



# *INNOVATION DIVERSITY*

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## *NEW APPROACHES OF CULTURAL ENCOUNTER IN EUROPE*



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A manual with insights, best practice portraits, ideas, a checklist and links  
in the inclusive performing arts and culture scene  
.....

ENRICHING CHANGE NEW  
INSPIRING INNOVATIVE  
OPEN-MINDED DIVERSITY  
MIXED-ABLED ART FREE  
THINKER IMPULSE VARIET  
PARTICIPATION CHANCES  
REVOLUTION DEVELOPMI  
FUTURE EVERYBODY  
SOCIETY ACCESS FLEXIBILI  
TY RESPECT TOLERANCE  
ACCEPTANCE POTENTIAL  
JOY PLEASURE EXPRESSION  
TRANSITION POLITICAL  
PASSION UNIQUENESS  
CURIOSITY AVANTGARDE  
PROFESSION QUALITY  
PIONEERS AESTHETICS  
ZEITGEIST VISIONARY  
COMMUNICATION BRAVE

## FOREWORD

Inclusion is an issue which intersects and affects all areas of life – including public as well as social institutions. By its ratification of the *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)* in 2009, Germany is committed to promoting and protecting the full and equal participation of persons with disabilities. This also applies to the field of culture!

There have been significant changes especially in passive participation within culture and the arts in the last few years. However, there remains a great deal to do in relation to accessibility. It is my impression that sensitivity towards people with different disabilities has improved in many ways, whether it be by the growing supply of sign language interpreters, audio descriptions, more legible lettering, or guided tours specifically for people with cognitive disabilities.

In the future, we should focus on increasing active participation in the arts and culture by encouraging the full realisation of the individual's creative and cultural potential. This opens up new dimensions for people with disabilities and creates experimental spaces in which perspectives can change. It will also encourage new forms of discussion as to what "disability" really means and how we define our concept of "standards".

The European project *Un-Label* has achieved this in an exemplary way through cooperation between artists of various disciplines and abilities in opening up and exploring aesthetic spaces. This shows how important new creative and inclusive approaches are.

The booklet you hold in your hands through the efforts of *Un-Label* combines scientific, political as well as practical concepts, which illuminate cultural participation in a variety of ways. The presentation of ten best practice portraits offers valuable insight into the varied work of European cultural professionals and encourages the development of projects of one's own with an inclusive context. The booklet also provides checklists and a list of European stakeholders, with practical suggestions.

It would please me greatly if this booklet helps to promote exchange and encounter, enabling further growth in the international network of inclusive cultural professionals. The development of art through inclusion makes an important contribution to innovative change, enriching us all and adding to the diversity of our cultural landscapes.

**Christina Kampmann**

Minister for Family, Children, Youth,  
Culture and Sport of the State of North  
Rhine-Westphalia  
(2015-2017)

## PROLOGUE

Page 2

# 1

## UN-LABEL

Page 13

### Foreword

*Christina Kampmann,*  
Minister for Family, Children,  
Youth, Culture and Sport,  
North-Rhine Westphalia

Page 3

### Intro

Page 6

Art, disability and excellence: the international creative case for inclusion

*Ben Evans*

Page 8

### Un-Label:

Insights into a groundbreaking international concept

*Lisette Reuter*

Page 16

### Un-Labeling Direction:

On directing an international, interdisciplinary and inclusive project. Methods and strategies in working with diversity in the arts sector

*Costas Lamproulis*

Page 23

### The political dimension of Un-Label

*Prof. Dr. Andreas Thimmel*

Page 27

Inclusive practice from a professional dancer's point of view – A plea for a re-think

*Wagner Moreira*

Page 30

### Overcoming difference

*Magali Saby*

Page 34

Communicative challenges for heterogeneous groups in cultural activities – Insights from assessments of Un-Label

*Anna Nutz & Judith Vitek*

Page 38

## 2 *BEST PRACTICES*

Page 45

Candoco Dance Company (UK)

*Joanne Lyons*

Page 46

ShareMusic & Performing Arts  
(Sweden)

*Sophia Alexandersson*

Page 52

Freie Republik HORA (Switzerland)

*Sarah Marinucci*

Page 58

DIN A 13 tanzcompany (Germany)

*Gerda König*

Page 64

Royal Conservatoire Antwerpen (Belgium)

*Kris De Visscher*

Page 70

Moomsteatern (Sweden)

*Per Törnqvist*

Page 76

Vo'Arte (Portugal)

*Rita Piteira*

Page 82

IntegrART (Switzerland)

*Emanuel Rosenberg, Susanne Schneider,  
Uma Arnese Pozzi, Gunda Zeeb*

Page 88

Fuori Contesto (Italy)

*Silvia Welleggia*

Page 94

Dançando com a Diferença  
(Portugal - Madeira)

*Diogo Gonçalves*

Page 100

## 3 *IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE ART*

Page 105

Making inclusive art work:

Beyond the cycle of dependence

*Joop Oonk & Mutsumi Karasaki*

Page 106

The three different perspectives  
of disability

*Ben Evans*

Page 110

Five fields of action for classifying  
cultural participation criteria –  
A glance at Switzerland

Page 112

Practical methods for inclusive  
cultural events

Page 114

Checklist for practical planning  
and the realisation of inclusive art  
programmes

Page 116

Contacts and networking –  
A compilation of European players  
in the performing arts sector

Page 120

## INTRO

Our world is characterised by difference. Twenty-first century globalisation has opened up territorial boundaries, and intercultural exchange is now an everyday occurrence. Society is becoming more heterogeneous by the day. It is not only impacted by such factors as demographics, migration movements and socio-economic crises, but also by changing values and expectations. Along with these, new challenges are emerging for politics, the economy and civil society. It is of paramount importance to respond to these with competency, innovation, flexibility and tolerance, so as to enable a respectful symbiosis. Cultural opportunities have a special potential to function as a medium that is reflective of society.

Given current claims to diversity, it is striking that in the past, within the arts and culture sector, people with disabilities were barely represented, if at all. This meant the effective exclusion of an entire group within society, affecting both artistic creators and art appreciators.

This manual has been compiled in the context of the international project *Un-Label – New Grounds for inclusive Performing Arts*. Together, the wide variety of contributions from different perspectives present a comprehensive overview of the two-year model programme. In addition, further projects and participants are introduced who have made it their task to increase awareness of the great diversity in our society, to take difference as the norm and value it as a source of productive creativity. Attention is drawn here to the professional artistic work of people with disabilities, but also the difficulties they face in participating.

People with special physical, psychological or mental challenges are shaping projects and enriching them by utilizing unconventional means of artistic expression. Through a creative process geared to a wide range of participants, innovative concepts are emerging which are dismantling and reforming visual conventions. In a unique way, with its contributions from various European countries this manual displays the spectrum of multiple social attitudes and institutions, but also voices the shared desire for an inclusive, diversified society.

Through the guidelines of the UNESCO Convention of 2005 on the protection and promotion of the variety of cultural forms of expression, for more than 10 years there has even been a global political appeal calling for the right to culture for all<sup>1</sup>.

The implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2006 has given concrete form to the universal demand that all existing human rights should also apply to the situation of people with so-called disabilities. This

<sup>1</sup> Articles 4, 5 and 6 of the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity

major agreement constitutes an important step in strengthening the rights of more than a billion people with disabilities worldwide. In Article 30 there is particular emphasis on the concept of cultural participation. The signatory states have committed themselves to creating favourable conditions for people with disabilities, so that they can participate in cultural activities, being provided appropriate access to develop their artistic potential.

Despite these major worldwide agreements, many, in some cases country-specific, hurdles stand in the way of full implementation. It is therefore still a matter of engaging in pioneering work with commitment and professional artistic effort, so as to implement lasting inclusive formats as a fixed entity in both subculture and advanced culture.

As projects were submitted while compiling this manual, we observed that dance in particular has recognised the potential of inclusive work, appreciating new forms of expression as an enrichment of the movement repertoire. In selecting our best practice examples however, we tried to reflect the breadth of the various specialinterest performative arts.

In addition to the introduction to *Un-Label!* and the 10 best practice portraits, you also have in your hands information on current criteria for the dismantling of barriers as well as a checklist designed as an aid to your own practical planning and execution of future projects.

This manual concludes with a compilation of European stakeholders who have made a name for themselves as experts and key figures in the inclusive culture scene.

It is our fervent hope that this collection will grow and that further culture-makers will discover inclusive work for themselves. For cooperation and mutual enrichment of experience are important factors in strengthening the inclusive performance scene across Europe.

We wish you much inspiration for more inclusivity in art and culture!

**The Un-Label editors**

# ART, DISABILITY AND EXCELLENCE: THE INTERNATIONAL CREATIVE CASE FOR INCLUSION

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Something remarkable is happening in Europe. More and more, the arts sector is realising that long-stated commitments to greater diversity in the arts need to be implemented. Funders, citizens and governments are demanding this, but arts organisations themselves are increasingly understanding the value of an inclusive arts environment. It is an amazing time to be working on European projects seeking to increase access to the arts for disabled people as artists and as audiences.

I am particularly fortunate to work for an organisation, the *British Council*, which has a proud record of supporting disabled artists. The *British Council* is the United Kingdom's international organisation for education and cultural opportunity. We use the arts to build relationships between people, in the belief that the arts are one of the best ways to gain an insight into other cultures.

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For years the *British Council* has supported the very best disabled artists. As and when British disabled artists have made international-quality work they have often been supported by us to build international careers. A glimpse at our most recent Theatre & Dance showcase, the biennial *British Council Edinburgh Showcase*<sup>1</sup>, saw us promote to programmers from around the world, five productions by disabled artists within a list of only thirty in total. They were chosen not because of a political agenda, but because the quality and innovation of the productions placed them amongst the very best works within that competitive field.

We promote this work because the United Kingdom is fortunate to have a *Disability Arts* sector which is vibrant, which produces excellent work, and which has developed a community of arts professionals who are not only supportive of each other, but also constructively critical. It is something to be proud of.

But the vibrant arts community and the excellence of a current generation of disabled artists is not a historical accident. It would be wrong for this work to be seen in a vacuum.

The *Disability Arts* movement in the United Kingdom has a 40-year history as an artistic movement, but also as a political movement. *Shape Arts* was one of the first UK organisations to address the fact that disabled people were very rarely seen in Britain's galleries, theatres, concert halls and cinemas. Disabled people were rare as audiences, spectators and visitors, but almost unknown as artists and arts managers.

Tony Heaton, Shape Arts' Chief Executive states: "*It is important to remember that Disability Arts started in Britain and it was part of a struggle for civil rights.*" Jenny Sealey, Artistic Director of *Grange Theatre*, one of the leading Disabled Theatre companies in Britain suggests: "*Back in the 80s, if you were marginalised what you did then, politically, was you set up your own company (...) We started developing performances for each other, and over a period of years really, we started to get braver and much more confident that what we had to show was good. We stepped out into the more mainstream world and said, 'Excuse me, we've got stories to tell'.*"

The complex relationship between art and politics which represents the British Disability Arts movement has been explored by artists and advocates such as Jenny, Tony and many others. For now, it is enough to say that like all great art movements, an understanding of the social, political and personal history are vital to any investigation of the artistic work itself.

<sup>1</sup> The *British Council's biennial Edinburgh Showcase* is the single biggest opportunity for UK theatre companies to introduce their work to international promoters. The programme comprises new work that represents the very best of contemporary theatre and dance, reflecting the breadth and diversity of British performing arts.

## THE CREATIVE CASE FOR DIVERSITY

Quality is at the heart of our work with disabled artists. However, it would be wrong to say that we support disabled artists “despite” their disability. In fact, we acknowledge that diversity is one of the creative opportunities of our time.

In 2011 England’s arts funder, *Arts Council England*, published *The Creative Case for Diversity* – an incredibly useful way of thinking about diversity in the arts in the widest sense. This *Creative Case* sits in contrast to other, earlier, ways of thinking about the subject: the *Moral Case* and the *Legal Case*.

*The Moral Case* for Diversity in the Arts says that it is morally right that disabled people have equal access to the arts. If we believe that everyone should have the opportunity to benefit from the life-enhancing role of art, then we extend that to disabled people. Art for all is a good thing.

*The Legal Case*, certainly in the United Kingdom, is framed within the legal rights of disabled people to have access to goods and services. In 1995, the UK government passed the *Disability Discrimination Act*. This said that employers and service providers were, for the first time, under a duty to make ‘reasonable adjustments’ to their workplaces and services to overcome barriers experienced by disabled people. Employers, shops, theatres and galleries could be taken to court by individuals who felt they were unfairly discriminated against. In the arts, this had a major impact in the funding decisions and contract agreements made by arts funders and other statutory bodies involved in supporting all arts organisations. Access to the arts for disabled people was no longer just a ‘good thing’, but a legal right. Legislation is different around the world and is constantly adapting, but in Europe this *Legal Case* is increasingly important for governments, citizens, and for funded arts organisations.

The *Creative Case for Diversity*, however, sets out how diversity and equality can enrich the arts for artists, audiences and our wider society.

For me, the *Creative Case* makes a number of important assertions.

- Artists with unique experiences of and perspectives on the world make new and unique art.
- Explorations of difference or 'the other' help us all understand the complex society in which we live.
- Disabled artists are making idiosyncratic work designed to disrupt.

For example, I believe that no serious dance promoter, interested in the way the human body moves and travels in space, can ignore those leading disabled dance artists who have different bodies, and different ways of moving in space. I believe that visually impaired visual artists, for example, who use their unique perspective on the world to create exceptional art, bring to the art form something which has not been seen before in our galleries. And I believe that disabled musicians using digital technology to adapt musical instruments are developing new and innovative music which is changing the way that all musicians look at digital instruments.

These artists are not just making new works with interesting content which has never been seen before. They are challenging the form itself. So much so that the acclaimed visual artist, Yinka Shonibare, describes *Disability Arts* as "*the last remaining avant-garde movement*".

The *British Council* wants to see more of this radical and innovative work across Europe. We believe that all audiences and all artists will benefit from the challenge to form offered by disabled artists. We have just launched a new website and regular newsletter, [www.disabilityartsinternational.org](http://www.disabilityartsinternational.org) which aims to inform about the most exciting disabled artists in Europe, and to offer resources and information to the arts professional seeking to make his or her venue or event more accessible to disabled people.

We are currently inviting disabled artists from around the world to create profiles to promote their work. We're not doing anything radical ourselves, but rather shining a light on a bold vein of arts activity which has been growing in strength in the United Kingdom and across Europe for many years.

## PROVOCATION

The *Disability Arts movement* has developed through provocation and challenge to the status quo so I am going to allow myself to end with two key provocations I believe should be considered by all good arts organisations:

- What are you doing to address the barriers preventing disabled people from achieving fully equal access to the arts as audiences and as artists?
- What are you doing to ensure the arts benefit from the aesthetic challenge to form offered by disabled artists?

As you develop answers, do let us know. Let's share this responsibility, and revel in the remarkable new art being made.

**Author: Ben Evans,**  
Head of Arts & Disability, European Union Region,  
*British Council*

For further information:  
[www.disabilityartsinternational.org](http://www.disabilityartsinternational.org)

*1*

*UN-LABEL*

# Un-Label

[NEW INCLUSIVE DIRECTIONS  
FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS]

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*"Labels aren't necessarily a bad thing if we don't stick to them. Apparently, we label everything. It is part of our human nature. First we label. Then we look to understand and connect. The more we connect, the more we un-label. The more we un-label the more we connect..."*





ARTISTIC  
DISCIPLINES

Interdisciplinary  
Symposia

Artistic education and training

• • • • •

TARGET GROUP

Emerging professional performers from  
all artistic disciplines with and without  
disabilities from all over Europe; broad  
audience with and without disabilities,  
actors and networks of the  
inclusive cultural sector



Photo: © Yilmaz Ulus

# UN-LABEL INSIGHTS INTO A GROUNDBREAKING INTERNATIONAL CONCEPT

<sup>1</sup> *Un-Label* is a cooperation project between *Sommertheater Pustelume e.V.* (Germany), *SMouTh* (Greece), *SKYGD* (Turkey), *Can: doco Dance Company* (UK) and *TH Köln* (Germany). It is co-financed by the *EU Program Creative Europe*.

<sup>2</sup> Deaf artists, artists with cognitive impairments, with physical disabilities, visual impairment and learning difficulties took part in the activities.

The international cultural project *Un-Label* with partners from Germany, England, Greece and Turkey<sup>1</sup> has set itself the task of highlighting the multifaceted potential of emerging professional performers with and without disabilities from all over Europe by bringing together different abilities and various cultural influences.

As an interdisciplinary and inclusive project, *Un-Label* was formed to encourage an open collective of artists from dance, theatre, music, acrobatics and poetry, with an emphasis on diversity rather than disability. It is the first of its kind at a European level.

Each human being is unique and seeks individual forms of expression in order to grow and develop throughout life.

*Un-Label* represents this diversity and considers it as an opportunity for innovation and expressive pluralism.

Together with 100 artists from more than 12 countries with different abilities, specialties<sup>2</sup>, cultural backgrounds and needs, we started a research journey full of artistic inspiration and human enrichment over a period of two years. A journey across frontiers with the aim of developing new inclusive and innovative possibilities in the performing arts. Our goal was to reduce barriers and enable equal participation in art and culture for everyone. The realisation of this was through various workshops, an artistic residency and a large multidisciplinary theatre



production, which has since been presented as a national and international guest performance at festivals and on theatre stages around Europe. An essential part of *Un-Label* consists of the organisation of international symposia for establishing a European network, in which new ways of cooperation can be explored and developed.

The lack of equal access is often still the biggest barrier for people with disabilities wishing to participate in cultural life. But the arts and cultural sector especially, has enormous potential for implementing best practices for equal opportunities - which, in the end, could set pioneering new trends with very positive social implications.

With *Un-Label* we aimed to create an innovative project, offering artists with and without disabilities the chance to develop their artistic abilities together and to learn new skills from each other. This project supports the cross-border mobility of the artists, facilitating access to professional job opportunities. The key stimulus for our work is the fact that cultural diversity leads to a more interesting, more innovative and more meaningful art. Beyond labels and pigeonholes, inclusive cultural work provides interaction with so many different people and creates space for creative cooperation. It involves mutual exchange for various forms of artistic expression and unconventional implementation strategies, but also communication with connecting and separating elements, enabling the creation of something entirely new.

Established concepts of body, space, world and society are critically examined, so that an extension of the traditional criteria in contemporary art becomes possible. New and highly interesting artistic and aesthetic approaches have thus been created. Cultural work also becomes the springboard for important socio-political discourse on diversity, which is more important now than ever, given the current political and social climate.



Photo: © Yilmaz Ulus

# PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION

## UN-LABEL WORKSHOPS:

In the course of the project, *Un-Label* has organised interdisciplinary workshops for artists with or without disabilities at European level. The workshops, that took place 2015 and 2016 in Germany, Greece and Turkey, were carried out by an international mixed-abled group of artists, who had previously participated together in a five-day training workshop in Cologne, Germany. The concept and methodology for the inclusive workshops were developed together with the artistic management team. The seminar enabled the artists to organise the following workshops by themselves, at home and abroad.

During these workshops, in which 100 artists with and without disabilities from more than 12 countries participated, the coaches showed how the different methods from the field of the performing arts can be used in inclusive settings. So together, we developed new inclusive avenues for artistic expression.

One artist describes her impressions during these workshops as follows: *"The close collaboration with artists with disabilities has given me a lot of creative input and this enriching experience will accompany me my whole life."*

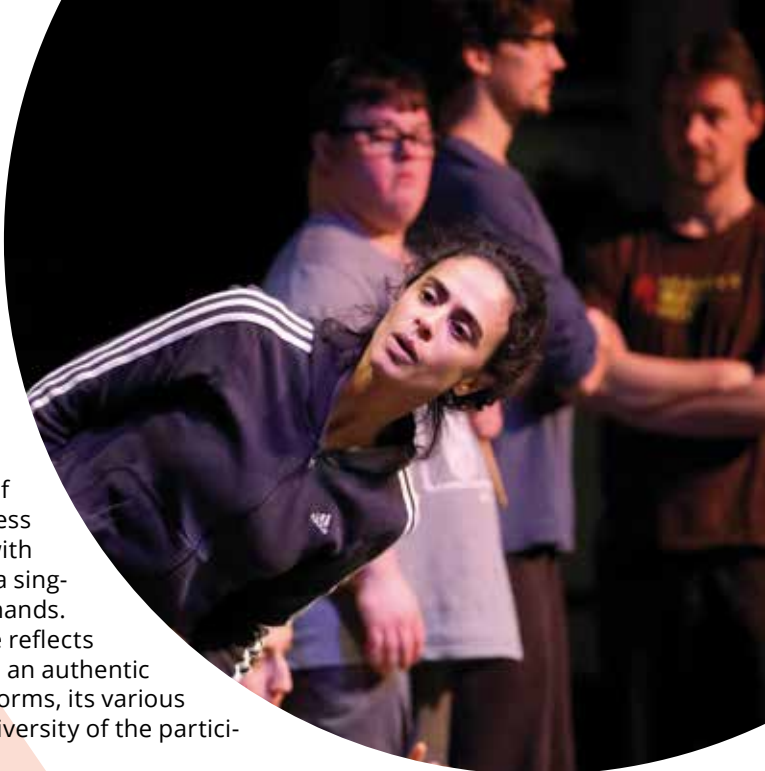
## THE UN-LABEL PRODUCTION:

After the completion of the workshops, the ensemble members for the production were selected from the whole group of artists. The artistic achievements of the previous workshops influenced and shaped the one-month artistic residency, which took place in the spring of 2016 in Cologne. There we developed the multidisciplinary theatre production *"L"*, which provided answers to the question *Do I need Labels to Love?*



Photo: © Yilmaz Ulus

The composition of the Un-Label company as a whole is rather unusual. The 16 international stage artists, from dance, theatre, music, acrobatics and poetry, come from Belgium, Brazil, Germany, France, Greece, Sweden, the Czech Republic and Turkey. Moreover, our ensemble has a deaf dancer, deaf acrobat, an actress with a wheelchair, a dancer with Down's syndrome as well as a singer with artificial legs and no hands. The production "L", therefore reflects our heterogeneous society in an authentic way with its cross-genre art forms, its various languages and the physical diversity of the participating artists.



We celebrated the premiere of the piece in six sold-out performances within the international *Sommerblut Kulturfestival* in Cologne in May 2016. We subsequently went on tour as a guest performance at internationally renowned theatres in the countries of our project partners in Greece and Turkey in the autumn of 2016 and the spring of 2017.

We felt it was important that the performances at home and abroad should be accessible to all. The performance therefore included multilingual voice narration, sign language and projected subtitles in the national language of the venue. With the additional aid of synchronous audio descriptions, blind and visually impaired persons were also able to follow the entire performance. The piece was thus able to overcome language barriers for the entire audience.

## UN-LABEL SYMPOSIA:

The *Un-Label* symposia were a further, essential part of the project. These took place together with the respective performances as a reflective framework programme in Germany<sup>3</sup>, Greece and Turkey. Through the organisation of these symposia a platform was created, on which active exchange between artists and stakeholders from the field of culture, science and politics was initiated. Tried and tested diversity approaches and methods, as well as social and political dimensions from

<sup>3</sup> The German Symposium was a collaboration of *Un-Label, ibk e.V., intakt e.V.* and *Sommerblut Kulturfestival e.V.*



various European countries were presented and discussed. It was debated how cultural institutions and stakeholders open up to diversity, how concepts of high quality can be designed, tested and implemented at the European level.

The entire project with workshops, production and symposia, was academically overseen by the *Faculty of Applied Social Sciences* at the *TH Köln/University of Applied Sciences*.

*Un-Label's* activities demonstrated the potential of persons with disabilities at the European level, and this has stimulated an important social dialogue. Through the cooperation of various project partners, synergies have been created, expertise has been pooled and a space for encounters and exchanges has developed. This is leading to new innovative and visionary approaches for the promotion of artists with and without disabilities, who have not hitherto been seen in the current European cultural landscape.

All partner countries have ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which guarantees full participation and equal opportunities to all people with disabilities. *Un-Label* gave us the chance to obtain very concrete, country-specific insights. The comparative examination with the various situations of each respective partner country in relation to their implementation of inclusion in the fields of society, infrastructure and funding policy have been very informative. The reality is that, compared with Germany and the UK, countries like Greece and Turkey have offered very little in the way of inclusive access and practices in the cultural sector. Also, the differences in infrastructural conditions, such as public transport, urban planning measures and barrier-free hotel rooms, are striking. Hence, persons with disabilities are rarely visible in social and public life and opportunities for participation are very limited.

This may be due to the fact that most countries focus on inclusion on the basis of the medical model of disability. A look at the UK, on the other hand, shows that assistance for people with disabilities can be successfully enshrined in the cultural sector, and in the arts diversity can be regarded as an enhancement.

In Germany, inclusion has been particularly discussed in the education sector in recent decades. Governmental and social institutions forced cultural work into the social corner. Unfortunately, in many cases this led to delays in observing the artistic quality of inclusive art and cultural work and placing them in a professional and artistic context.

A gradual awakening and change can be perceived across Europe. Funding institutions, cultural and training locations are starting to open up a new direction, in which the diversity of society is respected and supported as well as innovative inclusive approaches. This trend is bound to evolve and further enrich our art and culture.

In only two years, *Un-Label* was able to become an internationally recognized brand and to set up a successful dynamic European network of artists and organisations. The intensive and professional use of social and digital media has really paid off. More than 1.5 million people have been reached so far through press work and public relations. We produced our own media, using additional services from other institutions. We are also proud that *Un-Label* was awarded second prize in the first *German Inclusion Award* announced by the *Paul-und-Käthe-Kraemer Foundation*.

This overwhelming and enthusiastic Europe-wide response to *Un-Label* has clearly shown that it is necessary to promote inclusive projects more strongly in the field of culture and to drive forward research in cultural studies, because ultimately *Un-Label* can only be a source of inspiration.

There is an urgent need to create and enhance stable networks among key stakeholders, to offer training and further education programmes for cultural operators as well as professionalisation opportunities for artists with disabilities, who have very limited access to academic artistic education or other professional training opportunities. This could cover any current needs with the goal of developing and furthering accessibility of the performing arts and to provide new innovative opportunities for the equal participation of artists and audience.



Photo: © Meyer Originals



## WHAT ARE UN-LABEL'S GOALS IN THE FUTURE?

Our wish is to continue our artistic and socially pioneering work, which has already accomplished much, even after the project phase has ended. Un-Label created an international inclusive platform enabling and supporting the artistic work of people with and without disabilities at a high professional level. In the future, for example, an interdisciplinary mixed-abled company could be established, offering artistic training and workshops on a regular basis and supporting artists with and without disabilities in their professionalisation. Approaches in the area of further training for cultural operators may be initiated in the field of inclusion. Of course, a prerequisite for that is secure financial support. The next major project has already been applied for...

**Author: Lisette Reuter**

Concept, Head of management and producer of *Un-Label*

For further information, visit:

[www.un-label.eu](http://www.un-label.eu)

[facebook.com/un.label.eu/](https://facebook.com/un.label.eu/)

### OUR VISION:

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That *Un-Label* will be seen, heard and experienced by far more people in the future – beyond all categories, pigeonholes and labels.



# UN-LABELLING DIRECTION

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## ON DIRECTING AN INTERNATIONAL, INTERDISCIPLINARY AND INCLUSIVE PROJECT

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### METHODS AND STRATEGIES FOR WORKING WITH DIVERSITY IN THE ARTS SECTOR

It is reasonable - to say the least - that the contemporary performing arts can be seen as the epitome of collective expression. But if we want to see these kinds of creative activities in a much broader creative context with unlimited expressive impulses inspired by diversity, we should take a closer look at the forms and methods of an interdisciplinary, intercultural and inclusive production, just like *Un-Label*, a vast universe of inexhaustible creative stimuli waiting to be composed.

Performing arts are based on composition. No matter which art form we choose. Even if we limited our choice to only one, we would face dissimilarities that we would need to connect, to combine, to compose. Image, sound, music, space, speech, movement, light, dark, communication... ideas, truths, opinions, prejudices, approaches ... diversity, multiplicity, the unknown and the impossible... challenges! Obviously, one single challenge is enough to ignite the creative coexistence of people in the performing arts. But this very coexistence automatically creates more challenges, which multiply and grow during the process; and as they do, so does the creative verve. Imagine what happens, when people from different artistic disciplines meet with people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, speaking different languages, communicating and expressing themselves in different ways, and sometimes not even being able to interpret each other's means of expression. It may sound chaotic, but this exciting pandemonium may generate a genuine, coherent and meaningful performance.



Photo: © Firat Bingöl

## THE INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

From theatre to dance-theatre and contemporary music-theatre, the coexistence of various performing arts on stage is an increasingly common phenomenon. However, in most cases, the weight of the narrative line or thematic framework falls into one of the art forms and the rest are there in a supporting and aesthetical role. What characterises an interdisciplinary performance is the equal relationship of the arts on stage and an approach that allows each art form to take the lead in the definition of the frame.

The basic idea behind this process is to allow spontaneous stage creation, which, through one of the performing arts, attempts to autonomously tell a story or express a situation or a feeling. Essentially, we are

not starting from a script or a libretto – although a text can be the motive – but from a certain key idea that we dismantle and work with in small parts, sometimes individually, at other

times in separate art discipline groups, and sometimes in interdisciplinary groups. What is certainly very interesting and efficient in this practice is to let the art forms engage in an equal dialogue and so trigger performing elements that one person alone could never create from a piece of paper or in a rehearsal studio.

But the most daring element of this process is to allow artists to express themselves quite freely, with their own means and following their own aesthetic approach, knowing that this should happen with

every co-creator and then, during the composition, to find common ground that not only respects the personal investment of all concerned,

but equally includes the elements of their creativity in order to make the artistic product their own.



Photo: © Yilmaz Ulus



## *THE INTERCULTURAL APPROACH*

Putting the different art forms in an open, equal dialogue is rather like placing people of different cultures who speak different languages, in a debate on a critical issue. Almost always, the difficulty lies not only in the restrictions of expression and understanding, but also – and mostly – in the definition of the subject itself, since everybody will perceive the subject differently. As in any dialogue, the intercultural approach should begin with a willingness to pay attention, listen and understand. And as agreement is not a necessary element of a debate but, on the contrary, disagreement is the element that makes the debate more interesting and sparkling. During the creative process, the plethora of opinions and different approaches is what enriches the artistic product, providing identity, originality and significance.

In fact, the combination of two “complicated” situations – working interdisciplinarily and interculturally – makes things easier than might be presumed. Because finally, in a multicultural environment, arts are the ultimate tool of communication and make people feel more connected and comfortable. So, if there were a key to unlock efficiency in these cases, it would be to avoid excessive verbal communication and analysis and let the artists approach the subject in practice.

## *THE INCLUSIVE APPROACH*

Art is a perpetual quest for identity. By redefining our truths, our needs, our beliefs and our perceptions, we constantly redefine our position and our perspective in our living environments. By shaping new forms, we recognise new norms and contest them as soon as they are defined. Art looks for “the other” not to discriminate against it or to distinguish it, but to include it; because otherness is an integral part of the creative act. In an era in which our “inclusive” societies fail to include their members, inclusion in the arts is no longer a choice but a necessity. The work of a mixed-abled group of artists is not to highlight the everyday problems that people with disabilities encounter or to wag a finger at society’s wrong choices, but to fill the gap of ignorance with new expressive tools, by enriching our creative vocabulary.

Working with different physicalities, confronting sensory challenges, defying the forms and working mostly out of comfort zones, demands more effort, more time and a lot of personal investment and confidence. So it is of paramount importance to install a framework of respect, security and freedom, where otherness is the most common ground. Once this is achieved, the creative beast is unleashed.



Photo: © Yilmaz Ulus

In the origin of our quest with *Un-Label* there lies one question: "Can there be identity without otherness?" What we now know is that working together makes us unique in such a way that we might rephrase the question as: "Can there be creativity without otherness?" Diversity is a unique field of exploration and inspiration. Enjoy it!

**Author: Costas Lamproulis,**  
Concept and Artistic Director of *Un-Label*

# THE POLITICAL DIMENSION OF UN-LABEL

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The European cultural project *Un-Label* stands for inclusion, internationalism and democracy. It is considered a role model and a good example for how it brings the kind of broadened perspective needed to overcome barriers and differences and the strategies for its realisation. "Human" projects like *Un-Label* support the idea and reality of European integration more than the measures taken by the world of regulation that has dominated matters in the EU in recent decades. *Un-Label* is therefore a bold manifesto, representing a reasonable antipole to the discourses and practices of inequality, nationalism, hate and discrimination. The project emphasises a focus on human rights, the concept of an open society and the recognition of difference. Within *Un-Label*, this is not only an exemplary assertion; rather, it is a reality which makes the whole project much more efficient and credible.

In order that *Un-Label* could be achieved and completed successfully, some pioneers, organisers and artists were needed to create this bold vision. It took considerable effort on the part of all stakeholders, in an awareness that this project is a journey into an unknown field of power, discourse and communication.

At the beginning of the project in the year 2015 nobody could have guessed that political tensions and rifts would start within the EU and the countries involved, like Turkey, Germany, Greece and Great Britain. Turkey is challenging its own democracy and freedom of expression. Also, the discursive and practical political shift from human rights policies and a culture of welcome to policies for deportation, closure and security in the Federal Republic of Germany was not a badge of honour for Germany. In 2015 the idea for the realization of the project was brave and bold. Now, in 2017, the political conditions from an open society's point of view have deteriorated greatly, so the success of *Un-Label* was particularly important; also important is the fact that with their efforts the participants have crossed national, linguistic, cultural, physical and cognitive boundaries. If diversity is considered the standard case within *Un-Label*, then standards for normality as well as politically and religiously stipulated normativity would lose their fascination for power and mastery over the individual. This is an important prerequisite for a world of empowered citizens.

## HOW CAN THIS HIGH STANDARD BE MAINTAINED?

*Un-Label* creates close communication and working cohesiveness between people from several European countries. It brings people with and without disability and from various artistic disciplines – like music, dance, theatre, poetry and acrobatics – together. The essential part is the encounter and communication through the medium of art and the relation to the persons involved as autonomous subjects. The stakeholders pursue at least the following three objectives, or rather work on the following three areas:

The first objective relates to the artists' own artistic development and further progression by promoting education based on self-determination and participation for individuals. Secondly, it is evident that the individual's artistic activities are intensively involved in the interaction of the group, in the interests of social and democratic learning. Viewing others as persons, recognition and respect for the others are constitutive for the joint work, for the artistic process and the product. Thirdly, from a societal perspective the group experience will be extended in at least two areas. On the one hand, presumed or actual borders between nationalities, ethnic or religious affiliation in the cultural context and the joint work become more flexible. An experience of reflexive interculturality<sup>1</sup> and reflexive internationality is created. On the other hand, the various lines of difference such as gender, artistic discipline and professionalism as well as the form and degree of disability has become the daily norm and the constant mirror. This reflection and educational experience leads, not to confusion, but rather to an outstanding artistic work by the collective.

The project offered the opportunity to expand the horizon of experience and to question and better understand social and political developments. The workshops in particular provided many opportunities for intense encounters and exchange. The participants learned, for example, that people in Turkey have to overcome more obstacles than people who have made their home in Germany. This is because of the differences in legal claims for certain social benefits, the specific promotions of persons with physical or mental disabilities and the

<sup>1</sup> Term was coined by Franz Hamburger, professor emeritus for social pedagogy in Mainz

implementation of accessibility. A German participant said: "Pushing a wheelchair along the hilly, bumpy and steep roads of Istanbul took us, as a group, to our limits." And the supposedly wheelchair-accessible room in Greece that had no step-free access to the bathroom clearly demonstrates the challenges. But also in Germany we discovered contradictions between the progressive inclusion agenda and reality in administration, economy and society.

During de-briefing talks with the participants of the *Un-Label* workshops many of those involved said that this was the first time they had worked with people with disabilities. They expressed their appreciation of the experience of this encounter and the shared learning. It was noted that the focus was not placed on the topic of disability during the workshops, but during the period of reflection it became a key component and inclusive culture work was regarded as an exceptional occurrence. Some of the participants have also repeatedly made the point that they simply could not have imagined that this cultural project would work with such a heterogeneous group. These observations from the power of prejudice, of ignorance and partial knowledge relate to the structuring power of political and media discourses, and must be met by concrete practices in order to change the conversation, as shown with *Un-Label*.

It is also important to note that the *L - Do I need Labels to Love?* piece developed during the project is a highly political piece of art. It questions established gender stereotypes and brings on stage persons who have been disabled or stigmatised by society. It is entirely similar with "*unlabel*" that the audience is stimulated to question the labels they consciously or unconsciously apply to people in various situations. By not drawing attention to the different national and cultural roots of the artists and the entire team of *Un-Label*, it offers not only an important contribution to social inclusion policies but also a strong statement against nationalism.

**Author: Prof. Dr. Andreas Thimmel,**  
Leader of the research unit Non-Formal Education  
Faculty of Applied Social Sciences  
at the TH Köln / University of Applied Sciences

# INCLUSIVE PRACTICE FROM A PROFESSIONAL DANCER'S POINT OF VIEW

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## A PLEA FOR A RE-THINK

For me it is the changes of perspective that motivate my work with the functionality of diversified movement. It is a great help to me as a performer to study different bodies, whether disabled or non-disabled, within the performing arts. It helps me rethink current dancing standards and inspires me to develop new choreographic and educational approaches that aid movement in a manner appropriate to the demands made on the individual's particular physique.

For the *Un-Label* project, I worked in several roles. As assistant for directing and choreography, as a coach and also as a professional contemporary dancer, I had the opportunity to analyse various forms of bodywork, techniques, and composition from different perspectives. My observations informed my research study *C.O.R.E. – Creating Opportunities of Research & Explorations* in the context of my artistic Master Class programme at *Palucca University* in Dresden.

Since 2009, I've had a hip impingement<sup>1</sup>. The surgery changed forever how I view my own body. I studied the structure and function of the pelvis intensively and since then I have been trying to find the best and most efficient ways of using the hip joint in my movements, using it to its best possible effect. During the *Un-Label* project, I had a wonderful opportunity to deepen my research into the diversity of movement possibilities<sup>2</sup>.

While engaged in inclusive work with *Un-Label* it quickly became apparent that each human body is unique and as such, each situation requires a different approach. There are, of course, basic forms and principles in dance which academically trained dancers adhere to. However, we should bear in mind that the performance of a particular movement can take a variety of forms. My observations of different performers with and without disabilities have shown, for example, that the relation between mobility and stability plays an important role in partner work.

<sup>1</sup> Pincer impingement or femoral acetabular impingement syndrome (FAIS) is a condition in which the femoral head impinges on the hip socket. If left untreated, it has been reported to be associated with progressive osteoarthritis of the hip.

<sup>2</sup> The full observation results can be read in my research study *C.O.R.E. – Creating Opportunities of Research & Explorations*, which I carried out within the frame in the context of my artistic Master Class programme at the *Palucca University* in Dresden.

This insight prompted the question of how much stability is needed to achieve optimum mobility and at what point stability loses its stabilising function and instead acts more like a blockage, impeding fluidity of movement. The first task was to find the centre of balance in one's own body as well as in the partner with a disabled body. During the workshops and the performance preparations for *Un-Label* I was able to study in practice how the body can be supported by contact with one's partner, providing stability as well as added mobility for both dancers.

The exploration of mutual balance while partnering took place in a long process of continual experimentation and subsequent discussion. We used simple techniques of "contact improvisation" like the "rolling point of contact"<sup>3</sup> to develop awareness of the force of weight, to train shifting the centre of gravity, and to recognise the impulses of a movement "in balance" or "off-balance"<sup>4</sup>. The "rolling point" technique produces a dynamic play with balance in the field of tension between stability and mobility as the partners move as one body, remaining in constant physical contact. As they swing, turn, roll, and later "fly and fall", the partners establish a mutual centre, paying close attention to each other or supporting each other physically. The goal is to train sensory perception and the reflexes and extend the range of mobility. In addition, this method helps them learn to release unnecessary physical tension and use muscular strength efficiently.

The performance with Magali Saby, a French actor and dancer in a wheelchair, focused on the shifting of two joined bodies in space. It is an exploration of the way in which each system, individually as well as together, organises itself in space. The abilities and limitations of the two bodies moved in mutual balance or were united in a symbolic system. At times, one adapted to the other, and sometimes the bodies complemented each other. The focus was not on the limitations of the two bodies, but on discovering the other person's capabilities.

It became clear to me quite early on that my previous definition of disability was in need of fundamental reform. Until then, for me, it was always associated with fragility and sickness. I noticed in myself a tendency to fear contact with people with disabilities and even a disinclination to face myself and my hip problem. Precisely through our intense exchange and artistic engagement with different bodies during the workshops in Cologne, Larissa and Istanbul I came to an important realisation: Disability is not an illness!

<sup>3</sup> Contact improvisation was originally developed by Steve Paxton, Nancy Stark Smith and Daniel Lepkoff et al. as a dance technique in which points of physical contact provide the starting point for exploration through movement for professional dancers and choreographers.

<sup>4</sup> Dancing in balance and off-balance is a principle involving tipping, hanging, leaning, and intentionally seeking destabilisation of balance.



"I'm not sick!" Magali told me emphatically, when I was extremely cautious in trying out special movements in our partnering work. She grabbed her foot strongly and roughly, moved her head and torso to and fro, and threw herself on the floor, repeating: "I am not sick!"



This moment left a deep impression on me because it demonstrated with utter clarity that my previous understanding of disability was completely wrong. I had to rethink things, reorientate myself and grasp the fact that it makes no difference whether your partner does or doesn't have a disability and that there is no need to treat him or her with excessive caution.

Yavuz Dikbiyik is a precise and virtuoso dancer who uses a wheelchair. I was so impressed by his movements during our four-day *Un-Label* workshop at *Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University* in Istanbul. His legs are completely paralysed, unlike Magali Saby's.

He therefore mainly uses the upper part of the body, arms and pelvis. His range of movements includes some extremely demanding sequences. His movement possibilities are varied and marked by a high degree of mobility. His hip joint with its extreme flexibility in contrast to my hip constraint led us to a conceptual and dramaturgical development of our work together. We immediately started improvising and experimenting. We used technical, theatrical and playful elements like manipulation, visual reaction, adaptation, complementation, shifts and progression as we acquainted ourselves with each other and the choreographic composition.

<sup>5</sup> The term "floorwork" in dance refers to movements performed on the floor, requiring flexible joints, a relaxed body and attention to the kinaesthetic feedback of the floor.

We integrated floorwork techniques<sup>5</sup>, partnering with or without wheelchair as well as footballing into our elaborated duet, to communicate a feeling of mutual ease and appreciation. Yavuz's skilful use of his arms and hands, for example, allowed him to manipulate my leg with his hand to kick the ball, which made me a great goal-scorer. But there were also some funny competitive situations which we incorporated into our scenes. It was fascinating to observe that, despite his so-called disability, Yavuz definitely had an understanding of the strength



line and in particular for the dynamic forces in the legs and hip joint. He knew exactly how to use his movement capacities. The conscious use of strength, flexibility, skills, constraints, limitations and symbiotic extensions enabled us to create a duet about mobility, stability, difference, diversity and natural acceptance.

The meaning of the project title *Un-Label* has become firmly ingrained as a value in my thinking and has since been at the very centre of my work. Is it really necessary to categorize people by their abilities and inabilities, giving them labels? After all, aren't we all human beings with strengths and weaknesses, able or unable to do specific things?

I now understand the full meaning of the term "mixed-abled". With this wider understanding, I have gained a whole new access to my artistic and pedagogical work. My focus has been revolutionised as a result of my inclusive work experience. *Un-Label* has made it possible for me to look at my work from a new viewpoint and offers me new perspectives for movement, teaching as well as choreographing. Due to the inclusive interaction between body and movement a further dimension has been revealed to me, in which the function of movement is more important than the academically trained and normative aesthetics of dance as an art form. Through unexpected encounters I have gathered valuable inspiration for my continuing work, opening up to me a new perspective on the performing arts. Mixed-abled performers belong on the stage. They need to be researched artistically and their numerous talents need to be trained professionally.

**Author: Wagner Moreira,**  
Dancer, Choreographer, Artist  
of the *Un-Label Company*



Photo: © Firat Bingöl

# OVERCOMING DIFFERENCE

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As an artist in a wheelchair, I have always felt the desire to be able to develop myself professionally at the heart of my two artistic fields: dance and theatre.

I started dance and theatre at the age of eight. Unfortunately, I had to put them on hold due to health issues. Being in a situation of being disabled, I felt the need to do well, to excel. I have always been inspired by the origins of my difference, the strange mobility that I loathed for many years. I have been working with my subconscious memories, with movements that are chaotic, uncontrollable and involuntary, with spastic inflexibility as well as with muscle weakness. It is the contradiction of my pathology. For several years I felt locked inside that body, not knowing how to free myself. I think I needed to explore a physical vocabulary that was unfamiliar to me. From the beginning of this experimentation, several personal questions have preoccupied me. What does a “different body” mean? What is normal?

<sup>1</sup> Integrance, a project bringing together four professional inclusive companies from Belgium (*platform K*), England (*stopgap*), Scotland (*independen- dance*) and France (*micadanses*).

During my first dance courses, I never danced in my wheelchair. Always upright, on the ballet bar, with partner help or on the floor. For most people it seems paradoxical that a person in a wheelchair can suddenly stand up and dance a waltz with a partner. I wanted to use this as an advantage and create the sensation of being in the wheelchair but also of being upright or performing on the floor – depending on the artistic needs. Sometimes, however, I really felt that the wheelchair was like a straitjacket – it limited my movement.

<sup>2</sup> A German interdisciplinary production with an international and inclusive cast. *Verflüchtigung – Can there be identity without otherness?* was the precursor project of *Un-Label*.

In recent years, I have had the privilege of being engaged in multiple international projects such as Integrance<sup>1</sup>, Verflüchtigung<sup>2</sup> and *Un-Label*. The common goal of those projects was to bring together artists with and without disability. In retrospect, I would say that through *Un-Label* my consciousness altered. I gained a lot of confidence and developed artistically.



Photo: © Uwe Nimmrichter

All members of the cast were fully engaged in the process of creation. It was based heavily on improvisation and personality. We created a space of liberty, absolutely open to suggestions, proposals and ideas, without limitation. As such, the artists built the heart of the production and created the piece as a self-empowered team.

This philosophy also allowed me to implement something I have long aspired to – using my wheelchair in the service of the creation, for instance as an element of the set, as a prop, or as one of the dance partners in a pas de deux.



I felt an urgent need to liberate myself from the wheelchair and renew my artistic vocabulary. For the entire *Un-Label* performance I had no contact with the wheelchair on stage. With its altered function my perspective on my disability also changed and I even felt that the stage design successfully questioned the audience's preconceived ideas about "difference", too.

Before *Un-Label*, I could never have imagined a person in a wheelchair would be able to work with aerial silks or that a deaf dancer could breakdance to a precise musical rhythm. *Un-Label* made it possible.

For such a change in attitude to take place quite generally within the cultural system – enhancing opportunities but also recognising professional artists with disabilities and the high quality of their work – there needs to be a raft of urgent measures that confront prejudices, stereotypes and conventional practices. From my perspective, there is a glaring lack of appropriate educational opportunities. I would like to see more art, music and dance colleges opening their doors to people with disabilities. This year, the *Centre National de la Danse*<sup>3</sup> in cooperation with CEMAFORRE<sup>4</sup> took an important lead in creating and publishing numerous working materials on culture-specific topics in the context of inclusion. These are valuable tools for students and professional dancers with disabilities. Such initiatives are important first steps, but there is still a long way to go. There is a general need for our cultural institutions in Europe to open up and make their artistic programmes accessible to artistic creators with disabilities.

I have noticed, furthermore, that there is a fear of the unknown and the different other in the creative world. We might take the conventional audition as an example. It is noticeable that casting directors, theatre and film directors and choreographers are still very hesitant to employ an artist with a disability. They prefer to employ an able-bodied actor to act as a disabled person<sup>5</sup>. In my own experience I have attended numerous auditions to which I was invited on the basis of my curriculum vitae and photographs, but after revealing that I was a wheelchair user, I was politely turned down. I have to assume they do not dare to confront themselves, the team and the audience with a real disabled person. An unusual approach might bring uncertainties to the production and courage is required in taking new paths. But isn't that always the case when people work together?

It is surely long overdue for creative artists with and without disabilities to be employed on an equal basis. This is, in my view, what the contemporary stage should look like in the 21st century.

**Author: Magali Saby,**  
Actress and dancer  
of the *Un-Label Company*

**Co-Author: Max Greyson,**  
Poet of the *Un-Label Company*

<sup>3</sup> *Centre national de la Danse* (CN D) is an art center dedicated to dance located in France.

<sup>4</sup> *European Centre for accessibility in culture*  
Founded in 1985, the association CEMAFORRE aims to develop and promote access to leisure and culture for all, especially for people in difficulty for reasons of health or disability.

<sup>5</sup> e.g. François Cluzet in the film *Intouchables* or Marion Cotillard in the film *De rouille et d'Os*, etc.

# COMMUNICATIVE CHALLENGES FOR HETEROGENEOUS GROUPS IN CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

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## INSIGHTS FROM THE EVALUATION RESULTS OF UN-LABEL

*Un-Label* was academically monitored and evaluated by two graduates of the Master's course Pedagogy and Management in Social Work at the *TH Köln / University of Applied Sciences* (research unit Non-Formal Education).

This article provides an overview of the master's thesis with the title *"Interaction processes in a heterogeneously composed group in the context of art and culture"* by Anna Nutz and Judith Vitek.

The team of the interdisciplinary cultural project *Un-Label* is made up of a very heterogeneous group of people. It brought together persons with and without disabilities from different countries and various disciplines of the performing arts. They all share a passion for exchanging experiences and working together to create an innovative art project.

The heterogeneous nature of the team became the central element of our communication research. It was interesting to note how different people communicate with each other, work together and which social practices can be identified.

We soon asked ourselves which processes of interaction were observable<sup>1</sup>. This framework was specified during the survey on the basis of a variety of different observation approaches.

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<sup>1</sup> Research is based on procedures used in the Grounded Theory by Strauss and Corbin and on theoretical approaches based on the Symbolic Interactionism theory of Mead.

## DIVERSE COMMUNICATION CHANNELS IN INTERNATIONAL AND INCLUSIVE ARTS

The term communication is common in everyday language. However, little thought is given to the various complexities involved in the communication process. Communication is not static – it is dynamic and describes the process of information exchange between two or more living creatures. It finds its expression in various forms: in verbal language, in written language, in body and sign language. The German sign language was first legally recognised as a language in 2002.

The workshop module of *Un-Label* has provided a unique framework in which to analyse artists from more than twelve different countries of origin with or without disabilities<sup>2</sup> and from various artistic fields – music, dance, theatre, acrobatics and poetry – all in one place. We observed three workshops in Germany, Greece and Turkey between September 2015 and February 2016, also from the participants' perspective, with a focus on communicative and interactive aspects.

We used spoken English as the basis for communication during the workshops through all production phases, which was adapted to meet the needs of the participating persons. The diversity within the group constellations has been particularly noticeable in the ways of communicating. To ensure diversity in all communication processes, the participants started to use different modes of interpreting, which directly influenced each other. During our analysis, we noticed that the group always tried to explore new ways of approaches to make all information available for all participants. This either led to a dialogue or started different types of interpretation within the group. Here we describe a practical example:

Setting: Workshop in Istanbul, Turkey in February 2016. The workshop group consists altogether of 32 artists from seven nations, including two people with specific learning difficulties and three deaf artists. The workshop is supported by a communication assistant from Germany.

A Turkish participant contributes ideas to the workshop in spoken Turkish. Another person converts the information into plain Turkish for the participants with learning difficulties. Given the fact that some people in the group do not speak Turkish, the information was also directly interpreted into spoken English. Then the German communication assistant is able to interpret the English into German sign language for the two deaf persons in the group. Another person now interprets the German sign language into international sign language. In this way, the information of the Turkish participant from the beginning of the communication chain has reached a deaf Turkish participant and also all those present.

<sup>2</sup> The disability term is used here according to in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Disability is not something that resides in the individual as the result of some impairment; rather, it should be seen as the result of the interaction between a person and his or her environment. Interaction with various barriers, whether environmental or attitudinal, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.





Figure 1: Example of a communication chain from an *Un-Label* workshop

This example shows that the information transfer within a diverse group of people is more complex and time-consuming than for a homogenous group with the same language knowledge. Without the use of simultaneous interpretation by multilingual trained specialists and/or technical equipment such a diverse project could face complicated interpreting problems, which would require more time and would not guarantee that all the possible forms of communication are addressed.

## INDIVIDUAL PREFERENCES FOR FORMS OF COMMUNICATION

A closer look at the communicative actions of different people reveals an individual hierarchy of the available communication forms. This is illustrated by the following two examples:

The workshop group is divided up into small groups. The observed small group gets the task to develop a small performance within a relatively short period of time. The coach who can't speak Turkish and has only a rudimentary knowledge of sign language, discusses further possible procedures with the group in spoken English. During this exercise, he is not supported by a communication assistant, so that he himself tries to explain the situation through miming gestures for the two deaf artists. In addition, he gets support from a Turkish participant with a good knowledge of English, who is able to interpret his words into Turkish and plain Turkish.

This example again clearly demonstrates that this situation, too, resulted in a spontaneous collaboration, meeting communication barriers with their own possibilities. To avoid the temporal and informal losses due to the complicated interpreting modes, the participants developed an alternative communication method during the process.

After some time of mixed communication between spoken and sign language, the coach suggests communicating only through the body. The group agrees to avoid sign and spoken language for a certain time. The possibility of collective trying and interacting through purely physical and musical interaction creates new performative ideas. However, after a while the group once again uses spoken and sign language.

At first there was a clear prioritisation of the spoken and sign language, but the experience shows that it is not enough to offer a nonverbal communication form to overcome the individual prioritised communication channel based on communication habits. There will always be participants who feel uncomfortable with purely physical communication and who therefore choose more familiar communication forms.

There is no all-in-one solution in this setting. *Un-Label* uses the nonverbal method within the artistic processes as an alternative communication type. The use of creative expressions and the renunciation of formal language forms – whether by sign or plain language – conveys different content and creates a very special exchange with each other. The temporary use of this technique has a significant impact on the creative process.

However, to meet the requirements for a satisfactory information transfer and to guarantee that in a heterogeneous group, as described here, communication is possible on an equal basis with each other, the communication requirements must be clarified in advance for international and inclusive settings. In this way, an exchange or simultaneous use of diverse communication forms can be applied and acquired preferences can be critically questioned.

## *HOW DIVERSITY IN COMMUNICATION BECOMES A SOURCE OF ENRICHMENT*

This observation raises the following questions: How may we successfully establish diverse communication forms in a heterogeneous group? And what qualifications must be developed? Let us take another observation:

Traditionally, at the beginning of each new *Un-Label* workshop, all participants, coaches and the team present themselves with their first names. For this they use oral language and the language of signs simultaneously. Many of the participants come into contact with sign language for the first time during this round of introduction. People without a personal sign name will try to find a suitable sign for themselves together with the group.

The seven-year-old daughter of two participants is actively involved in one of the introduction rounds and gets to know all the names. In the course of the day she gets a lucky charm as a gift from a Turkish participant, who sits in a wheelchair. Proudly she shows the lucky charm to her parents and tells them the name of the giver in sign language.

Three attitudes become apparent during this process:

1. Since the girl was not from Turkey, it was presumably difficult for her to memorise the Turkish names of all the persons present. The personal sign names, which were simultaneously used, offered her the possibility to learn and reproduce the names through a further communication channel.
2. The personal sign names were naturally used by the seven-year-old girl from Germany with a good sense of hearing. At this moment, for her, sign language is equivalent to spoken language.
3. The girl calls the woman by her sign name. It is, therefore, highly probable that a person with the preference for verbal communication would have described the physical appearance of the giver verbally. She could simply be descriptive

with concise attributes such as "she uses a wheelchair", which could have described the woman very quickly. However, in this context the disability was not relevant to her – she did not even mention the wheelchair.

Therefore, communication provides possibilities of exchange via multiple channels of communication, which can be used individually by any person who has the relevant expertise. The individual situation determines which learned channel will be used to transfer the necessary information more clearly. You do not necessarily have to be part of a specific group of people. Alternative and creative ways of communication in the form of sign language and artistic interactions provide additional scope for action and promote variety in communication. Furthermore, this might have a positive effect on the group dynamics, supporting respectful interactions with each other and strengthening solidarity through well-developed social skills. Curiosity towards anything new, sensitivity and openness form the basis for successful, sustainable relationships based on equality.

## *INCLUSIVE TASKS IN CULTURAL ACTIVITIES*

New opportunities are created due to our inclusive examination within this heterogeneous group, while questioning and updating traditional approaches. This became apparent as soon as the tasks had to be adapted according to the needs of participants, with or without disabilities, so that they could be performed by all participants.

The following situation describes how we developed a universal command which is easily perceivable during exercise instructions, reaching all persons at the same time without excluding anyone.

The trainer suggests the use of a nonverbal command composed of hand-clapping and foot-stamping to signal the end of a group exercise, so that the command is perceivable for hearing as well as hearing-impaired people. After an assurance that the two deaf persons can perceive the command through floor vibrations, it can be successfully integrated into exercise.

The help of this so-called two-channel communication – the command can be received by auditory and tactile senses – ensured that all of those present were reached. Communication through eye-contact with the trainer – a visual stimulus – is no longer required.

It is strongly recommended that the instructor already knows the needs of the participants in the preparation phase and adjusts the exercises by choosing easily accessible options, in order to fully meet the requirements of this group and to reach everyone.

## CONCLUSION

Communicative challenges and irritations in groups are very common. Through analysis of these observations we noticed that the use of mixed forms of communication is reasonable and should not focus too much on certain communication modes. By changing communication channels, no privileged group emerges, since nobody receives the information first and nobody last. Therefore, it is much more successful to communicate via different communication channels that complement each other and to broaden the horizons of opportunities and exercise their use.

When we as a research team reflect on our own role and actions in the evaluation phase of the workshops, we notice that this experiment has also broadened our horizons. We gained experience in multifaceted communication processes and soon realised that we also had biases and preconceptions, which were corrected in the course of the project. It also became clear that the focus of evaluation and research at present is on spoken and written language. It is therefore our desire that art and culture, as pioneers of inclusion, should provoke more sectors of society in research and practice, to rethink old concepts and establish new methods, as implemented in *Un-Label* as an innovative and visionary project.

**Authors: Anna Nutz und Judith Vitek**

Faculty of Pedagogy and Management in Social Work, TH Köln /  
University of Applied Sciences, Evaluators of *Un-Label*

# 2

## *BEST PRACTICES*

# Candoco Dance Company

.....  
We want to show you what dance  
can be and who can dance.







#### LOCATION

United Kingdom  
(London)  
International focus  
.....

#### ARTISTIC DISCIPLINE

Contemporary dance  
Artistic education and training  
.....

#### TARGET GROUPS

Professional national and international  
disabled and non-disabled dancers  
of all ages, genders  
and abilities



Notturno by Thomas Hauert (2013). Photo: © Benedict Johnson.

<sup>1</sup> *Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance* is the UK's first ever conservatoire of music and dance, which has created unique opportunities for collaboration between instrumentalists, singers, composers, dancers and choreographers.

<sup>2</sup> *The Place* is home to London Contemporary Dance School, Richard Alston Dance Company, a 280-seat theatre, an extensive range of classes, courses and participatory opportunities for adults and young people, and professional development programmes for artists.

<sup>3</sup> *Aspire* is a British charity that provides practical help to people who have been paralysed by Spinal Cord Injury.

*Candoco Dance Company* was founded in 1991 by Celeste Dandeker and Adam Benjamin. It developed out of integrated workshops at *London's Aspire Centre for Spinal Injury* and quickly grew into the first company of its kind in the UK – a professional, inclusive dance company of disabled and non-disabled artists. As a repertoire company, we commission a variety of world-class choreographers to showcase the dancers' range of skills and to give audiences a rich, diverse experience of inclusive dance. *Candoco* is a limited company, registered in England and Wales, and has charity status. The performing company itself is made up of seven disabled and non-disabled dancers and is supported by a staff team of around 10 people along with a pool of 15 *Candoco* Artists, who help deliver our extensive Learning programme. Besides receiving income from touring and educational work, *Candoco* receives funding from *Arts Council England*, charitable trusts and foundations and through private donations. We work with and are supported by a number of exceptional partners, such as *Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance*<sup>1</sup>, *The Place*<sup>2</sup> and *Aspire*<sup>3</sup>.

As a company, *Candoco* is curious about what dance can be, how the company can provide new ways into dance and how our work can challenge perceptions of ability. The team works hard to ensure that *Candoco's* artistic output and educational programme are of the highest quality in order that the work

itself provides a practical demonstration of the intrinsic value of inclusive practice or the *Creative Case for Diversity*<sup>4</sup>.

Successes over the years include a popular artist training programme, high-profile visibility in events such as the Olympic and Paralympic Games ceremonies in 2008 and 2012, prominent performances by our Youth Dance Company, *Cando2*, and critical and public acclaim for restaging works such as Jérôme Bel's *The Show Must Go On* and Trisha Brown's *Set and Reset/Reset*. *Candoco's* work was recognised with the *UK Theatre Award for Achievement in Dance*<sup>5</sup>. The annual *UK Theatre Awards* celebrate the professional excellence and achievements of performing arts all over the UK.

We are committed to continually learning from the people we meet and work with, always challenging our own methods, in order to provide as excellent an example of best practice as we possibly can. We embrace difference and use its artistic possibilities to create unique high-quality productions that constantly challenge expectations. An ambitious and innovative commissioning strategy of using world-class choreographers to create new work has been the backbone of the company since it started, providing a means for showcasing the creative potential of difference, the talent of our excellent dancers and a platform for artists and audiences alike to experience the value and thrill of inclusive work. Driven by the understanding that diversity is exciting, and dance is richer when different bodies and perspectives are part of its creation, we push the boundaries of the art form and how it is presented. *Candoco's* commitment to learning has always underpinned all of our activities, providing participation projects, teacher training, mentoring, debates and advocacy work alongside our extensive touring programme. At the heart of the company are people, and by empowering our performers and participants with movement, we aim to draw the lens away from notions of

<sup>4</sup> *The Creative Case for Diversity* – Since 2011 *Arts Council England* has been exploring how organisations and artists can enrich the work they do by embracing a wide range of diverse influences and practices. The diverse nature of contemporary England offers unique opportunities for artistic collaborations, innovation, risk-taking, and investment in talent development.

<sup>5</sup> The annual *UK Theatre Awards* celebrate the professional excellence and achievements of performing arts all over the UK.



Not from a particular piece. Photo: © Hugo Glendinning (2012)



disability and invite audiences to look beyond their appearance. All our work, from performances by our professional and youth companies, to our workshops, regular classes, intensive and training modules, seeks to make a long-term change in the vibrancy of dance and the range of dancers seen on the stage. Since 1991, society – in the UK at least – has come some way towards ensuring equal opportunity for people to fully participate in all aspects of life. There is still a long way to go. Although we are increasingly seeing different bodies on stage in the mainstream Arts sector, we are still far from a true reflection of the rich diversity of people in society around us.

As a company, we are continually debating and discussing internally and externally around dance and disability issues and where *Candoco's* practice sits within this. For example, do we agree not to tour to an international venue which we know is terribly inaccessible? Or do we tour there precisely because it is inaccessible and our presence there will help broaden people's understanding of access and the general lack of full access?

Through our travels and constant reflections, we continue to grow and develop our practice: from Palestinian artists who "just get on with it" to US artists who stand for no less than *Universal Design*<sup>6</sup>, we realise that we have much to learn from each other.

<sup>6</sup> Universal design refers to broad-spectrum ideas meant to produce products, devices and environments that are inherently accessible to older people, people without disabilities, and people with disabilities.



That is why *Candoco* feels privileged to have played a part in *Un-Label*, an EU-funded project that offers an incredible opportunity for international artists to work inclusively, learning from each other and enhancing each other's practice, across borders. It is why we are so excited to continue growing those opportunities by linking in with other cross-European projects, such as *Moving Beyond Inclusion* and the *British Council's Unlimited Access*.

**Author: Joanne Lyons,**  
General Manager, *Candoco Dance Company*

For further information, visit:  
[www.candoco.co.uk](http://www.candoco.co.uk)

<sup>7</sup> *Moving Beyond Inclusion* is a 2-year project, co-funded by the *Creative Europe programme* of the European Union. The project supports the development of skills, expertise and audiences within the professional inclusive sector of disabled and non-disabled dancers. It aims to bring about a broadening of perceptions and practice within the mainstream dance world, ensuring that positive change can be sustained through the showcasing of and opening-up of discussion around the best of inclusive practice. Project partners are: *SPINN* (Sweden), *Centre for Movement Research / HIPPI* (Croatia), *Oriente Occidente* (Italy), *Tanzfähig* (Germany) and *BewegGrund* (Switzerland).

<sup>8</sup> *Unlimited Access* was a programme designed to support best practice in the commissioning, creation, dissemination and programming of performing arts by deaf and disabled artists. It was a partnership between *British Council* (UK), *VoArte* (Portugal), *Onassis Cultural Centre* (Greece), and the *Croatian Institute for Movement and Dance* (Croatia) cofunded by the *Culture Programme of the European Union*.



'Beheld' by Alexander Whitley (2015). Photo: © Hugo Glendinning.

A man with blonde hair and red face paint is shown in a performance setting. He is wearing a black t-shirt and has his head tilted down. A hand is visible on his shoulder. The background is dark and out of focus, showing other people and stage equipment.

# ShareMusic & Performing Arts

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Our vision is to give everyone the possibility to express themselves artistically in a world where differences are considered valuable.





**LOCATION**

Sweden  
(Gränna, Gothenburg, Malmö)

.....

**ARTISTIC DISCIPLINE**

Interdisciplinary art  
Artistic education and training

.....

**TARGET GROUPS**

Organisations and Institutions of the culture,  
education and disability sector, Disabled and  
non-disabled people, professional artists  
of the performing arts and media,  
students, teachers

HiHatXpress. Photo: © PeterLloyd





Photo: © sharemusic

*ShareMusic & Performing Arts* is an international arts organisation working with artist development and pioneering performing arts using a mix of art forms – music, theatre, dance, video art and performance. The field of innovative arts technology is important. The head office is situated in Gränna, Sweden with offices in Gothenburg and Malmö.

*ShareMusic* is, due to the diverse field we are cooperating within, working with a wide spectrum of target groups including both organisations and individuals: disabled and non-disabled people, students, teachers, media, professionals and institutions/organisation within culture, education and disability sector.

*ShareMusic* is a non-profit arts organisation founded in March 2003. In origin, the concept is based on the works of Dr. Michael Swallow, who established *ShareMusic* in Great Britain as music-specific post-school education for people with disabilities in 1986. *ShareMusic* is legally independent of the British branch. In 2016 we changed our name to *ShareMusic & Performing Arts*. Six employees work for the organisation and annually around 35 people are employed in different projects and assignments. The organisation is financed by public funds, project support and its own revenues.

Our motivation is artistic and societal development. Our work is rights-based and follows the *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*<sup>1</sup>. It is also clearly tied to the *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*.<sup>2</sup>

We work with internationally renowned artists sharing the stage equally with people of different abilities. High quality is at the core of everything we do. The performances we have staged represent the unique way of creation through the collaborative artistic process in which musicians and artists, composers and choreographers together produce a piece of art. Experience and skills of each individual are involved in the process of creation and so become an important part of a work as a whole.

We believe in broader culture and a wider definition of artistry. We always strive to conduct our work and activities in groups consisting of a mix of people with different backgrounds, experiences and abilities. Inclusion and participation are our foundation - the performing arts are the tool to achieve this. We provide innovative technology that facilitates opportunity for everyone, regardless of ability, to both create and perform. We are passionate about sharing our unique skills and our way of working.

We only develop new work, created in collaborative artistic processes. 'Togetherness' is a key word. Professional artists are creating an environment of trust and curiosity, where people can explore and develop creative ideas working together. Our artistic teams are using the people they have to find unique abilities and expressions.

The opera *SHANGHAI* is one example of our work. It was created by *ShareMusic* together with the *Göteborg Opera*. Stephen Langridge, Artistic Director, opera/drama at the *Göteborg Opera* says that the creation of *SHANGHAI* is different from anything else he has been involved in before. "The reason is that you usually have an idea, a story, someone writes a libretto, another composes the story and then you pick the artists", he

<sup>1</sup> *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* is a convention to protect and promote the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities.

<sup>2</sup> *The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)* are new goals for more sustainable development worldwide. The goals address and incorporate in a balanced way the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental.



Dawn at Galamanta. Photo: © Peter Lloyd



Photo: © ShareMusic & Performing Arts

says, continuing: "With *SHANGHAI* it was completely the opposite. The ensemble was put together first, including artists from the Göteborg Opera and from ShareMusic. Based on the selection of artists the composer and librettist create the opera. The opera is created by the artists."

*ShareMusic's* work process aims to include everyone and is not focused on disability. Everyone participates on an equal basis. The approach is not to focus on limitations, but rather to see each person's potential and inner resources instead.

Our work started with facilitating short courses in music, dance, theatre and art in which a final performance played an important part. In succeeding years, we recognised how the performances improved. We did set ourselves the target of acquiring a commissioned work, which we achieved in 2009 when our very first big performance *Dawn at Galamanta* was performed in Stockholm's

Central Station in collaboration with composer and conductor Christian Lindberg, choreographer Helene Karabuda and the Swedish *Wind Ensemble*<sup>3</sup>. Several commissioned works have since followed: *Hi-Hat Xpres* with composer Nigel Osborne and choreographer Veera Suvalo Grimberg. *Mondgewächse*, a multimedia work with composer Patricia Alessandrini and the ensemble *Gageego!*<sup>4</sup> where in which traditional instruments meet arts technology. Our next commission, *SHANGHAI*, in collaboration with *Göteborg Opera*, director Stephen Langridge, composer Line Tjørnhøj and librettist Erik Fägerborn is focusing on developing inclusive work within voice theatre and opera.

Our calls for composers are attracting artists worldwide, who want to explore and develop new artistic expressions with us. We have developed a strong focus on the labour market, offering employment to people with different abilities. We have worked in several ways in this area - through advocacy aimed at broadening the labour market in the cultural sector, but also providing training. We have launched two educational programmes, focusing on teaching *ShareMusic's* knowledge and way of working. We have trained people to become workshop assistants, exhibition workers and lecturers in the field of culture.

### <sup>3</sup> *Wind Ensemble*

The Swedish Wind Ensemble prides itself with its the breadth of its repertoire and its genre-crossing collaboration. The orchestra has its residence in Stockholm.

<sup>4</sup> *Gageego!* was formed in 1995 with the explicit mission to explore and make contemporary music more accessible. As one of the key players in Contemporary Music Sweden, the ensemble is held in high esteem for the pleasurable and curious way they interpret today's music, while always pushing the technical and artistic levels to new heights.

We do face obstacles: funding is one. Not primarily because of lack of funding resources, but because we are still being questioned as an artistic organisation. Through our work we push the barriers and stretch the norms regarding quality and whom we look upon as an artist.

We see the importance of inclusive arts for changing society towards positive participation of people with different abilities in, not only the arts, but also society itself.

**Author: Sophia Alexandersson,**  
Artistic Director, *ShareMusic & Performing Arts*

For further information, visit:  
[www.sharemusic.se](http://www.sharemusic.se)

Photo: © ShareMusic & Performing Arts





# Freie Republik HORA

.....

Performers with mental disabilities are currently en vogue, but where are the directors, choreographers, stage designers, dramaturges etc. with mental disabilities?



LOCATION

Switzerland (Zurich)

.....

ARTISTIC DISCIPLINE

Theatre, Education, Research

.....

TARGET GROUPS

Actors with mental disabilities,  
theatre enthusiasts,  
experts as well as laypeople  
from the art scene

The theatre experiment *Freie Republik HORA* started in 2013 and is set up for five years. In this process-orientated project, the members of the *Theater HORA* ensemble develop directing projects. There are three phases to the project: phase



1 in which they direct collectively, phase 2 in which they make their first attempts at directing on their own, and phase 3 in which six members of the *Theater HORA* ensemble carry out their own directing projects, with a budget and, in some instances, the participation of external artists. The results are then presented to an audience.

In addition to the aim that every member of the *Theater HORA* ensemble should be granted the opportunity to practise artistic self-determination and self-responsibility, there is also a focus on the maturity of the audience.

We start conversations with the audience immediately after the performances to establish a constructive and fruitful dialogue between audience, directors and actors of *Theater HORA*. Only the audience has the opportunity to give feedback about respective performances during all three phases. The artistic direction of *Theater HORA* has followed the self-imposed rule of not giving feedback, instead only acting as facilitators.

## RESEARCH FROM QUITE DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

The research project *DisAbility on Stage* (2015-2018), hosted by the *Institute for the Performing Arts and Film (IPF)* of *Zürich University for the Arts*, with the support of the *Swiss National Science Foundation*, is involved in one of their three sub-studies in phase 3 of the long-term performance project from *Freie Republik HORA*, with the title: *Creation Processes in Theatre by and with Disabled Actors and Directors*.

The *DisAbility on Stage* research team, consisting of artists and scientists, observe phase 3 of the *Freie Republik HORA* project from different perspectives. The rehearsal processes of the six director projects were examined from three viewpoints: from an artistic point of view, as part of theatre research and from a video-ethnographic<sup>1</sup> point of view.

<sup>1</sup> The term “video-ethnographic” here describes, besides the artistic and theatre research point of view, another research method in which people and their actions within a field defined by the researchers are documented and examined on the basis of audio-visual recordings.



The filmmakers Pascal Grange and Silke Andris are interested in the ways in which the directors realise their directing projects. In addition, they are keen to find out what this change of position and perspective from actor to director means for each of them.

Nele Jahnke, who represents the artistic management of *Theater HORA* together with Michael Elber, practises self-reflection in her dual role. On one hand, she has the formal role of the artistic director, but in practice she deliberately takes on the role of the assistant of the *HORA* directors. This ensures that she does not interfere in the creative process as a superior authority, functioning only as an appointed organiser for the relevant director.

From the perspective of theatre studies, Yvonne Schmidt, supervisor of this sub-study, is interested in how the six directors' practices and roles are negotiated within the production process. This sub-study examines how systems of making theatre are developed in the rehearsal space as an aesthetic as well as a social space. This is done by means of participatory observation and interviews.

The doctoral research fellow, Sarah Marinucci, has developed and tested different formats of audience discussions together with *Theater HORA* and examined the reactions of the audience.

The *Theater HORA* ensemble is involved in the research process of the *DisAbility on Stage* subproject in different ways: An audio-visual diary of the daily rehearsals will be developed in a video cabin. In addition, ensemble members who are not currently involved as performers document the process with drawings, photos, blog posts or interviews with attendees. The results of this project are an ethnographic film<sup>2</sup> about the production process of the *HORA* artists, a multimedia online publication, a theatre studies dissertation as well as several journal articles.

<sup>2</sup> A derivation of the term ethnography. Here it means the study of the project participants and their social actions by use of the film documentary.

The experiences collected in the cooperation with *Theater HORA* can be summarised on the basis of four perspectives, as follows:

Firstly, there is the perspective of the camera team, who observe the entire process mainly through the camera lens. Secondly, there is the perspective of the artistic director of *Theater HORA*, who has followed the self-imposed rule of giving no feedback on the artistic process. The director therefore functions as an artistic observer, who is formally involved in the process but acts only as someone following the process from the outside. Discussion of her function may at times produce opposing positions.

Thirdly, there is the perspective of theatre studies, which takes

a neutral observer position from the outside. The fourth perspective is considered a central aspect for research – the perspective of the *HORA* ensemble members through their self-observing approach.

To gather all these perspectives, the research team conducted a minuted de-briefing session after each rehearsal day in phase 3 of *Freie Republik HORA*. The topics addressed during these meetings ranged from how everyone was feeling to questions about responsibility and manipulation and on to reflections on directing styles as well as theatre structures, which are outlined here in a short theoretical excursus.

## THE EXPERIMENT AND ITS RISKS

The very fact that professional artists with mental disabilities direct a play is an extraordinary event and a pioneering achievement within the contemporary inclusive theatre scene. It is an experiment which implies uncertainty, anxiety and question, but at the same time curiosity, excitement and the desire to do something new. Naturally in the realisation of the projects to be directed, several hurdles had to be overcome, as each of the six *HORA* artists had a different approach to the unfamiliar director's role. Consequently, six directorial styles were applied, although it should be noted how quickly conventional theatre mechanisms and hierarchical structures were reinstalled.

The directors became increasingly aware of their power and in fact tended to use it – some more strongly and more forcefully than others. Initially, the research team was unaware of these dynamics, or simply unwilling to accept that they were a factor. However, as this pattern grew and could no longer be ignored, it emerged as a central topic of conversation within the research team.

It was important to address these issues: In the context of *Freie Republik HORA*, was there an attempt to reproduce the conventional, and in some cases problematic, theatre hierarchy? If so, at what point is dictatorial behaviour no longer tolerable? Clarification was needed as to how far an external intervention, for example on the part of the artistic director of *Theater HORA*, was necessary and possibly appropriate to put a stop to this development.

At the same time, questions about the consequences of such actions occasionally put the team in a dilemma. Were the artists prevented from exploring and expressing their autonomy and maturity? And wasn't that precisely the goal of the project *Freie Republik HORA* – to build autonomy and maturity?

Perhaps though, reproducing a norm, building on it and then daring to take the next critical step is the best way to reach the objective. Of course, all experiments and desires for personal development have the inherent risk of failure. But experience has shown that it is in the spaces filled with uncertainties, risks and possibilities, that new things are created that may shape our future.

**Author: Sarah Marinucci,**  
PhD Student, *University of Bern,*  
Institute for Studies in Theatre Science

For further information, visit:  
[www.hora.ch](http://www.hora.ch)





# DIN A 13 tanzcompany

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Dance, especially, is an excellent way of crossing the boundaries between cultures and people with and without physical disabilities.



#### LOCATION

Germany (Cologne)  
International focus  
and worldwide co-productions



#### ARTISTIC DISCIPLINE

Dance theatre  
Artistic education and training



#### TARGET GROUPS

Dance and theatre audiences as well as  
interested people in the field of inter-  
culturality, diversity, aesthetics, sociology  
and inclusion; international mixed-  
abled contemporary dance  
artists





The *DIN A 13 tanzcompany* was founded by Gerda König in Cologne in 1995 and since 2000 has been recognised as the non-profit association *DIN A 13 e.V.*

It is a key value for the company to focus on the artistic approach rather than the implementation of pedagogical or inclusive priorities.

Prior to founding *DIN A 13 tanzcompany*, Gerda König always felt very attached to the medium of dance. The stage fascinated her because of its artistic freedom – a space to question social circumstances and to provoke changes of perspective. This attitude has since been reflected in her productions.

The artistic approach taken by the company is marked by the exploration and visibility of the quality of movement inherent in “differing bodies”, whose diversity forms the basis for the choreographic work. *DIN A 13* challenges viewing habits and normative ideals in contemporary dance and enriches it in the process through new impulses. Assumed boundaries and

valuations between special bodily characteristics and a dancer's peak performance become dissolved in choreographic pictures. They pose questions which invite an artistic dialog to enter. Gerda König is constantly searching for contrast and provocation in her choreographic pictures, mirroring the human tension between inner and social conflicts. The ensemble thus addresses cultural realities, traditions as well as certain social and political conditions. The joint exploration of a mixed-abled approach constantly opens up new avenues for further developing dance. The unexpectedness of another body becomes an aesthetic experience whose expressiveness sets new benchmarks of quality.

International projects aim to promote exchange between cultures through dance and to establish new mixed-abled companies on various continents. In the past, in cooperation with the *Goethe-Institut* *DIN A 13* put on co-productions with Bulgaria, Slovenia, Brazil, Kenya, South Africa, Ghana, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Venezuela and Israel, with successful national and international tours.

The intense and long-term cooperation between art director Gerda König and her choreographers Gitta Roser and Marc Stuhlmann is of crucial importance for the artistic career of *DIN A 13 tanzcompany*. The company's management is in the hands of Anika Bendel. She took over the position of producer in 2016 and is responsible for the organisation and implementation of all regional and international cooperation projects. *DIN A 13* does not have a regular dance ensemble. For each production the company chooses a suitable cast of professional dancers with or without disabilities.

*DIN A 13* takes two fundamental approaches in its artistic work:

- the exploration and visualisation of the quality of movement inherent in "differing bodies" whose diversity forms the basis for the choreographic work
- detailed engagement with different cultural realities, traditions as well as social and political conditions

Each choreographic process begins with introductory improvisation tasks appropriate to the thematic focus. During the development of individual movement material, the artistic interest aims to explore the physical potential and the associated aesthetics of the differences of all



Photo: © Emilio Méndez / 2013

the dancers. *DIN A 13* has been working with a very detailed implementation of the adaptation, which makes it possible for ensemble sequences to use exceptional movements choreographically. Staging a paralysed arm, the high muscle tone of spasticity or an unusual gait become an enriching and aesthetic moment of dance in the ensemble work.

To develop the content plane, the artistic team first creates a stage concept, which is then edited by the ensemble within the cultural context of the cooperating country and/or within the thematic framework of the production. The dance material developed in the exploration phase is then staged as a full-length dance production under the direction of Gerda König and her choreographers.

The intense artistic engagement with numerous ensemble members and international guest dancers has encouraged the multicultural development of *DIN A 13 tanzcompany*. As

pioneers in the German dance landscape, they reached international fame over the years through their continuous work and the associated quality improvement. The results speak for themselves: besides the guidance of Gerda König, who has constantly built on her experience in working artistically with dancers with and without disabilities in the form of diverse dance commissions, there have been 31 successful productions performed at many international dance festivals, including the United States, England, Sweden, Spain, Portugal, Cyprus, Poland, India, Venezuela, Israel, Sri Lanka and Korea.

Interest in exceptional qualities of movement, as described in choreographic terms, has grown significantly in recent years. An average of more than 150 dancers apply for an audition for any new German production by *DIN A 13*. Professional dancers in particular, focus more strongly on the artistic work of the dance company and recognise the potential to break with academic forms of dance and take it further.

With dance formats like the *Crossings Dance Festival* and *KULTURdifferenzTANZ*, in 2006, 2008 and 2011 the *Din A 13*-team was able to establish a major public platform for international mixed-abled dance in Germany. This has clearly highlighted,



Photo: © MeyerOriginals



once more, its creative value for contemporary dance. A festival programme with highly professional performances from around the world was able to increase the audience's awareness of this dance genre. At the same time, the festival introduced the chance to challenge classical dance forms, to discover new aesthetics within the movement quality of differing bodies, boosting the desire to experience more such performances in the performing arts.

When celebrating its 20th birthday in 2015, the mixed-abled dance company posted a cultural policy milestone by developing together with the ballet of the *Theater Hagen* the production *Perfectly Unperfect*, which was shown for the first time in a German municipal theatre.

*DIN A 13 tanzcompany* places a high value on sustainability, which is why it has positioned itself in the education sector over the past years. In the context of school projects, it has focused on familiarising young audiences with dance and choreography by allowing a glimpse behind the scenes. By setting up a small dance project they help to bring students with different bodies into contact with each other, giving them the opportunity to gather performance experiences of their own. The company also offers a wide range of dance workshops as well as further training and education for teachers and educators in schools and universities.

**Author: Gerda König,**

Founder and artistic director of *DIN A 13 tanzcompany*

For further information, visit:

[www.din-a13.de](http://www.din-a13.de)

# Royal Conservatoire Antwerpen

[FACULTY OF DANCE]

.....

Inclusive dance practices  
create a virtuosity  
of imperfection.



**LOCATION**

Belgium (Antwerp)

.....

**ARTISTIC DISCIPLINE**

Contemporary dance  
Academic dance education

.....

**TARGET GROUPS**

Dance students with and  
without disabilities

Photo: © Cy Leong

Although inclusive dance is a well-established practice in the United Kingdom, in Flanders and Belgium inclusive dance is still at an early stage. Yet, inspired and encouraged by this international development, Iris Bouche, former artistic director of the dance department of the *Royal Conservatoire in Antwerp*, decided to programme inclusive dance practice as a fixed part of the curriculum. In April 2015, the dance department organized #Rethinking Bodies, an international intensive study week with workshops, lectures and presentations on the potential of inclusive dance practice for contemporary dancers. This study week, condensed into a three-day symposium, is now offered each year to the students in the third year of their Bachelor's Degree.

The added value is clear. Not only does inclusive dance enrich the students as dancers, it also questions predominant views on contemporary dance and dancers and it widens the contexts in which dancers can use their talents and skills, such as "special" education, health and welfare, community and social care work. Despite the positive experiences of the students during this symposium, some prejudices remain very persistent. The idea that inclusion will bring down the quality of contemporary dance is sometimes hard to counter, and a study-week or a symposium cannot provide a sufficient antidote to this. So, in 2015, Iris Bouche and her colleague Karel Tuytschaever found the means to create a performance with a mixed group of third-year dance students from the Conservatoire and pupils from *De Leerexpert Dullingen*, a school for special education for youngsters with physical and/or multiple impairments. A group of nine disabled dancers and ten dance students was formed. For their performance *De Gedekende*<sup>1</sup> they drew inspiration from the visual work of Berlinde Bruyckere, especially her sculptures with blankets. All the students visited her exhibition at the *S.M.A.K.*<sup>2</sup> in Ghent and then went to work on questions of worry and suffering, combining to create physical movements with the blankets.

<sup>1</sup> English: "Covered by blankets".

<sup>2</sup> *S.M.A.K.* – Museum of Contemporary Art

A major drive for Iris and Karel was the potential of inclusive dance practice for the dance itself. The further development of contemporary dance is enhanced by the presence of a greater diversity of dancers. All the dancers involved are challenged to leave their comfort zone, to leave behind well-known techniques and patterns and start again from dance as a tool for communication. The presence of disabled dancers also questions many obvious notions such as beauty, elegance, technicality, virtuosity and authenticity. Finally, inclusive dance is also enriched by the creative input of disabled dancers, their narratives and forms of expression and, on a symbolic level, by who is represented on the set and by the challenge to the audience to recognise themselves in the performers on stage.

That does not mean it is an easy job to make a dance performance together with young and unexperienced disabled dancers. At times, it proved a methodological challenge for teachers Tuytschaever and Bouche. Sometimes, the young dancers with learning difficulties had trouble remembering the combination of dance steps or the choreography in general. For that reason, the creation process departed from the movements of the disabled pupils. Nothing was taught, all movements came from the young dancers themselves. They made their own raw material, on which the choreographers and the dance students explored further. In one exercise for example the pupils had to write their name. This task is very specific. Some cannot write, but usually they can write their name. When you ask them first to write it literally, you can make clear to them that it is already a kind of movement. Then you can elaborate, with: "How does the letter 'S' go, and what would happen if this room were your desk? What would happen if you couldn't walk or write?" Bouche and Tuytschaever taught their students to observe very objectively, without telling them what to do. It is a matter of starting very close to their natural and spontaneous movements and then gradually building towards abstraction.



Photo: © Cy Leong

The great ambition of an inclusive dance performance like *De Gedekende* is to disconnect the notion of virtuosity from seemingly limitless and perfect physical control. Instead, elements of vulnerability, imperfection and human interaction trigger ingenuity and form the motor for artistic innovation and a different, more recognisable, relation to the audience. In *De Gedekende* the principle of inclusion ensured that every dancer had to push their boundaries, says Iris Bouche: "The way disabled and non-disabled dancers behave changes, because they work in a different environment. The behavior they can rely on every day in school or in their institution, no longer provides guidance and therefore they often push their physical limits without realising it. For *De Gedekende* we wanted to start from the potential of a group of young people, not from two groups but from one large group, where everyone is able to communicate their capabilities and show their individual expression. At first glance

you might think that dance students and young disabled people have little in common, but I believe they have one common denominator: an obsession with their physicality."

Although the project was a great experience and the dance department was pleased with the artistic quality of the performance, the project was not entirely satisfying. Due to the limited time frame in which the performance had to come about and the limited experience of the dancers, the social aspect of the project stood too much in the forefront. Especially at the beginning, the dance students of the *Conservatoire* put themselves too much at the service of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the pupils of *De Leerexpert*. The students lacked the time, space and sometimes the courage to put the artistic research first. There was also no possibility to continue working with the same group, whereas a long-term and sustainable timeframe has proven crucial for inclusive dance processes. This of course has implications on financial, educational and infrastructural levels. To accommodate this, the dance program developed a follow-up study: an inclusive dance lab dedicated to fundamental artistic research into inclusive dance practice.

The lab aims for continuity by offering weekly dance classes. Students at the *Conservatoire* dance together with disabled dancers. Currently, the group mainly attracts disabled dancers with some previous experience in inclusive dance projects. Attracting new dancers remains extremely difficult. It is not easy to convince disabled people and their networks (carers, parents) that dancing is also for them. During the weekly classes the dancers focus purely on artistic research. Also, several participants write down their personal experiences for further qualitative research. No performance is planned, only short showcases.

For disabled dancers to be able to start formal dance training, the *Conservatoire* still has a long way to go. There seems to be a major barrier to enrolment. Is this due to



Photo: © Cy Leong



the name, the perception? It takes a great deal of courage to audition, although auditions require no previous training. Rather, the dance department is looking for personalities, for dancers with character, that stand out on stage. That is something we cannot teach. Dance education can offer all the required skills and knowledge to bring that character to the stage. If a disabled dancer does audition, the school needs to be sure that it can provide a good environment to support that person. The campus of the *Conservatoire* itself is accessible and the group of students is small enough to provide an individual and personal approach. Sarah Whatley of *Coventry University* has already developed a framework for such a personal support in higher dance education. But to attract more disabled students, the dance department needs more than just internal measures. It also requires a broad network that discovers and supports new talent; it needs role models that encourage the ambition of a dormant generation of disabled dancers; and it needs courageous programmers who dare to present inclusive dance in their regular programme. In the long run, we need to alter the expectations of the public about contemporary dance for inclusive dance practice to become the new normal.

**Author: Kris De Visscher**

*Royal Conservatoire Antwerpen*

For further information, visit:

[www.ap.be](http://www.ap.be)



# Mooms- teatern

.....

A strange, surreal, thoroughly unique  
theatre experience full of surprises and  
unsettling images.





LOCATION

Sweden (Malmö)

.....

ARTISTIC DISCIPLINE

Theatre

.....

TARGET GROUPS

Professional actors with learning disabilities, an audience of young children, teenagers and adults



*Moomsteatern* is a professional theatre company based on seven actors with learning disabilities who perform together with various actors without disability.

The theatre was established in 1987 in Malmö, Sweden. Our major goal is to work with artistic objectives, banning all therapeutic and social aims. This means, we focus on approaching the audience by telling great stories and performing at a high artistic level.

Legally, the theatre is a foundation with 15 employees including artists, technical staff and administration. The actors with learning disabilities are employed on a fulltime basis with salaries and conditions of employment based on the collective

agreements relevant to the performing arts in Sweden. They are trained at the *Malmö Theatre Academy* at the *University of Lund* and are members of the *Swedish Actors Guild*. For each theatre production *Moomsteatern* collaborates with professional guest artists, musicians, directors, scenographers and costume designers.

An important aspect for *Moomsteatern* is the fact that the disabilities of our actors do not have a specific impact on our content on stage. The repertoire is often based on mainstream plays, modern classics or adaptations of old classics. In their profession *Moomsteatern's* actors represent all sides of humanity. In their private lives they are often defined by their disabilities and our company believes in releasing the actors from stereotypical disability-related assignments while on stage to focus on their profession. When talking about identity, it is important for *Moomsteatern* to define our ensemble as actors with learning disabilities and not as disabled people doing acting.

Although the goals of *Moomsteatern* are solely artistic, this does not mean that as a theatre we are oblivious of our audiences' perceptions. The fact is: the actors who tell the stories are actors with learning disabilities. Generally, in a theatre, the actors are the senders and the people in the audience are the receivers.

The audience attends a performance to be entertained without reflecting on the person behind the actor. Looking at a play, where actors with disabilities perform, this changes. Parts of the audience will emotionally refuse to be merely receivers. Some people have an urge to also be senders, to identify themselves as benefactors towards the actors on stage.

Often, in encounters with audience or journalists, our actors will meet such reactions as: "Oh, you are so cute", "How do you remember all that text?", "Aren't you feeling a bit nervous?"

Well-intentioned, but condescending. This attitude of being perceived and treated like a child, of journalists assuming they can't ask questions with any substance, is a part of everyday life for our actors. It is a very important goal for *Moomsteatern* to contribute towards changing structural discrimination, move towards individual empowerment and to oppose the stereotypes.

In opposing the stereotypes *Moomsteatern* also opposes the term "disabled art". It is simply art! The actors in our theatre company are educated and experienced actors, some of them have been acting for over 20 years. On stage, in their role as professionals, they are experts, they are in every way able.

In 2008 the theatre left all collaboration with the care and welfare system in Sweden behind and reached a goal that the theatre had been fighting for – to be exclusively funded by the arts councils. It was an important principle for *Moomsteatern* to be accepted by the political system as a fully professional theatre. Today we are funded by the state, and by regional and local arts councils.

At the permanent stage in Malmö, we produce two to three theatre productions and present 50-60 performances each year. The target groups range from young children to teenagers and adults. Around forty percent of our shows are staged at schools. Besides these performances we regularly tour to other places in Sweden and occasionally around Europe and the rest of the world.

The ensemble has fulltime employment, which means about forty hours each week. Each production is rehearsed for eight or nine weeks before the opening. With each production *Moomsteatern* works with freelance professionals. The perspective of mixing actors with and without disabilities is an important point for us. Also, the plays are often directed by external directors who have never worked with *Moomsteatern* before, which the theatre values as a great opportunity to develop artistically.







*Moomsteatern* has been internationally celebrated for its courage and artistic integrity in productions such as *Company of Strangers* (2010) and *Man without Direction* (2014), produced in collaboration with the multiawarded actors and directors Pelle Öhlund and Nina Jemth. *Man without Direction* has also been the basis for a short film shown at various film festivals around the world.

Since 2014 *Moomsteatern* has been collaborating with *Compagnie de l'Oiseau Mouche* in Roubaix, France and *Mind the Gap* in Bradford, England in a three-year project within the *European Union Creative Europe Programme*<sup>1</sup>. The aim of the project *Crossing the Line* is to mobilise creative and artistic energies to shake up assumptions about disability and performance. The partners want to contribute to the creation of more employment opportunities for learning disabled artists, for them to tour internationally and reach larger audiences. The project resulted in a showcase in January 2017 in Roubaix. In the future *Moomsteatern* hopes to develop many more national and international collaborations. The theatre also keeps an open door for students wishing to follow and research our work. We wish to investigate further possibilities in film and in touring outside of Sweden. It has always been a part of *Moomsteatern's* game plan to expand, to learn and to move forward.

<sup>1</sup> Creative Europe Programme is the European Commission's framework programme for support to the culture and audiovisual sectors.

**Author: Per Törnqvist**  
Artistic Director, *Moomsteatern*

For further information, visit:  
[www.moomsteatern.com](http://www.moomsteatern.com)

# Vo'Arte

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To include others  
we must first  
accept ourselves.







#### LOCATION

Portugal (Lisbon)

.....

#### ARTISTIC DISCIPLINE

Interdisciplinary Arts

.....

#### TARGET GROUPS

Artists with and without disabilities,  
established and emerging artists,  
the performative, visual  
and video arts community  
and the socially  
disadvantaged

Vo'Arte, a nonprofit cultural association, which for the past 18 years has been supporting contemporary artistic creation and inclusion in the performing arts, for the protection of forms of artistic expression. We undertake national and international projects that promote exchange and interdisciplinary work in creative art, deliberately bringing together established and emerging artists.

Our work aims to build international and interdisciplinary cooperations, strengthening longterm relationships and networks. Those allow the interchange and flow of artistic practice and the promotion of disabled artists across geographical and social boundaries.

Vo'Arte also promotes the exchange of best practice between arts organisations seeking models, infrastructures, and methodologies that reduce the barriers to the involvement of disabled people in the arts and culture as artists, technicians or audiences. It

explores and challenges how disabled artists are viewed within the wider arts sector, exploring the artistic value of work created by people who have a unique perspective on the world around them.

In 2007 Vo'Arte founded its own dance company, the CiM Dance Company. Since then, it has performed its own productions and organised inclusive dance workshops in Portugal and abroad. CiM works with professional dancers with different physical abilities. It aims at high professional quality and mainstreaming. Our 10th anniversary in 2017 is a great occasion to honour the accessible arts by highlighting the creative possibilities of the active participation of disabled persons within artistic processes.

Vo'Arte seeks paths of diversity and lasting enrichment of human experiences. In our multidisciplinary approach, new methods bring with them new impulses, new reactions and new artistic issues. A particular focus on the part of choreographer Ana Rita Barata and filmmaker Pedro Senna Nunes is development of the unique movement characteristics and expressive strengths of each interpreter.

The individual style of each artist is clearly highlighted and promoted. One of the most interesting works in recent years was the *Choreographic Creation Laboratory for Inclusive Dance*,



Performance O Aquil, at InArt. Photo: © Claudio Ferreira, 2010

held in April 2014 at the *InArt Multidisciplinary Art Festival*, part of the *EU Creative Europe funded project Unlimited Access*, co-organised by Vo'Arte.<sup>1</sup>

It was an intense encounter that explored motivations, concepts, methods and synergies between different body languages and movement as well as choreographic tools employed by a wide variety of professional choreographers and dancers in inclusive dance.

Developing choreography for people with disabilities is no different from developing choreography for those without. It is just a question of expectations and goals. To choreograph for people with disabilities requires a refinement of procedures for a more detailed description of what is expected. In the event of working with the visually impaired, both the dance and the nature of the dancer need a certain generosity in the creative process. As much is done through touch, a dialogue emerges between one's own body and the bodies of others. Reacting to their answers, hearing their guidelines, working both individually and collectively. Not exploring what each performer and dancer can do but rather how he or she does it, discovering and testing new paths, memorising them, undoing them and following another path, revealing different compositional techniques, in constant evolution.

There is vigorous current debate in Portugal about definitions of "disability" and conceptualisations of it. The "social model" of disability is of particular relevance in the field of inclusive education. But many have a critical attitude towards the practicalities of social integration of people with physical, intellectual or psychological differences. This controversy does not need to be limiting unless society fails to take adequate measures to manage inclusion successfully.

Another concept is the "medical model". This view reduces the function of dance for people with disabilities to a purely therapeutic use or to a method of rehabilitation.

In our view, there is another perspective to cultivate, not only in relation to disability but rather generally in the realm of contemporary dance. It is not just a matter of new opportunities for expression that emerge from artists with disabilities, which permit aesthetic transformations and social changes.

It is a way of challenging the language of dance. It can place art in a new context, enabling new observations of connections between capacities and disabilities. We must examine the body, its shape, its position and its way of working. Dance, in particular, has great potential for thinking outside the box and crossing boundaries. A way is opened to value the various challenges and creativity in inclusive work. This prompts us to think about our role in society and the way we deal with differences and diversity.

<sup>1</sup> *Unlimited Access* – was a programme designed to support best practice in the commissioning, creation, dissemination and programming of performing arts by deaf and disabled artists. It was a partnership between *British Council* (UK), *Vo'Arte* (Portugal), *Onassis Cultural Centre* (Greece), and the *Croatian Institute for Movement and Dance* (Croatia) co-funded by the *Culture Programme of the European Union*.

Through movement, the development of a choreography with people with and without disabilities can reveal a variety of views of the world. As expectations change with regard to expression through dance, a paradigm shift is taking place. *Vo'Arte* has already stimulated many people to look at life with different eyes and peer beyond the edge of their own horizon. Through the encounter with our artists we can make clear to society how someone with a disability can be easily integrated into that society's life.

*Vo'Arte* lays special emphasis on the exchange of best practice models among cultural organisations. This is helpful in introducing methods and infrastructures from other players, providing new ways of breaking down barriers to people with disabilities – whether for the art creators themselves, for the production team, consisting of managers, technicians and stagehands, or of course the audience.

Our goal is to advance inclusive dance and the possibilities of freedom from barriers in dance. Awareness of this area needs to be strengthened. International cooperations should be encouraged to develop professional perspectives for artists with disabilities and continue to develop them for the long term.

In addition, through networking, a critical discussion is taking place concerning the ways in which artistic creators with disabilities are perceived in the arts scene and what artistic value is ascribed to their work.

One thing is clear: the special perspectives and life experiences of mixed-abled artists are producing something unique in the arts.

Many of the problems in relation to inclusion come from the fact that people with disabilities are still heavily underrepresented in the Portuguese media. This has the effect that society in general views the topic exclusively from the point of view of charity work and social aspects. It is therefore of prime importance for the cultural landscape to dismantle the barriers

in people's heads to clear the way for the establishment of inclusive art. This also explains why, for instance, there are as yet very few positions for people with disabilities in the performing arts. Moreover, there are scarcely any opportunities for training



Performance Sobre Rodas. Photo: © sileks, 2011



Street performance "Sobre Rodas" (On wheels)

to equip people at a professional level. Since no equality measures have been passed through the legal system, the pathway to employment is made that much more difficult.

Unfortunately, things are changing very slowly in Portugal. A great deal of pioneering work still needs to be done. So it is one of the primary objectives of *Vo'Arte's* mission to strengthen worldwide awareness for inclusive cultural concepts and to be an innovative facilitator in the performing arts.

**Author: Rita Piteira**

Project Manager, Cultural Producer  
and Communication Director of *Vo'Arte*

For further information, visit:

[www.voarte.com](http://www.voarte.com)



# IntegrART

[MIGROS CULTURE  
PERCENTAGE]

.....

IntergrART actively supports the inclusion  
of artists with a disability, within  
art and society.







#### LOCATION

Switzerland (Basel, Bern,  
Geneva, Lugano)

.....

#### ARTISTIC DISCIPLINE

Festival (dance, music, theatre)  
Symposia, Education

.....

#### TARGET GROUPS

People interested in culture with or without  
mental or physical disabilities  
Professional artists with or without  
mental or physical disabilities  
Students, Universities

<sup>1</sup> The *Migros Culture Percentage* is a voluntary initiative by Migros, incorporated in its articles of association that demonstrates the company's responsibility towards society. Migros is committed to providing a wide access to culture and education for the general public, allowing the company to interact with society and empowering people to participate in social, economic and cultural changes. Key elements of this commitment are culture, society, education, leisure and economy.

*IntegrART* is a networking project by *Migros Culture Percentage*<sup>1</sup> that actively supports the inclusion of artists with disabilities within the arts sector and society. Already existing cultural institutions had been given the possibility to unite and actively promote their interests with a stronger voice. Since 2007, the partners *BewegGrund. Das Festival* (Bern), *ORME Festival* (Lugano), *Out of the Box-Biennale des Arts inclusifs* (Geneva) and *wildwuchs* (Basel) have been working together to organise the biennial initiative across Switzerland. Right from the beginning, the four linked festivals for theatre, dance and culture have pursued the aim to devote intensive study to the topic of diversity and disability. *IntegrART* supports platforms in this area which create a new view of the world through the expressive opportunities of the performing arts. Here, people with disabilities are treated as part of a heterogeneous society and are quite naturally involved in the artistic dialogue. Every two years the network collectively selects two to three dance productions with inclusive emphasis from home and abroad, which are coordinated, presented and financed by the *Migros Culture Percentage* at all four festivals. In addition, symposia are held on a regular basis with and for experts from the world of art and culture.

In this way *IntegrART* creates added value in the programming and helps spread the message of inclusion in Switzerland.

The special emphases of each of the four partners involved in *IntegrART* may be set out briefly here:

### **BEWEGGRUND. DAS FESTIVAL // BERN**

The *BewegGrund* association has been organising a biennial festival in Bern since 1999. This inclusive event brings together high-profile dance and theatre productions as well as bands featuring artists with or without disabilities. *BewegGrund. Das Festival* also serves as a platform for community dance groups from all over Switzerland. During the five-day festival in the city of Bern, regional, national and international partnerships are strengthened and the cultural diversity of the city is promoted.

### **ORME FESTIVAL // LUGANO**

The *ORME Festival*, which takes place every other year, was founded in 2012 by *Teatro Danzabile* and *FTIA*<sup>2</sup> with the aim of presenting different integrative and inclusive art forms in Ticino from the regional, national and international arts scene. *Orme* means "tracks" and in the festival context refers to the quest for cultural identity. A path on which one leaves tracks. The shape of the track is only secondary. It may be a footprint, the imprint of a crutch or the tyre marks left by a wheelchair. Each person has the right, if they wish to do so, to express their own creativity, transcending any physical or mental differences they may have.

<sup>2</sup> *FTIA – Inclusion handicap* is a non-profit organisation that defends the rights of people with disabilities in Ticino and advises them on legal issues and accessibility issues.

## OUT OF THE BOX - BIENNALE DES ARTS INCLUSIFS // GENEVA

This unique, weeklong event in the Frenchspeaking part of Switzerland began in Geneva in 2013 and takes place every two years. Both local and international productions are presented, the aim of which is to prompt new thinking on the relationship between art and disability. The interdisciplinary programme opens up new aesthetic perspectives and provides space for the development of contemporary art projects in an inclusive context.

## WILDWUCHS // BASEL

With its international network and a base in Basel, since 2001 *wildwuchs* has been strengthening the position of marginalised groups and establishing a spirit of cultural variety, diversity and non-conformism. The biennial festival experiments with new forms of dance, performance and theatre, and enables people from all walks of life to participate actively or passively in cultural life – as initiators, participants or spectators. With its numerous guest productions, its own productions and co-productions as well as its broad range of discussion platforms, *wildwuchs* provides a transcultural meeting point that is accessible to everyone.

All the festivals supplement their programmes with different personal development opportunities for amateurs and professionals. While the cities of Bern, Lugano and Geneva concentrate on workshops in the inclusive area of dance, Basel also offers activities in the theatre sector.

To build a lasting bridge between theatre and dance practice and between training and research, *IntegrART* also supports the stage lab *DisAbility on Stage* as a project partner. The three-year research project (2015-2018) is linked to the *Institute for the Performing Arts and Film (IPF) of the Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK)* with the support of the *Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF)*. The aim of the pilot project is to promote the participation of people with a disability by offering dance and theatre training and to initiate discussion about disability at art schools and universities throughout Switzerland. The focus lies on two model collaborations: the Bachelor's degree in Contemporary Dance at the *ZHdK* in collaboration with *Cie BewegGrund* in Bern, and the Master's degree in Physical Theatre at the *Accademia Teatro Dimitri* in Verscio in collaboration with the dance company *Teatro Danzabile* of Ticino. They are getting to grips



Photo: © Unmute Dance Company: Ashed (IntegrART 2017)

with a joint development of practice-oriented knowhow, focusing on the crossover points in the inclusive theatre and dance scene, training practice and research at the arts university.

In the 2017 edition of *IntegrART*, students from the two universities meet in the studio, in each case for two weeks, to rehearse with dancers and performers with disabilities. The artistic and academic results are subsequently presented to a wider audience in the context of the four festivals.

## ACCESSIBILITY MEASURES

The accessibility of the festival to all is a top priority for *IntegrART*. We therefore provide translation and interpretation services for particular programme points, with sign language interpreters, programme booklets in simple language and accessible websites. *IntegrArt* presents all the information on accessibility to different cultural activities at all four locations on the website [www.zugangsmonitor.ch](http://www.zugangsmonitor.ch).

## MOBILITY

Accessibility for people with reduced mobility is guaranteed across the entire festival area. Shortly before the festival begins, experts inspect all festival venues and ensure accessibility for all. For example, on the Basel advisory board there is a wheelchair user who is responsible for all mobile accessibility issues around the festival. He carries out an inspection of the entire festival area in advance. Furthermore, each venue provides sufficient space for wheelchairs, free admission for companions and toilets for people with disabilities.

## HEARING AND SEEING

In relation to translation and description facilities for a hearing and visually impaired audience, it is necessary to examine each of the productions and to decide, which types of accessibility tools are required for the staging. The festival network is currently evaluating the efficiency of the app *Talking.Birds* for making events and performances accessible to visually and hearing impaired audience members by delivering captioning or audio description directly to their mobile device. Unfortunately, inductive listening systems for people with a hearing impairment still cannot be taken for granted in Swiss theatres. We therefore work with *Pro Infirmis*<sup>3</sup> and the local cultural authorities to acquire mobile systems that can be installed alternatively at the different festivals and provide audio descriptions.

## COGNITION

Depending on the type of project, *IntegrART* provides surtitles in simple language. These are intended for people with mental disabilities as well as people with limited local language skills. In addition, the programme booklet as well as the website of both

<sup>3</sup> *Pro Infirmis* is the largest specialised organisation for people with disabilities in Switzerland, working towards the unrestricted participation of people with disabilities in social and social life.

festivals in Basel and Bern are published in simple language and with helpful illustrations.

The translation of foreign-language productions into the three local languages of Switzerland (French, German and Italian) is generally provided by all four festivals to facilitate low-threshold access to the festival programme for the entire *IntegrART* audience.

## FINANCE

Financial accessibility is also on the agenda. In Basel, since 2015, they have already applied the *1 for 2* ticketing system in which the visitor pays for his own ticket as well as an additional ticket that can be picked up at the box office by anyone who can't afford it. In the future, we will introduce this principle also for the ticketing services of the other festivals.

*IntegrART* is becoming more and more popular and is receiving positive feedback. Because of those opportunities, which challenge people's ideas, artists with disabilities are increasingly able to establish themselves in the regular cultural sector. The diverse projects promote awareness for the benefit of the growing number of inclusive art forms. As companies create inclusive projects, they are focusing more and more on artistic discussion rather than on social or representative considerations. It is now recognised that this development enhances the range of opportunities in the arts and produces new forms in the creative process.



Photo: © BewegGrund/Massimo Furlan (IntegrART 2017)

### Authors:

Emanuel Rosenberg (artistic director, *Orme Festival*),

Susanne Schneider (artistic director, *BewegGrund*),

Uma Arnese Pozzi (artistic director, *Out of the Box - Biennale des Arts inclusifs*),

Gunda Zeeb (artistic director, *wildwuchs*)

For further information, visit:

[www.integrart.ch](http://www.integrart.ch)



# Fuori Contesto

A photograph of a man in a wheelchair, smiling and looking towards the camera. He is wearing a light grey t-shirt and yellow trousers. Behind him, two women are standing; one is holding a phone and looking at it, while the other is looking towards the man. They are in an urban setting with a wall covered in graffiti in the background. A large white circle is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the title and a quote.

.....

Our stories with other people merge,  
rise up in the air and overlap.





**LOCATION**

Italy (Rome)

.....

**ARTISTIC DISCIPLINES**

Dance/ Theatre, Festival  
Artistic education and training

.....

**TARGET GROUPS**

All ages, professionals  
and non-professionals,  
people with and without  
disabilities

<sup>1</sup> *Danceability* is the study of movement improvisation for all people in any combination – the full spectrum of humanity.

<sup>2</sup> *Alito Alessi* is the co-founder and Artistic Director of DanceAbility International. He is internationally known as a pioneering teacher and choreographer in the fields of contact improvisation, dance and disability.

Founded in 2005 as a non-profit cultural association, *Fuori Contesto*, based in Rome, consists of dancers, actors, a head of communications and a production manager. Five of our members are *DanceAbility*<sup>1</sup> teachers, certified by Alito Alessi<sup>2</sup>.

*Fuori Contesto* offers a space where everybody is accepted and can find their own way of expression. The understanding of art underlying our projects makes the whole concept of inclusion superfluous – inclusion being a term that can be a native label that is easily taken in a marginalising and isolating way.

We produce inclusive theatre as well as dance performances with mixed-abled professional artists. Our range of productions includes traditional and more unconventional performances as well as site-specific performances. We put on our performances in theatres such as *The Mercadante* in Naples, *Teatro Olimpico* in *Vincenza*, *Teatro Valle* and *Teatro Vascello* in Rome, but we also perform at schools as well as urban environments such as streets, squares and shopping centres. We believe it is important to meet society outside, in public spaces, and reach people in site-specific spaces.

We gear our work deliberately to a broad audience outside the traditional theatre, to reach those who might otherwise find it difficult to see performing arts. We want to make it accessible for all. Often we attempt to merge our performers' bodies with the architecture. In this context, the human organism brings the city alive. In our street parades for example, the dancers suddenly break into urban areas. They start quietly and then intensify their action until the audience is involved in a collective dance. A dance of the city. A dance of the community.

Our aim is to encourage the public to have a re-think and to provoke active social responsibility. By including all kinds of differing bodies, we stimulate discussion of diversity, helping to reshape thinking within our present society.

We explore new possibilities by engaging the different skills of our artists to the multifaceted patterns of movement and storytelling that emerge in a shared creative process.

Furthermore, we are careful to find an appropriate narrative form, both for our artists and for the audience, to facilitate their personal access to the topic of diversity, thus helping to trigger a change of perspective.

For example, in the site-specific performance *Carriage Tour*, the main character is a wheelchair – empty, carried around by two women. The performers invite spectators to sit in it, take a ride in it and perceive reality from another point of view while surrounded by laughter, dancing and improvisation. At the end of the short trip, the spectator is awarded a “wheelchair driving license”.



As long as our mixed-abled company has been in existence, we have been discovering many creative possibilities. We became aware from working with dancers and actors and their mobility aids such as wheelchairs and crutches that there is a special potential in this combination which can lead to artistically exciting and high-quality results.

In our professional training sessions and mixed workshops, we therefore always provide additional aids that can be used when required. We feel it is important to reflect on the impact of additional aids in the artistic context and be aware of the impact they have on the creative process. We explore the wheelchair, for example, as we might a part of the body. When a person uses a mobility aid, there is an automatic creative relationship between body and device. A joint search for balance begins. Depending on the direction and dramatic composition they are used in a wide variety of ways in our performances.

In the showcase *Off Place*, there is a dancing couple, one of whom has a motor disability and needs crutches. Together, they present their performance about boundless love in a shop window. By the very choice of this space, which usually displays branded goods, perfection and fashion, they question aesthetic conventions and the way our society views different bodies.

Our aim is to tell stories by using gestures, language and dance. We concentrate on how a story can be told by movement and hidden emotions can be expressed. We always start with the content, based on existing literature or created by the participants themselves. The plot guides us. We explore it through physical theatre, narrative theatre and dance theatre. The way the artists deal with the emotional plane in the narrative and in our own experiences is an important element in the treatment of the content. By movement and performative elements we



Workshop "Danceability anche noi". Photo: © Maria Cardamone, 2015

give expression to our inner selves, revealing needs, describing conflicts and proposing solutions.

A 15-year-old actor with a wheelchair composed the following lines about her character within the play:

"Everyone sees me as a goddess,  
perfect, ethereal, unreachable,  
and I move like a goddess,  
travelling on a cloud.  
I don't know why,  
but they look at me like that.  
When I step in, silence falls.  
When I step in, space expands"

For the artist, this text contains many elements from her own experiences. The cloud is a metaphor for the wheelchair. It has often been her experience that when someone with a disability enters the room, it suddenly goes quiet. At such moments it feels, she says, as if time and space expand into infinity. In her description, the participant interprets diversity as divinity – perfect, but in a way, as distant and lonely as she is in such situations.

During the performance, the participant seemed to fly in the wheelchair, with the expression of movement and speech this person promoted the right of self-determination.

Besides the artistic productions, *Fuori Contesto* offers the chance to gain experience with diversity through inclusive workshops and dancing classes for professional artists as well as interested people of all ages, with and without disabilities. One major influence on *Fuori Contesto* is the *DanceAbility* method. This technique, based on dance and contact improvisation, allows us to bring people with different physical abilities together to interact with each other. Dealing respectfully with diversity, this pursues the idea that anyone can dance by expressing their individual capabilities. Here, in particular, we encourage the development of emotional intelligence and improve relational learning. Through personal physical experience all the participants gain greater awareness and understanding for the connection between emotions, ideas and actions.



Street Performance "Danceability anche noi", Photo: © Maria Cardamone, 2015

Since 2013, we have also been responsible for the artistic direction of *Fuori Posto. Festival di teatri al limite*. This festival takes place mainly in urban spaces and represents various disciplines such as theatre, dance, music, installations and photo exhibitions. In this context we also offer a variety of workshops that deal with the social relevance of an inclusive culture.

We view our work as an interplay between cultural and social components. Too often, unfortunately, this approach is not recognised as professional artistic creative work. Compared to other festivals in Italy the *Fuori Posto. Festival di teatri al limite* is still not being accorded equal acceptance and respect for its artistic achievements. We have to ask the question: Is it because people with disabilities are involved in our performances that they are not regarded as serious cultural productions? We therefore call upon the public and the press to move beyond outdated stigmatisations and to gauge the quality of the artistic achievement by the performance itself, instead of being distracted by non-normative external features. Physical or mental differences have no relevance in the artistic quality of a work.

One of our performers, who has a mental disability, said: "In a comedy people should laugh because we are really good on stage, not because we are different!"

**Author: Silvia Belleggia**

Head of Communications and Press Office *Fuori Contesto*

For further information, visit:

[www.fuoricontesto.it](http://www.fuoricontesto.it)



Affari di famiglia - La Danza. Photo: © Fausto Podavini, 2014

# Dançando com a Diferença



.....

We believe in the creative potential,  
productivity and value of all people.

We oppose the marginalising and  
labelling of people and call  
for equal rights for all.





LOCATION

Portugal (Madeira Islands)

.....

ARTISTIC DISCIPLINE

Dance

.....

TARGET GROUPS

Professionals and non-professionals  
with and without disabilities,  
socially disadvantaged people



<sup>1</sup> "Dancing with a Difference".

The group *Dançando com a Diferença*<sup>1</sup> started as a pioneering project in Portugal in 2001. At that time there was still a complete lack of public awareness, that a dance ensemble in which people with and without disabilities worked together, existed. Then, such an enterprise seemed almost out of the question in Portuguese society. It was almost impossible for people with bodies that do not fit the norms to gain acceptance as artistic creators. It was a difficult path to follow, and marked by uncertainty.

Looking back, the changes started to appear very slowly. Now, however, audiences no longer focus on our dancers' disabilities but appreciate the artistic quality of our work. Gradually we were able to gain more visibility and more artistic recognition from the local population. As a result other players were also inspired to develop artistic activities with people with disabilities. As time move on more and more inclusive dance groups became established throughout the country and *Dançando com a Diferença* has become a best practice model. Nowadays, it is common practice on Madeira, the Iberian Peninsula and also in Brazil, and inclusive dance practices have found recognition and their own firm place in the artistic context.

*Dançando com a Diferença* arose out of the practical implementation of the inclusive dance concept developed by Henrique Amoedo in Brazil. It was put together from the method created by Edson Claro<sup>2</sup> in which gymnastics and dance are combined, using the principles of Rudolf Laban<sup>3</sup> and the techniques of contact improvisation. Amoedo adapted this to the needs of people with disabilities. They form the structure and the foundation for our technical and artistic work. On this basis, with a variety of dance styles, we attach elements conducive to autonomy and the student's capacity for self-representation. We try to approach diverse dance styles. The more knowledge our students gain, the greater their ability to respond to a variety of challenges. Accordingly, we value our senior dancers in particular, as they have a very positive impact on the group as a whole, adding value from their own valuable experience gained over a number of years.

<sup>2</sup> Edson Claro, Brazilian dancer and dance teacher, made a study of the compatibility of dance and physical education.

Since 2007, *Dançando com a Diferença* has developed into a nationally and internationally renowned contemporary dance company. We have also become an important training organisation, managed by the *Associação dos Amigos da Arte Inclusiva (AAAIDD)*. The association offers activities in three areas: education, artistic creation and academic research. Aesthetic and artistic quality is paramount in all three areas. In the development of concepts of inclusive dance, artistic quality and aesthetics have a great deal of influence on how the social image of people with disabilities can be changed. The performing arts have a wonderful and important role as mediators in this by helping people think about and examine social approaches and pigeonholing in relation to disability. When *Dançando com a Diferença* performs on stage these days, there is a noticeable change in the audience's and cultural producers' perceptions of reality. This is why we are so committed to continuing along this path, promoting aesthetic transformation and the value of diversity in the contemporary arts and taking it even further in the future.

<sup>3</sup> Rudolf von Laban (1879–1958) – Hungarian dancer, choreographer and dance theorist, who developed a system for analysing and recording human movement, called “Labanotation”.

Currently, the nucleus of our group consists of 30 dancers with and without disabilities between the ages of 14 and 52. The group has regular dance classes with Henrique Amoedo (artistic mentor) and also with other teachers, who use our methodology under Amoedo's supervision. For performance productions, the company also works with national and international choreographers, who provide technical and aesthetic enrichment. In addition, at present there are 60 people in basic training groups and 30 people in the advanced courses we offer.



Choreography: Beautiful People (2008), Choreographer: Rui Horta. Photo: © Júlio Silva Castro



Just recently, we have begun to work with groups from socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods, our aim being to bring theatre, dance, recreation and play classes to socially at risk populations. Amoedo's methodology also encourages the development of personal and social skills. Communication, interpersonal relations and self-confidence are strengthened as a result. Social integration, which after all begins in the group, can then spread socially, within the community.

Our goal for the future is the creation of our own academy where students with and without disabilities are trained to become certified dance teachers. We want to give all our students the opportunity to follow a professional career in the dance sector. However, given Portugal's current socio-economic situation, which has already led to budget cuts and a lack of funding in the cultural arena, this is going to be difficult to achieve.

**Author: Diogo Gonçalves**

Assistant of Production, *Dançando com a Diferença*

For further information, visit:

[www.aaaidd.com](http://www.aaaidd.com)

# 3.

## *IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE ART*

# MAKING INCLUSIVE ART WORK

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## BEYOND A CYCLE OF DEPENDENCE

*Misiconi Dance Company* is the only inclusive dance company in the Netherlands. We produce national and international performances, organise a talent development programme and teach community dance classes in Rotterdam. In addition, we coordinate public education events such as lectures and workshops.

With this article we want to raise awareness of the persisting unequal treatment towards artists with disabilities in our present society and institutional systems. We are well aware that within Europe people with disabilities face similar obstacles. The present discussion, which has a Dutch focus, should therefore be treated as one of many examples all over Europe.

Patrick is one of the *Misiconi Dance Company's* dancers. Due to the complicated Dutch disability benefit system relating to funding and financial documentation, he is classified as a client and *Misiconi* as a care organisation. Obviously, this classification system is misleading and creates serious limitations for Patrick and many other artists. For his performances, for example, he has to be contracted through a volunteer agreement rather than a freelance contract. This means that his payment only covers his out-of-pocket expenses. There is no other way he can properly receive a full paycheck as a non-disabled artist would do. Like Patrick, many artists and performers with a disability have to face this reality – they are in a constant struggle for professional respect and need to navigate disabling social environments on a daily basis as they pursue their careers. In Western society, being employed and getting paid has a huge



impact on social inclusion. In other words, people who have no chance to work for a decent wage might not be fully integrated into society and find themselves judged by others as well as themselves as not being a full citizen.

*Wajong*, one of the major Dutch disability benefit systems for people who have been assessed as having little or no capacity to work, creates, in our view, a financial disincentive for the recipients to take up a paid job option. The more one earns through paid employment, the less payment one receives from *Wajong*. The combination of personal income and financial support covers only around 70-90 % of the national minimum wage, irrespective of the wage the person actually earns<sup>1</sup>.

Furthermore, once somebody is on a short term contract, s/he faces difficulties getting back on the previous *Wajong* level. That is because this person is now assessed with a higher capacity to work. Some parents or carers often end up deciding that it is best for a *Wajong* recipient not to work. This decision is sometimes made in consultation with the recipient, but most often officially on behalf of the recipient, despite their willingness to work and parents' and carers' wish for them to do so. Such a system traps the recipients in a state of dependence.

The capacity to work is medically assessed in terms of productivity. This is an expression of the conventional understanding of the economy, in which the physical capacity equates to the ability to produce something tangible, measurable and consumable. It is an understanding of capacity that is tied to the normative body – or to our society's understanding of what a "normal body" should be like, in relation to physiological, neurological, mental and behavioural aspects.

<sup>1</sup> See this webpage for the details (in Dutch): <https://perspectief.uwv.nl/forum/s/inkomsten-verrekening-bij-werken-naast-oude-wajong-0>

A similar idea about physical capacity has traditionally been applied in the arts and creative sector. Generally, for far too long, the sector has worked almost exclusively with nondisabled, normative bodies. There is a deep-rooted reluctance in the arts scene to explore the creative potential of people with disabilities. Inclusive arts are often seen as a charitable practice or part of a therapy, rather than a professional occupation and practice.

There is no doubt that the opportunity to express themselves gives artists with a disability a sense of independence, autonomy and satisfaction. However, we also need to think about inclusive art not only for its benefits to the performers themselves but also in terms of their artistic merit based on how their performances can resonate with, affect, move and challenge the audience. Additionally, the inclusive arts also have the potential to bring about social changes.

Patrick was recently involved in a *Misiconi* project. His performance explored ways in which highly diverse bodies can connect, collaborate and interdepend. With the use of props and the physical set, Patrick and non-disabled performers challenged the audience to see objects, people, and relations between them from new points of view. The performance piece was very positively received. It has since been presented in various formats and settings, including a music video and a collaborative performance piece with non-disabled, multidisciplinary artists at the *Amsterdam Dance Event and Museum Night* – two of the biggest cultural events in Amsterdam.

Physical diversity in the arts ignites artistic expression and creativity by showing and celebrating all bodies and their capacity to express, challenging preconceived notions of the body. The arts sector has always provided a fertile ground for controversial expressions to emerge that challenge conventional ideas and values. Like any art forms, inclusive artwork goes beyond a form of self-expression, as it can disrupt entrenched ideas. It resists distorted and stereotypical representations of people with disabilities, influenced by concepts of pity, abnormality and burden as is often seen in the mainstream media. It can show disabled bodies not as deficient, but as "differently-abled" whose potential capacity is constrained by disabling social and physical environments.

Beyond the conventional economics which are based on the circulation of money and which treat human capital only in terms of its financial value, inclusive arts allow us to focus on the artistic capability rather than the deficit ratio.

The arts can be provocative; its thought-provoking expressions can lead to an articulation of alternatives to the status quo. When it comes to inclusive arts, there is no difference. That means that artists and performers with a disability deserve equal recognition and appreciation. This should also be reflected financially, as they work as professionals and make a valuable cultural, social and political contribution. It is long overdue and an absolute necessity to provide a meaningful platform for people with disabilities within the arts sector, to be able to express diversity and to be given support by the government as well as the wider arts community.

The disability benefit system also needs to offer more flexibility, so that disabled artists and performers are not financially penalised for working. Governmental support should also be provided to foster creative exploration among artists within the arts sector. This needs to be done from an amateur to a professional level to create more collaborative and accessible environments, where people with a diverse range of bodies – whatever the medical definitions may be – can work together in doing “serious business”: creating art.

**Authors:**

**Joop Oonk,**

Founder and artistic director, *Misiconi Dance Company*

**Mutsumi Karasaki,**

Sociologist at the *Universiteit van Amsterdam*

For further information, visit:

[www.misiconidance.nl](http://www.misiconidance.nl)

# THE THREE DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES OF DISABILITY

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There exist different perspectives of disability within our society. The three most prominent models being:

## CHARITY MODEL

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Disabled people are unfortunate, should be pitied, and need financial support. It is morally right to support them.

## SOCIAL MODEL

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People have different impairments but they are disabled by our society – by structural, cultural, economic or attitudinal barriers. This model emphasises the independence of disabled people once these barriers are addressed.

## MEDICAL MODEL

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Disabled people need to be cured; they are seen as passive and dependent on medical specialists. We need to support them to overcome their impairment.

In contrast to the *Charity* and the *Medical Model*, the *Social Model* explores disability as a construct of our society. For example, a wheelchair user is actively disabled by the steps built at the entrance to a building. It doesn't matter what her impairment is. If the architect had designed the building differently the wheelchair user would be less disabled!

This model emphasises the independence of disabled people once these barriers are removed, but it also emphasises the need for all organisations to evaluate the barriers they may have unknowingly created.

Therefore, for arts professionals, it is vital that we constantly examine what the barriers are which prevent disabled people from equal access to the arts as audiences and as artists.

For audiences these include physical access to the arts – such as lack of wheelchair access, or no sign language interpretation; they include financial access to the arts – as disabled people often have far higher transport costs to get to an arts venue, and less disposable income than non-disabled people; and they also include cultural assumptions – such as “the arts are not for me”, or perhaps other gallery visitors glaring at a child with severe autism who responds to a painting he loves by making loud noises of pleasure.

But artists and arts professionals face these barriers and more. Training in the arts in conservatoires and arts schools is often not extended to disabled people. Many career development opportunities which support artistic growth are inaccessible – the workshops, residencies, and international exchanges which are so important for a developing artist are largely inaccessible. Disabled artists also face barriers in the cost of showcasing or touring their work: if their work sometimes costs more because there is an extra team member in the touring company, or a sign language interpreter needs to be paid, they can often lose out to cheaper companies. And the all-important networking can be a challenge: why should a Deaf artist attend an event when only the opening speech is sign language interpreted? It's the networking that makes the event important.

It may feel overwhelming for any one organisation to overcome all these barriers, but disabled access is a journey and not a destination. All arts professionals and organisations can start that journey – sometimes with small steps, and sometimes with a big leap, perhaps funded by an external source. What is important is to understand that many of the things we all take for granted are not accessible for disabled people as audience or arts professionals, and to start to help all of our colleagues understand that as well.

**Author: Ben Evans,**

Head of the Arts & Disability Department, European Union Region at the *British Council*



# FIVE FIELDS OF ACTION FOR CLASSIFYING CULTURAL PARTICIPATION CRITERIA

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## A GLANCE AT SWITZERLAND

The pilot project *Kultur inklusiv – Label für inklusive Kulturinstitutionen* advocates a sustainable inclusive culture in Switzerland. It promotes a holistic and inclusive attitude on the part of cultural institutions, which have set themselves the goal of accessibility and participation for all people. Cultural institutions, as label-bearers, meet their responsibility to take into account the entire diversity of our society in their cultural mission and not to exclude any potentially interested public groups. The label is awarded by the cultural special unit *Kultur inklusiv* of *Pro Infirmis*<sup>1</sup>. This has developed a list of criteria that is divided into five fields of action. The laboratories are committed to the holistic and longer-term implementation of defined individual measures in all five fields of action:

<sup>1</sup> *Pro Infirmis* is the largest specialised organisation in Switzerland committed to the rights of people with disabilities in all areas of life.

Source: <http://www.kulturinklusiv.ch/de/startseite/das-label/inklusive-kultur-5.html>

Field of action 1:

## ARTISTIC PROGRAMMING

Artistic content in cultural programming and cultural education

Implementation of individually defined holistic inclusive mediation and/or programme accreditations as part of the regular mediation and/or programme concept of the cultural institution – regularly or continuously.

Field of action 2:

## CONTEXTUAL ACCESS

Ensuring the accessibility of cultural content without hindrance

Assessment of the accessibility of cultural offerings and targeted implementation of individually defined measures and tools to support and facilitate the visibility, audibility and/or comprehensibility of the cultural content – if necessary, implemented in different steps.

Field of action 3:

## ARCHITECTURAL ACCESS

Ensuring obstacle-free structural access to the cultural institution

Review of all publicly accessible venues and implementation of appropriate and proportionate measures for obstacle - free access, obstacle - free mobility and good orientation in the premises or on the venue area of the cultural institution.

Field of action 4:

## WORK OPPORTUNITIES

People with disabilities as contributors in the cultural institution

The provision of internships, apprenticeships, permanent positions, part-time assignments, accompanying job offers, work training, consultations, training and/or voluntary work as an employment opportunity or recreational activity.

Field of action 5:

## COMMUNICATION

Ensuring the accessible communication of the cultural institution

Providing an inclusive attitude and barrier-free communication of all information and measures for the unobstructed accessibility of cultural content and obstacle-free structural access as part of the holistic inclusive communication strategy; in addition, directing target group specific communication by using the corresponding network as a multiplier.

# *PRACTICAL METHODS FOR INCLUSIVE CULTURAL EVENTS*

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## *A SELECTION OF POSSIBILITIES FOR ACCESSIBILITY AND THEIR GRAPHICAL CONTENT COMMUNICATION*



Excellent public level access and available transport connections with step-free access



Limited free disabled parking spaces



Accessible toilets available across site



Accessible information points are on site distributing both programme and access information



Guide dogs welcome



Assistance available for blind and visually impaired visitors, including guiding and narration



Touch Tour (tactile experience in advance of the event, e.g. by inspection of the scenery and encounter with the artists in costume)



Audio-described performances



Sound enhancement systems available



Sign language interpretation



Text Transcription (speech-to-text transcription)



Captioned performances



Translation into simple language and pictograms



Relaxed performances

# CHECKLIST

## FOR PRACTICAL PLANNING AND REALISATION OF INCLUSIVE ART PROGRAMMES

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This checklist<sup>1</sup> aims to support cultural operators in planning and implementing future projects with consideration to accessibility. It gives an overview of practical criteria for shaping cultural participation. When planning an inclusive and accessible event, the target group and their specific needs play an integral role. But a careful and holistic review of the total need, with adequate time to revise the plan, is critical to overall success.

### TIME

**Inclusive art programmes often require additional time expenditures and planning**

- **Precocious planning**  
The earlier and more thorough the planning, the easier and more effective the implementation.
- **Scheduling the rehearsal times**  
Did you take into consideration that some people need more time to be ready to start? Plan enough time for preparation.
- **Appropriate working hours and breaks**  
Concentration times can vary greatly.
- **Versatile communication**  
Plan enough time for communication in heterogeneous groups, (e.g. for explanations in simple language, sign language interpretation or other languages)

### FINANCING

**Inclusive art programmes require higher costs**

- **Budget**  
Have you taken into account the fact that your financial plan needs to cover all accessibility aspects? (e.g. additional staff, special equipment, barrier-free materials)
- **Ticketing**  
Do you offer discounted/free admission prices for disabled people and their accompanying persons?

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## COMMUNICATION, MARKETING, PUBLIC RELATION

### Inclusive art programmes require clear communication and good marketing

- **Target groups**  
Have you clearly defined these?
- **Contact possibilities**  
Do you offer several different communication channels for being contacted? (e.g. phone, e-mail, fax, post, online contact form, sms, facebook etc.)
- **Transparency**  
Do you clearly communicate about the range of accessibility opportunities provided by your production as well as the physical venue itself?
- **Respectful language**  
Are non-derogatory terms regarding disability used by lecturers, staff and other stakeholders?
- **Reservation and booking system**
  - Do you accommodate personal requirements? (e.g. wheelchair space, simple language, gesture interpreter, audio description)
  - Is it possible for blind or visually impaired people to book and participate in the event?
- **Information materials and program**  
Do you provide all informations regarding your venue in an accessible format? (e.g. in sign language, in simple language, Braille, barrier-free pdf or rtf-file in adequate font size)  
When choosing the font, you should pay attention to the following:
  - Use sans serif fonts
  - Avoiding cursive fonts
  - Line spacing of at least 1,2
  - Strong contrast between font and background
- **Website**  
Is this barrier-free?
- **Web 2.0.**  
Is your event presented on facebook, instagram, twitter?
- **Images and Illustrations**  
Do you describe images and graphics for blind and visually impaired people? (e.g. on the website, in lectures, in information materials, etc.)
- **Translation / Interpreting**
  - International translation
  - Simple language
  - Sign language interpreting
  - Real-time transcription
  - Surtitling / subtitling
  - Audio description
- **Streaming**  
Do you offer a (simultaneous) online transmission? This may be a suitable way of enabling people with autism, for instance, to participate.
- **Live Chat Offer**  
For external participation in discussions, question rounds and networking.

## TECHNICAL EQUIPMENT

### **Inclusive art programmes often require additional technical equipment**

- Projectors for inserting subtitles / surtitles
- Projection screens / screens for the transmission of real-time text transcription
- Transmission techniques for interpretation and audio description (e.g. infrared or radio receivers, speaker cabinets)
- Amplifying audio systems, hearing aids such as induction loops, FM equipment, neck ring loop headphones
- Strong bass systems for the transmission of vibration (e.g. for deaf artists)
- Good internet connection for live streaming and chat on the internet

## TRANSPORTATION

### **Inclusive art programmes often require precise planning for arrival and departure**

- **Route descriptions**  
For a barrier-free arrival and departure.
- **Public transportation**  
Is the venue accessible?
- **Parking**  
Do you provide accessible parking and is it well signposted?
- **Suitable transport facilities for the artist such as:**
  - Provision of mobility-aids for cars or buses
  - Accessible coaches
  - Train tickets for wheelchair users - Remember there is often a very limited number of wheelchair places available
  - Register any additional support needed for passengers with reduced mobility when booking flights

## HUMAN RESOURCES

### **Inclusive art programmes require a higher amount of human resources**

- You will need additional staff on hand, for example:
  - Mobility assistance
  - Communications assistance
  - International interpreter
  - Sign language interpreter
  - Simple language interpreter
  - Simultaneous transcriber
  - Specialist for the audio description
  - Technician to ensure all technical accessibility aids
  - Trained staff with an awareness and competence for diversity to provide information and personal support at the venue.
  - Trained staff with intercultural competence
  - IT specialists with experience in barrier-free websites
  - Designer / graphic designer specialised in barrier-free information materials
- Have you considered people with disabilities as part of your staff?
- Does the programme provide work opportunities for people with disabilities?

## VENUE

**Inclusive art programmes have specific requirements regarding the location, the audience area as well as the backstage space.**

- **Rehearsal rooms**  
Are they barrier-free?
- **Accommodation**  
Double check whether the hotel rooms meet the accessibility criteria.
- **Venue/ Event location**
  - Can one reach the venue without obstacles?  
(e.g., ramps, step-free area, elevators, good lighting, light/automatic doors, height-adjustable speaker desks, etc.)
  - Is there a clear path by means of signposts or blind guidance system?
  - Are there sanitation facilities suitable for people with disability?
  - Are there sufficient seats for wheelchair users and their companions?
  - Are there seating gaps for wheelchair users at the tables?
  - Is there a rest area with seats and couches provided?
  - Floor conditions: Does the flooring transfer the resonance sufficiently?  
(e.g. for deaf and hearing impaired artists)
  - Have you thought of providing tools such as seat cushions, footstools, sliding boards, buckling straws, etc.?

## METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

**The following steps support the practical implementation of inclusive art programmes:**

- **Initial analysis**  
About your target group, the work process, the timeline and the desired results.
- **Requirement analysis**  
Have you made an inquiry into the needs of all parties involved?
- **Mission statement**  
Did you define a shared and agreed vision with regard to interactions and communications within the group? (e.g. are there any workshop units or training opportunities in this regard?)
- **Discussion circles for exchange**  
Do you offer space and time for transparent dialogue with the entire team in order to communicate personal well-being, difficulties and suggestions?
- **Evaluation and feedback**  
The evaluation gives you a measurable view of your work.
- **Insights into the inclusive work**  
Provide public rehearsals and thus offer the possibility of direct dialogue and mutual encounters between the artists and the audience.

<sup>1</sup> This collection does not claim to be complete, as the definition of accessibility is the subject of a dynamic process and new individual solutions have been invented and discovered. The technical possibilities are also constantly evolving.

Sources: [ramp-up.me](http://ramp-up.me); Bundeskompetenzzentrum für Barrierefreiheit in cooperation with K Produktion: Handreichung und Checkliste für barrierefreie Veranstaltungen, 2012.

# CONTACT AND NETWORKING

## A COMPILATION OF EUROPEAN ACTORS

The following compilation<sup>1</sup> lists professional companies and cultural organizations working in the field of inclusive performing arts.



Festival



Interdisziplinäre Kunst



Dance



Information / Education



Music



Theatre

### BELGIUM


Danspunt	Ghent		danspunt.be
Fest'dif	Villeurbanne		festdif.com
Plattform K	Ghent		plattform-k.be
Royal Conservatoire of Antwerp	Antwerp		ap.be
Theater Stap	Turnhout		theaterstap.be
Wit.h	Kortrijk		vzwwith.org

### GERMANY






Amelinde - Künstlervermittlung	Cologne		amelinde.net
Barner 16	Hamburg		barner16.de
Blaumeier Atelier	Bremen		blaumeier.de
DanceAbility	Trier		danceability.de
Deutsches Gehörlosentheater	Munic		gehoerlosentheater.de
DIN A 13 - tanzcompany	Cologne		din-a13.de
EUCREA	Hamburg		eucreea.de
Glanzstoff - Akademie der Inklusiven Künste	Wuppertal		wirindglanzstoff.de
Grenzenlos Kultur - Theaterfestival	Mainz		grenzenloskultur.de
Institut für Bildung und Kultur e.V.	Remscheid		ibk-kultur.de
Just fun	Bochum		justfunbigband.tumblr.com
Kultur vom Rande	Reutlingen		kultur-vom-rande.de
Meine Damen und Herren	Hamburg		meinedamenundherren.net
Monster Truck	Berlin		monstertrucker.de
Netzwerk Kultur und Inklusion	Remscheid		kultur-und-inklusion.net
No Limits Festival	Berlin		no-limits-festival.de

Opernwerkstatt am Rhein	Hürth		opernwerkstatt-am-rhein.de
Rollenfang - Künstlervermittlung	Berlin		rollenfang.de
Sommerblut Festival	Cologne		sommerblut.de
Szene2wei	Essen / Lahr		szene2wei.de
tanzbar_bremen	Bremen		tanzbarbremen.com
Tanzfähig	Berlin		tanzfaehig.com
Tanzlabor Leipzig	Leipzig		tanzlabor-leipzig.de
Theater Ramba Zamba	Berlin		theater-rambazamba.org
Theater Thikwa	Berlin		thikwa.de
Theaterwerkstatt Bethel	Bielefeld		theaterwerkstatt-bethel.de
Un-Label	Cologne		un-label.eu
Zamma Festival	Munic		zamma-festival.de
Zentrum für bewegte Kunst eV. Berlin	Berlin		www.zbk-berlin.de






## FINLAND

Kaaos Dance Company	Kauniainen		danceabilityfinland.com
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



## FRANCE

Art et Dechirure	Rouen		artetdechirure.fr
Ascendances Company	Barnave		ascendances.org
IVT International Visual Theatre	Paris		ivt.fr
La Compagnie de l'Oiseau-Mouche	Roubaix		oiseau-mouche.org
Orphee Festival	Paris		orpheefestival.com


## GREECE

Exis Dance Company	Athens		facebook.com/ExisDanceCompany
Liminal	Thessaloniki		liminal.eu
Onassis Cultural Centre	Athens		sgt.gr
SMouTh	Larisa		smouth.com
THE.A.M.A.	Athens		distheater.gr

## ITALY

Cortille Studio Movimento	Milan		ilcortile.net
Fuori Contesto	Rome		fuoricontesto.it
Oriente Occidente	Rovereto		orienteoccidente.it
Ottavo Giorno	Padova		ottavogiorno.com
Teatro due Mondi	Faenza		teatroduemondi.it
The Academy of Diversity-Teatro Ribalta	Bolzano		teatolaribalta.it


## CROATIA

Croatian Institute for Movement and Dance	Zagreb		danceincroatia.com
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## NETHERLANDS

Holland Dance Festival	The Hague		<a href="http://holland-dance.com">holland-dance.com</a>
Misiconi Dance Company	Rotterdam		<a href="http://misiconidance.nl">misiconidance.nl</a>

## NORWAY

De Utvalgte	Nesoddtangen		<a href="http://deutvalgte.no">deutvalgte.no</a>
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## AUSTRIA

ICH BIN O.K. Dance Company	Vienna		<a href="http://ichbinok.at">ichbinok.at</a>
SICHT:WECHSEL	Linz		<a href="http://sicht-wechsel.at">sicht-wechsel.at</a>
T21Bühne	Vienna		<a href="http://t21buene.at">t21buene.at</a>

## POLAND

Teatr 21	Warsaw		<a href="http://teatr21.pl">teatr21.pl</a>
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## PORTUGAL

Acesso Cultura	Lisbon		<a href="http://acessocultura.org">acessocultura.org</a>
Dançando com a Diferença	Funchal / Madeira		<a href="http://aaaid.com">aaaid.com</a>
InShadow	Lisbon		<a href="http://voarte.com">voarte.com</a>
Plural Inclusive Dance Company	Lisbon		<a href="http://fundacaoliga.pt">fundacaoliga.pt</a>
Vo'Arte	Lisbon		<a href="http://voarte.com">voarte.com</a>


## SPAIN

Centro Dramático Nacional	Madrid		<a href="http://cdn.mcu.es">cdn.mcu.es</a>
DAN ZASS	Madrid		<a href="http://danzass.com">danzass.com</a>
Danza Mobile	Seville		<a href="http://danzamobile.es">danzamobile.es</a>
Meet Share Dance	Madrid		<a href="http://meetsharedance.com">meetsharedance.com</a>




## SWEDEN

Danskompaniet Spinn	Göteborg		<a href="http://danskompagnietspinn.se">danskompagnietspinn.se</a>
Moomsteatern	Malmö		<a href="http://moomsteatern.com">moomsteatern.com</a>
Share Music & Performing Arts	Gränna		<a href="http://sharemusic.se">sharemusic.se</a>

## SWITZERLAND

BewegGrund	Berne		<a href="http://beweggrund.org">beweggrund.org</a>
Danshabile	Geneva		<a href="http://dansehabile.ch">dansehabile.ch</a>



Institute for the Performing Arts and Film (IPF) Zürcher Hochschule der Künste (ZHdK)	Zurich		zhdk.ch
IntegrART	Zurich		integrart.ch
ORME Festival	Lugano		ormefestival.ch
Out of the BOX Festival	Geneva		biennaleoutofthebox.ch
Pro Infirmis	Zurich		proinfirmis.ch
Theater HORA	Zurich		hora.ch
WILDWUCHS Festival	Basel		wildwuchs.ch

## UK

Amici Dance Theatre Company	London		amicidance.org
Arts Admin	London		artsadmin.co.uk
Attitude is everything	London		attitudeiseverything.org.uk
Birds of Paradise (BOP)	Glasgow		boptheatre.co.uk
Candoco Dance Company	London		candoco.co.uk
Coral Dance Company	London		corali.org.uk
DaDaFest	Liverpool		dadafest.co.uk
Dance Umbrella	London		danceumbrella.co.uk
Deaf Men Dancing	London		marksmithproduction.com
Deafinitely Theatre	London		deafinitelytheatre.co.uk
Disability Arts International			disabilityartsinternational.org
Disability Arts Online			disabilityartsonline.org.uk
Diverse City	Dorset		diversecity.org.uk
Drake Music	London		drakemusic.org
Edinburgh Festival Fringe	Edinburgh		edfringe.com
Edinburgh Showcase	Edinburgh		edinburghshowcase.british-council.org
Everybody Dance	Whitbourne		everybodydance.org.uk
Extant	London		extant.org.uk
Graeae Theatre Company	London		graeae.org
Heart n Soul	London		heartnsoul.co.uk
Hijinx Theatre	Cardiff		hijinx.org.uk
INDEPEN-DANCE	Glasgow		indepn-dance.org.uk
Kraz Kat Theatre Company	Brighton		krazykattheatre.co.uk
Marc Brew Company	Glasgow		marcbrew.com
Mind the Gap Theatre	Bradford		mind-the-gap.org.uk
Shape Arts	London		shapeart.org.uk
StopGap Dance	Farnham		stopgapdance.com
The British Paraorchestra	Bristol		paraorchestra.com
The New Theatre	Dublin		thenewtheatre.com
Turtle Key Arts	London		turtlekeyarts.org.uk
Unlimited			weareunlimited.org.uk
Unlimited Festival	London		unlimited.southbankcentre.co.uk

## NON-EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

Accessible Arts	Australien / Sydney		aarts.net.au
Axis Dance Company	USA / Oakland		axisdance.org
Back to Back Theatre	Australien / Geelong		backtobacktheatre.com
DanceAbility International	USA / Eugene		danceability.com
Destino Dance Company	Ethiopia / Addis Ababa		destinodance.org
Downtown Contemporary Arts Festival	Egypt / Cairo		d-caf.org
Epic Arts Centre	Cambodia / Kampot		epicarts.org.uk
Inside Out Theatre	Canada / Calgary		insideouttheatre.com
NCA. SMALL THEATER	Armenia / Jerewan		facebook.com/nca.smalltheater
RemDans	Turkey / Istanbul		
Unmute Dance Company	South Africa / Cape Town		unmutedance.ca.za

<sup>1</sup> This listing does not claim to be complete.

# UN-LABEL NEW GROUNDS FOR INCLUSIVE PERFORMING ARTS

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**V.i.S.d.P.:** Lisette Reuter

**Editorial management:** Sarah Mitter, Lisette Reuter

**Editors:** Sarah Mitter, Lisette Reuter

**Translation:** Deborah Russi, Dr. David E. Orton, Sarah Mitter

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