the best way to illustrate what is possible is by example. Looking at worldwide models of accessible arts agencies also shows what the basics are and what can be accomplished. The following template or checklist can be used to assess arts organizations' level of access to disability/Deaf arts.

DISABILITY/DEAF ARTS TEMPLATE

1. Accessible and welcoming websites
2. Explicit and plain language regarding disability/Deaf arts in mission statements, policies, granting documents and/or programming guidelines
3. Available disability-related resources e.g. handbooks, articles, links, etc.
4. Accessible grant application formats
5. Budget forms and program guidelines which permit and include a line-item for access resources
6. Designated staff and culturally specific or seeding programs
7. In some cases, tracking and statistics on the sector

Funders

Success Example #1: The Arts Council of Northern Ireland⁴³

Working back from the point of entry, communications is key. But communications is only as good as the tools, programs and services it describes. The following numbered points refer back to the Template for Access (above).

1. The Council has its own Disability Arts website, indicated graphically in the right masthead of its home page; one click on the image takes you to a wide array of tools and information.
2. The Council also flags Arts and Disability prominently as a sub-section of “About the Arts” on its home page masthead to the left. The sub-section called Arts and Disability offers disability art definitions, news, publications, information, current initiatives and internal links to the Disability Arts website.
3. Of particular note is the section called “Advice and Funding”:
“Funding is the life blood of any project.” There are many ways to find funding but the five most popular ways of attracting funds to an arts project are:
 - Arts councils’ support
 - Local authority support
 - Other state support
 - European Union (EU) support, which has some trans-national programs
 - Private sponsorship/support

⁴³ www.artscouncil-ni.org

Info on each category of support can be accessed immediately with concrete information, “how-to” details and direct links to related agencies. The range of services available through this Council’s website is immediate, current and extensive.

4. Applications are available in large print, on disk, audio tape, and online.

Application forms include a section where applicants can mark off those Council priorities which apply to their proposal. One of the priorities listed is: “The project encourages the participation of people with disabilities with organizations and artists of the very highest professional standards across the disciplines.” Applications also include an Equality Monitoring Form, which is not part of the adjudication process but instils awareness and promotes fair and wide access to the programs.

5. The Council operates a premium payments scheme to encourage enhanced disability access. Budget forms include a line-item for premium costs, i.e., costs of delivery to Section 75 groups (for example, sign language interpretation). [NB: from the website’s Freedom of Information and Equality page]

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland is fully committed to the fulfillment of Section 75 obligations on the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations [required by the Equality Commission of Northern Ireland]. “Our Equality Scheme” sets out how the Arts Council proposes to fulfill those obligations.

6. The Council clearly designates a named individual as the staff person responsible for Arts Development which includes arts and disability, arts and health and voluntary arts. Examples of current program initiatives are:

- The Council participates in advisory panels to government agencies and provides a range of specialist advice across the arts and disability sector, including advice to clients from mainstream organizations.
- The Council funds the core costs for several arts and disability organizations, (for example, the Arts & Disability Forum), a wide range of arts & disability projects through Arts Council lottery schemes and work that helps arts venues improve disability access (for example, a three-year Accessibility Fund for arts venue adaptations).
- Along with An Chomhairle Ealaíon (the Arts Council of Ireland), the Arts Council of Northern Ireland funds two north/south collaboration projects: the award-winning Arts and Disability Awards Ireland grant scheme, for individual disabled artists; and the Arts & Disability Directory
- The Council has commissioned extensive research into barriers to disabled people’s involvement in the arts. This will provide a baseline to measure progress over subsequent years.

Success Example #2: National Endowment for the Arts, USA⁴⁴

The NEA meets all seven requirements on the Access Template Checklist. The home page slide show includes drop-down text descriptions of the images which can also be read with JAWS for blind and low-vision browsers who have the software. Directly under the image box is a universal Access graphic, which links to the NEA Office for AccessAbility subsite.

The AccessAbility Office is the advocacy-technical assistance arm of the Arts Endowment to make the arts accessible for people with disabilities, older adults, veterans, and people living in institutions and is positioned as an essential service.

This office provides information about:

- publications and checklists;
- laws and compliance standards;
- state and regional arts agencies;
- accessibility coordinators;
- the National Accessibility Leadership Award;
- leadership initiatives;
- arts and aging;
- arts in healthcare;
- arts in corrections;
- careers in the arts;
- universal design;
- resource lists;
- accessible media;
- making web sites accessible;
- organizations that assist artists with disabilities;
- organizations that assist children with disabilities;
- integrated dance organizations;
- funding opportunities and other accessibility links.

Also available are the invaluable NEA Checklist and a self-evaluation workbook based on American 504 legislation, enabling arts groups to review and upgrade their access capabilities individually and at the pace and level which works for them.

Canadian Arts Councils

Our survey of provincial/territorial councils and agencies websites reveals that none of the seven points on the Access Template are represented. Unfortunately, any positive information about clients and/or disability-related projects that may have been funded is consequently 'buried' as well and tracking has not occurred. At present the Canada Council for the Arts is the only agency to include any explicit disability-related language or proposed action, through its Strategic Plan.

⁴⁴ <http://arts.endow.gov/index.html>

The word “access” appears in the mission statements of several provincial arts councils in reference to cultural diversity and/or Aboriginal arts and culture. Diversity is the blanket term used to suggest general inclusion at most of the councils.

None of the Canadian arts council websites provide the access tools such as those available on the Arts Council of Northern Ireland website with the exception of drop-down text over images on some sites.

Service Organizations: A Conundrum

Art Service Organizations (ASOs) are potentially an important link in the access chain. However, in Canada and beyond this also appears to be a weak link. ASOs, reliant in most cases on membership fees and not-for-profit funding, are too often required to compete with member companies for grants. Similarly, corporate fundraising can be seen as inappropriate competition with member companies.

Funding is a major reason why disability-related access at present appears to be entirely off the radar and beyond the scope of activity which Canadian ASOs believe they can and should resource. Without some designated funding (seed funding or ongoing) from arts councils for cash-strapped ASOs, little may change.

Beyond the financial crunch lies a deeper indifference to issues of access, as discussed throughout this report. At present a classic case of chicken-and-egg prevails. ASOs can cite membership statistics to indicate that very few current members need or request access tools. However, potential members with disability-related interests or needs cannot access most mainstream ASOs in their current state and therefore do not join. Two non-Canadian examples illustrate the point:

Association of Performing Arts Service Organizations [APASO] ⁴⁵

The Association of Performing Arts Service Organizations (APASO) is a community of arts organizations that has gathered annually for over 20 years to share best practices for arts marketing, running discount ticket programs and booths, and providing advocacy support. It currently provides these and other much needed services to local performing arts organizations in 22 US states, three Canadian provinces and six countries.

Access is entirely absent from this website and organizational culture. A spot check of individual member websites is equally unproductive, including those explicitly advertising ticket booths and sales. There is no search mechanism to identify those member organizations which do offer accessible services. To date, the annual APASO conference has not to our knowledge featured access as a conference theme, except for occasional small group conversations among booth managers about booth site requirements.

⁴⁵ www.americaperforms.com/aboutapaso.html

The Association of Performing Arts Presenters (APAP) ⁴⁶ is a national service and advocacy organization representing more than 2,100 performing arts presenters, artists and artist managers throughout the world. Arts presenter members hail from all 50 states of the US and more than 28 different countries, representing both the non-profit and for-profit sectors of the industry, including large performing arts centers in major cities, rural community-focused organizations, outdoor festivals and academic institutions.

No mention of access is included anywhere on the APAP website, including the Issues Page which is devoted to advocating and educating on issues important to the performing arts. A review of the 2007 Strategic Plan is equally barren. No search mechanism exists to identify those members that do offer access in any form.

Success Model: Theatre Development Fund (TDF), New York City:

TDF provides orchestra seating at a 50% discount to people who are hard of hearing, Deaf, low-vision or blind, and also to people who cannot climb stairs, require aisle seating or need wheelchair locations. These services are provided through a TDF Accessibility Membership, and tickets are at a 50% discount to members.

To help train the next generation of theatre interpreters, TDF also sponsored a one-week institute at the Juilliard School, taught by New York's top theatre interpreters and offered for credit through RID (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf). Unfortunately the program has been suspended as of 2010.

Foundations

Foundations offer some sanctuary. The larger foundations amalgamate many of the principles and procedures of arts councils with the added benefit of presenting mixed mandates that can include social justice, disability, health-related and other core priorities, enabling Deaf and disability arts clients to propose projects that are embraced by jurors and committees.

Large foundations are quite responsive to evolving community need and their cultures and mandates support many of the points in the Access Template presented earlier. The long tradition of philanthropic giving in the United States makes family foundations particularly powerful: the Rockefeller and Mellon Foundations being two of the most prominent. In Canada, the Ontario Trillium Foundation and the Vancouver Foundation are two examples of foundations that have been particularly supportive of Deaf and disability arts and culture.

Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF)⁴⁷

The OTF's four granting priorities embrace a wide range of possible activities which can be achieved through arts, cultural, social and disability arts as well as other sectoral initiatives. They are:

1. Improved health

⁴⁶ www.artspresenters.org

⁴⁷ www.trilliumfoundation.org

2. Enhanced success for students and learners
3. Enhanced employment and economic potential for workers
4. More effective volunteers and more people engaged in their communities.

Although OTF does not have a portal to its access-related tools right on the Home page, it is still possible to type accessibility into the search bar on that page to bring up the following internal options:

- An Accessibility Tip Sheet (printable page) for those submitting an application to improve accessibility. This information is helpful in sending the necessary documentation. www.trilliumfoundation.org/cms/en/accessibilitytipsheet.aspx
- An online Accessibility Statement citing the OTF's commitment to Ontarians to help ensure that people of all abilities enjoy access to the information contained on the website. www.trilliumfoundation.org/cms/en/accessibility.aspx
- Templates and Examples of an Accessibility Evaluation Checklist [PDF] that detail Access requirements for companies to work towards: www.trilliumfoundation.org/cms/en/html/grantseekers/templatesandenamples.aspx

When searching “disability” many more research briefs and recipient profiles come up. In 2006-07, 12 client groups with a Deaf/disability-related focus were funded in the province-wide program although they were seldom arts and culture related. Arts projects that receive funding from OTF's Community Program since 2001 include: Picasso PRO, Workman Arts, the Abilities Festival, Keys to the Studio and Propeller Dance, all arts projects, have received funding from the OTF's Community Program since 2001.

Vancouver Foundation⁴⁸

Vancouver Foundation is the largest of Canada's 160 community foundations. Established in 1943, its mission is “To create positive and lasting impacts in communities through knowledge, networks, and philanthropy.”

The Foundation administers many endowments and has granting programs in nine funding areas: Animal Welfare; Arts and Culture; Children, Youth and Families; Education, Environment, Health and Social Development, Health and Medical Research, Youth Homelessness; and Youth Philanthropy.

One of their six stated values is an “accessible and inclusive organization”, open and responsive to the communities they serve, and one of their four core beliefs is “We embrace the benefits of diversity and inclusion of all people in organizations and communities.”

⁴⁸www.vancouverfoundation.ca

The Foundation has been very supportive of disability arts projects. It was the first to fund the Kickstart; first with a project grant under the stewardship of the BC Coalition of People with Disabilities, then with a two-year extension to continue activities under the Disability Arts Community Development Project, when Kickstart attained charitable tax status. This support came from the Foundation's Health and Social Development funds. When the grant was finished Kickstart was advised that it should thereafter compete for support from the arts and culture funds. The Foundation currently supports Theatre Terrific with a grant from the Provincial Ministry of Housing and Social Development's Disability Supports for Employment Fund, which it administers.

Class Acts: Culture-Specific Producers/Presenters

Success Model: Interact Center for the Visual and Performing Arts, Minneapolis, USA⁴⁹

The Interact Center was founded in 1992, by Artistic Director Jeanne Calvit, as a professional theater company that included actors with disabilities, and expanded its vision in 1996 to become a recognized center for both the performing and visual arts. Interact is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization and a licensed day care facility.

Interact is the only centre in the U.S. that offers professional-level training, performances, and exhibitions in multiple artistic disciplines, for artists with a wide range of disabilities, from physical to developmental to mental to behavioral. At Interact, adult artists with disabilities explore and expand their creativity as actors, writers, painters, sculptors and musicians.

Interact's three overarching goals are:

- To provide artists with disabilities skills and opportunities for creative expression, artistic growth, professional performance and exhibition opportunities, and opportunities to earn income from their work.
- To challenge existing stereotypes that assume people with disabilities are not capable.
- To challenge the arts community to recognize and include the unique talents and vision of people who have long been marginalized.

At Interact, over 90 artists earn income through theatre performances and sales of artwork in the organization's public gallery, The Inside Out Gallery. Regional, national and international performances and exhibitions by Interact artists enable the public to see work that is raw, honest and explores visions and voices that would otherwise not be seen or heard. Furthermore, Interact demonstrates a progressive model for integrating artistic and social service systems in ways that build on people's strengths, rather than focusing on their limitations.

⁴⁹ <http://www.interactcenter.com/>

Success Model: Graëae Theatre’s web site, London, England⁵⁰

On Graëae Theatre’s web site, the home page and each subsequent page offers a text-only feature, a text enlargement feature, a background colour change feature and a filmed actor describing the page in British Sign Language [BSL] in real-time animation, in addition to its standard presentation. An audio button enables the viewer to add a voiced description as well.

A perpetual slide show on the right side of the page offers striking images of shows and activities that include people of mixed abilities. The home page description clearly states the company’s mandate regarding Deaf and disability arts. Any theatre company regardless of mandate could easily supply some or all of these access features in their web communications.

Graëae Theatre is a disabled-led theatre company that profiles the skills of actors, writers and directors with physical and sensory impairments. The artistic approach creates aesthetically accessible productions that include a disabled and non-disabled audience. It offers a full range of disability and integrated arts programs, productions and access services easily found by navigating the site.

Success Model: Deaf Culture Centre web site, Toronto⁵¹

The presentation of Deaf access on this site is particularly engaging and creative. Logging on brings four boxes up on screen, each containing a video image of a “host” inviting you “in”, offering entry options respectively in ASL, LSQ (French equivalent), English or French.

Clicking on any box brings up a playful panorama shot of a group of young people; clicking on any individual animates him/her to describe a particular service or feature of the Deaf Culture Centre in the language the browser has chosen. A text equivalent of the signer’s message appears below him or her on the page, along with links and other icons to navigate the site. It is fun, welcoming, clear and is the ultimate in communications access. The website was designed by the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf, Inc.

SOURCES

– Stella Palikarova, film-maker and graduate, Film (Screenwriting) and Psychology, York University, 2007.

⁵⁰ www.graeae.org

⁵¹ www.deafculturecentre.ca/Public/index.aspx

APPENDIX A:

Recommendations to the Professional Arts Community

(Extract from Picasso Project: A Report from the Field of Disability Arts [December 2004] by Alex Bulmer and Rose Jacobson © 2004)

Our recommendations are aimed primarily at service providers, funders, trainers, producers, artistic directors and arts professionals who hold the keys to access in many cases. Artists with disability are willing and ready to share their experience and knowledge with them in the pursuit of positive change. We are eager to become actively engaged in the process of change.

To Funders

A fundamental recognition of Def and disability arts as legitimate sectors, legitimate cultures and legitimate client bases is prerequisite to any discourse around access, policy and programming.

Disability issues must be placed on the agenda at the Councils, Foundations, Ministries and Agencies which fund the arts. Existing equity policies, missions and public statements of commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion should be reviewed and revised to include reference to disability.

Funding bodies are encouraged to seek Disability Equality Training and offer it to human resources and programming staff.

Funders should develop and adopt working Disability Action Plans. Plans should be encouraged and required of client companies.

Direct meetings between artists with disability and councils must be encouraged, planned and implemented at the initiative of funders once they have received some orientation, in the form of soundings, consultations and other forums.

Clients and prospective clients should be invited to self-identify their access requirements on all organizational materials and application forms. Adapted formats must be developed to communicate with and accommodate people with specific access needs (Deaf, blind and mobility)

Access resources should be introduced and included as a reasonable and acceptable line item in project, operations and program budget forms. Requests must be reasonably considered by informed jurors during the adjudication process

A review of criteria must take place regarding the professional status of and financial conditions affecting disabled artists, within the context of disability arts and in relation to artistic merit, excellence and professional training.

Juries, committees and advisories at funding bodies must begin to include reasonable representation by disabled artists and disability arts advocates where possible and appropriate.

Commensurate expertise must be made available to granting juries and committees in order to evaluate the merits of proposals which refer to disability- specific art forms, expressions and access related needs.

Human resource departments and other staff must become comfortable and conversant with access needs and protocols.

To Arts Service Organizations (ASOs)

Professional arts service organizations (ASOs) should review and amend their human resources, membership, service and programming policies and practices in consideration of the access requirements of disabled members and constituents.

ASOs are encouraged to seek Disability Equality Training as defined in this report and offer it to human resources and Programming staff before addressing disability arts issues at the programming level.

ASOs must scan their memberships re: disability awareness and become equipped to offer basic orientation re: access services, needs, attitudes and practices once they are equipped to do so.

ASOs should develop and adopt working Disability Action Plans. Plans should be encouraged/required of member companies.

Resources to implement Disability Action Plans should be reasonably considered and accommodated by funders when they appear in an organization's grant submissions and funding requests.

ASOs which offer consumer services e.g. ticket reservations and sales, events, discounts, show listings, etc. should provide adapted tools for disabled consumers to access the services.

Venued organizations should conduct a site audit and work towards the removal of mobility and other barriers for consumers and members.

Programming and services should reasonably reflect and include the needs and aspirations of disabled members and consumers.

Policies and public statements of commitment to diversity, access and inclusion should be reviewed and revised to include reference to disability rights.

To Theatre/Dance Producers and Trainers

Site audits should be conducted so that companies, venues and training centres can begin to create access and remove physical/sensory barriers from their working environments. Audits enable the company to make changes at the pace they can afford, equipped with proper knowledge and a variety of solutions.

Companies and venues which offer box office services, sales, show listings, etc. should reasonably begin to provide adapted tools for disabled consumers, including promotional materials.

Access services for audiences and/or students must be reasonably introduced: Sign Language Interpretation, taped or other forms of audio description for the blind, wheelchair accommodation, etc. as well as permission to bring an access worker into the classroom or performance venue.

Stages, pathways, and all backstage environments should be audited and made as accessible as possible for disabled performers and artistic personnel.

Artistic directors and managers should seek Disability Equality Training as defined in this report and offer it to volunteers and staff e.g. programming, front of house, technical and human resources, before addressing disability arts issues at the programming level.

Producing and training organizations should develop and adopt Disability Action Plans. Requests for resources to implement Disability Action Plans should be clearly included in applications for operating and project funds.

Auditions should be posted in formats and through outlets (including web sites, e-bulletins, and links) accessible to disabled performers. Audition notices and side materials should be made available to performers who request them whenever possible.

Non-traditional casting principles should also be applied to casting in terms of disability.

Producing and training organizations should engage in Disability Action Training as defined in this report by offering internships and apprenticeships within the company. In some cases this should lead to full, part-time employment or a contractual role within the company.

Artistic exchanges, residencies, mentorships offered by companies should welcome artists with disability and provide for their basic access needs.

When staff decides that particular productions and/or training programs are committed to inclusion, proper preparation must be made for all aspects of the process. Physical access, audition materials, properly rehearsed and integrated ASL interpretation, accessible promotions and above all the physical safety of performers and the safe-guarding of group dynamics, must be considered.

Producers should advocate strongly for the creation of an Access Worker Program as described in this report to be introduced at theatre schools, community colleges or elsewhere, supported by funding agencies.

Theatre Schools and departments should actively explore (collectively or unilaterally) the creation of such pilot training programs for Professional Access Workers.

APPENDIX B:

Basic Terms of Reference/Glossary

Medical model of disability: This model focuses on the lack of physical or mental functioning and uses a clinical way of describing an individual's disability. There are developmental and functioning norms against which the person is judged. It is a dehumanizing view where only the nature and severity of the impairment is important, together with the extent to which the difference can be put right or mitigated. It casts the individual as victim.

Disabled people have rejected this model saying it has led to low self-esteem, undeveloped life skills, poor education and consequent high unemployment levels. Above all they have recognized that it requires the breaking of natural relationships with their families, communities and society as a whole.

Social model of disability: Traditionally, society considers disability to be a tragedy for the individual and a burden for the family and society. However, the developing political scene identifies the social model of disability as a way to remove "blame" for disability from the individual and their impairments (the medical model) and to relocate the cause of barriers in the environment, in the way people behave and in the practices that lead to discrimination. This model requires a change in values and practices. When non-disabled people begin to understand this model, a community of allies will form to speed the process of attitudinal and concrete change.

The affirmative model of disability: Disabled people who believe that the social model does not allow for enough positive social identity and life experience, go a step further to describe an affirmative model which actively repudiates the dominant value of "normality" in favour of a positive assertion of the value and validity of life with an impairment. The disabled person's lifestyle, experiences, culture and identity are celebrated. It has its roots in the Disability Arts and Culture Movement and could be represented by the title of Johnny Crescendo's song, *Proud, Angry and Strong*.

Disability equality training: This training looks at a rights-based approach to disability, thereby changing the focus from the individual to society and the need for inclusion. Thus the questions become: What are my responsibilities an employer or service provider and how can I ensure a fair and inclusive practice/service delivery practice? Disability equality training has been devised by disabled people to help shift thinking towards a more inclusive society. It established disability as a rights-based issue, recognizes diversity and promotes equality of opportunity.

Positive action training: This training was first instituted by the London Arts Board in response to its own organizational workforce which was not representative of the population with regards to disability. A training model was developed to give disabled people the opportunity to train in-house in order to qualify and compete for jobs at all levels. Positive action training has subsequently been used in many organizations.

Positive action training (continued)

Recruitment of the apprentice is based on work-related criteria and his or her access issues are tackled separately. The program is offered in a series of stages which may include internal and external training, on-the-job experience and observation. The apprentice is supported by a key worker in the organization (Host) who are both supported by an Associate – a more experienced disabled person. At the conclusion a post or position agreed upon at the outset becomes available to the apprentice.

Arts and disability: is a broad term which incorporates people with disabilities as artists, participants and audience members. Arts and disability can be used to describe projects involving collaboration between disabled and able-bodied people (as artists, participants or audiences). Arts and disability projects, when collaborative, must involve people with disability at all stages, from planning to presentation. When people with disability are placed on the margins, projects cannot be endorsed within the practice of arts and disability

Disability arts: is a specific arts practice which involves **disability artists** creating work which expresses their identity as disabled people. Disability arts carry an additional dimension of meaning: that as disability arts practitioners move their work forward – individually and collectively – they are contributing to the expression of a distinct “disability culture” with unique experiences and perspectives, and shared values.

Artists with a disability include those artists whose work does not, in form or content, reflect their experience as disabled individuals.

Integrated arts: At its simplest, integrated arts and culture is a range of arts practices carried out by anyone with a disability, whether physical or cognitive, visible or invisible. This includes *artists with a disability*, whose disability may or may not inform their work and *disability artists*, whose work reflects some aspect of disability or the lived experience of it. Integrated arts also include artists who may not be “disabled” but who choose to work with artists with a disability.

Disability culture: In general terms, it is that which is common to the lives of disabled people and which informs their thoughts, activities, struggles and aspirations. It is not only rooted in a proper appreciation of the past but celebrates the present and the future. It is about expressing a reality and an identity through which disabled people can take their place in society as a whole.

SOURCES

- *Towards Inclusion Arts & Disability Information Booklet*, a joint initiative of the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, © 2003.

-The Picasso Project Report, © 2004

- “A Legacy for All of Us”: A Plan for the Development of Integrated Arts and Culture in British Columbia © 2007

APPENDIX C: References and Links

Select Canadian Disability/Deaf Arts Organizations and Initiatives

Abilities Festival, Toronto

www.abilities.ca

ArtBeat Studio

<http://artbeatstudio.ca>

Artists Helping Artists

www.aha-artists.ca

The Common Criminal Theatre Project, Toronto

www.commoncriminal.bravehost.com

Cool Arts

www.coolarts.ca

Corpuscule Danse

www.corpusculedanse.com/

CP Salon/Good Hair Day Productions, Toronto

www.fideskrucker.com/pages/cpsalon.htm

Creative Spirit Arts Centre, Toronto

www.creativespirit.on.ca

Deaf Culture Centre, Toronto

www.deafculturecentre.ca

Entr'acte, Quebec

www.entractes.com

Folie/Culture

<http://en.folieculture.org/>

Gallery Gachet

www.gachet.org

Glenvale Players, Willowdale, Ont.

www.glenvaleplayers.org

Joe Jack et John

www.joejacketjohn.com/

Kickstart Disability Arts and Culture / Kickstart Festival, Vancouver

www.kickstart-arts.ca

Les Muses: centre des arts de la scène

www.lesmuses.org

Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts

www.ninahaggertyart.ca

Picasso PRO, Toronto

www.picassopro.org

Les Productions des pieds et des mains

www.productionsdpdm.com/artistes.html

Propeller Dance, Ottawa

www.propellerdance.com

Realwheels Theatre /Skydive, Vancouver

www.realwheels.ca

Ryerson School of Disability Studies, Toronto

www.ryerson.ca/ds

La Société culturelle québécoise des sourds

www.scqs.ca/

SPARK Arts and Disability Network

www.sparkartsanddisabilitynetwork.blogspot.com

Stage Left Productions/Balancing Acts, Calgary

www.stage-left.org and www.balancing-acts.org

Start with Art Nanaimo

<http://startwithartnanaimo.blogspot.com/>

Théâtre aphasique

<http://theatreaphasique.org/>

Theatre Terrific, Vancouver

www.theatreterrific.ca

University of Manitoba MA/ M.Sc in disability studies

www.umanitoba.ca/disability_studies/contents/documents/brochure.pdf

Visions sur l'Art Québec, Montreal
www.vsaq.org

Workman Arts, Toronto
www.workmanarts.com

York University, Toronto, Ontario, MA and PhD programs in Critical Disability Studies:
www.yorku.ca/gradcdis/

Arts Councils and Related Organizations Cited

International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies
www.ifacca.org

Arts Council England
www.artscouncil.org.uk

Arts Council of Ireland
www.artscouncil.ie

Arts Council of Northern Ireland
www.artscouncil-ni.org

Arts Fund, Arts Council of Northern Ireland
www.artscouncil-ni.org/departs/all/equality/access-equality.PDF

Arts Council of Wales
www.artswales.org

Scottish Arts Council,
www.scottisharts.org.uk

Australian Council for the Arts
www.australiacouncil.gov.au

Americans for the Arts
www.culturalpolicy.org/pdf/access.pdf

National Endowment for the Arts
www.nea.gov

National Endowment for the Arts and National Assembly of State Arts Agencies
Design for Accessibility: A Cultural Administrator's Handbook, 1994.
www.nea.gov/resources/accessibility/pubs/DesignAccessibility/DesignAccess.pdf

Provincial and National Funding Agencies

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts, (crown agency of the government of Alberta)

<http://www.affta.ab.ca>

Canada Council for the Arts

<http://www.canadacouncil.ca>

Canadian Conference for the Arts

<http://www.ccarts.ca>

Culture.ca

<http://www.culture.ca>

British Columbia Arts Council

<http://www.bcartscouncil.ca>

New Brunswick Arts Board

<http://www.artsnb.ca>

New Brunswick

<http://www.gnb.ca/0131/art-e.asp>

Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council

<http://www.nlac.nf.ca>

Government of Newfoundland and Labrador

<http://www.gov.nf.ca>

Nova Scotia Arts Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage

http://www.gov.ns.ca/tch/culture_mandate.asp

Manitoba Arts Council

<http://www.artscouncil.mb.ca>

Northwest Territories Department of Education, Culture and Employment

http://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/Divisions/culture_heritage/indexcult.htm

Nunavut: Culture, Language, Elders and Youth

<http://www.cley.gov.nu.ca/index.html>

Ontario Arts Council

<http://www.arts.on.ca>

PEI Arts, Culture, Heritage

http://www.gov.pe.ca/infopei/Government/GovInfo/Arts,_Culture_and_Heritage

Prince Edward Island Council for the Arts
<http://www.peiartscouncil.com>

Conseil des Arts et des Lettres du Quebec
http://www.calq.gouv.qc.ca/index_en.htm

Saskatchewan Arts Board
<http://www.artsboard.sk.ca>

Organization of Saskatchewan Arts Councils
<http://www.osac.sk.ca>

Yukon (Government)
<http://www.tc.gov.yk.ca/>

Key Legislation Cited

Australian Disability Discrimination Act 1992
www.hreoc.gov.au/disability_rights/legislation/index.htm

Americans with Disabilities Act 1990
www.ada.gov

Disability Discrimination Act 1995, UK
www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1995/ukpga_19950050_en_1

Foundations

Canada

Ontario Trillium Foundation
www.trilliumfoundation.org

Vancouver Foundation
www.vancouverfoundation.bc.ca

Council of Canadians with Disabilities
www.ccdonline.ca/

Kéroul: Tourism and Culture for people with restricted physical ability (Quebec)
<http://www.keroul.qc.ca/en/>

United Kingdom

SHAPE Arts

www.shapearts.org.uk

Graeae Theatre

<http://www.graeae.org>

Artsline (1981)

www.artsline.org.uk

USA

VSA Arts (originally, Very Special Arts)

www.vsarts.org

National Endowment for the Arts

arts.endow.gov

National Arts and Disability Center

nadc.ucla.edu

International Center on Deafness and the Arts

www.icodaarts.org

Theatre Development Fund

www.tdf.org

Australia

Broughton Arts Society

www.communitywebs.org/BroughtonArtSociety/

Arts Access Australia

<http://www.artsaccessaustralia.org/>

Disability Arts Advocacy Project 2007

<http://history.dircsa.org.au/1900-1999/arts/>

Adelaide Festival Centre

www.adelaidefestivalcentre.com.au

International Disability Arts and Film Festivals

FilmPRO: Links with 90% of the international disability arts festivals currently in operation (www.filmpro.net).

Select Examples:

Deaffest celebrates and showcases the talents of Deaf media artists and film makers, from across the UK and overseas (www.deaffest.co.uk).

Breaking Down Barriers film festival organized by Perspektiva, a Russian non-governmental organization showcases 90 films: feature, documentary, short and long forms, public service announcements and animation (<http://festival-eng.perspektiva-inva.ru/>).

Emotion Pictures, the 1st International Documentary Festival on Disability Athens 2007, used the documentary as the medium, the concern of artists from all over the world on disability issues (<http://www.ameamedia.gr/en/node/67>).

International Disability Film Festival (Brazil): 243 film entries from 45 countries from all the continents including 68 from Brazil (www.assimvivemos.com.br).

Select Other International Initiatives:

Five Foot Feat

www.fivefootfeat.com

Pamoja Dance Group

<http://www.pamojadance.org/>

La Manga Video & Dance Co.

www.lamangavideoydanza.com

Tyst Teater of the Deaf

<http://tystteater.riksteatern.se/>

Back to Back Theatre

www.backtobacktheatre.com

Networks, Alliances, ASOs and Foundations

BC Regional Integrated Arts Network (BRIAN)

<http://www.kickstart-arts.ca/bc-regional-inclusive-arts-network/>

National Disability Arts Forum, UK

www.ndaf.org

International Guild of Disabled Artists and Performers, UK
www.igodap.org

Canadian arts Presenting Association (CAPACOA)
www.capacoa.ca

Canadian Network of Dance Presenters (CANDANCE)
www.candance.ca

Fado Performance Inc.
<http://performanceart.ca/>

Performance Creation Canada (PCC)
www.performancecreationcanada.ca

Association of Performing Arts Presenters
www.artspresenters.org

Association of Performing Arts Service Organizations (APASO)
<http://www.americaperforms.com/aboutapaso.html>

Professional Association of Canadian Theatres (PACT)
www.pact.ca

Theatre Ontario
www.theatreontario.org

Toronto Alliance of the Performing Arts (TAPA)
www.tapa.ca

Dance Umbrella of Ontario (DUO)
www.danceumbrella.net

Dance Ontario
www.danceontario.ca

BC Alliance for Arts & Culture
www.allianceforarts.com

The Dance Centre BC
www.thedancecentre.ca