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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



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Dance Service New York City, Inc.'s (DBA Dance/NYC) mission is to promote and encourage the knowledge, appreciation, practice, and performance of dance in the metropolitan New York City area. It embeds core values of equity and inclusion into all aspects of the organization. Dance/NYC works in alliance with Dance/USA, the national service organization for professional dance.

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TESTIMONY

“The National Endowment for the Arts congratulates Dance/NYC for the *Performing Disability. Dance. Artistry* study and report, and applauds Dance/NYC for its dedication to advancing the field of physically integrated dance and its support for dancers with disabilities.” Beth Bienvenu,
Director of the Office of Accessibility, National Endowment for the Arts

“The Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD) is proud to partner with Dance/NYC to promote inclusion and access to the arts for New York’s disability community. We commend Dance/NYC on this report as it provides a necessary overview of the opportunities and challenges of disability dance artistry and expands the role of people with disabilities in our city’s vibrant cultural life. MOPD looks forward to continued collaboration with Dance/NYC in our shared mission to increase knowledge and exposure of disability culture to enable artists with disabilities to thrive and succeed in their craft.” Victor Calise,
Commissioner, New York City’s Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities

“In order to grow the role of culture in our communities and the lives of all New Yorkers as a source of cohesion, inspiration, meaning, and vibrancy, we need to ensure everyone is given the opportunity to engage in the arts. While an increasing emphasis on equity and inclusion has driven progress in involving more people in the cultural sector, those with disabilities have not received the same degree of attention. That’s why our CreateNYC cultural plan made a deliberate effort to foreground people with disabilities as artists, audiences, and cultural workers. It’s also why we launched the CreateNYC Disability Forward Fund to support the efforts of cultural organizations to better engage this vital community. Dance/NYC’s latest report builds on the cultural plan’s recommendations and provides a thoughtful look at how these issues implicate the dance community. We applaud this report and all of Dance/NYC’s work to keep disability at the center of the conversation around inclusion in the arts, and we look forward to working alongside the many stakeholders committed to cultivating a more welcoming cultural landscape in NYC.”

Tom Finkelppearl, Commissioner, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs

INTRODUCTION

The study you are about to read is meant to increase knowledge about dance made by disabled artists, performed by disabled artists, and rooted in disability culture and aesthetics, in and beyond the New York City metropolitan area.

The findings and recommendations build on recent Dance/NYC research, including *Disability. Dance. Artistry.* (2016) ([Dance.NYC/disabilitydanceartistry16](https://www.dancenyc.org/disabilitydanceartistry16)) and *Discovering Disability* (2015) ([Dance.NYC/discoveringdisability15](https://www.dancenyc.org/discoveringdisability15)), and are drawn from the experience and knowledge of dance makers supported by Dance/NYC's Disability. Dance. Artistry. Fund ([Dance.NYC/programs/funds/dda](https://www.dancenyc.org/programs/funds/dda)). Established with leadership support from the Ford Foundation, and additional support from the Mertz Gilmore Foundation, the Fund supported six integrated and disability dance artistry productions in the metropolitan area in 2017 and early 2018.

The study surfaces key opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, the dance makers found New York City newly brimming with opportunity for disability arts, spurred in part by a growing advocacy movement, engaged government leadership, an expanding pool of interested funders, and effective promotion and program development furthered by Dance/NYC and partners such as the Disability/Arts/NYC Task Force.

On the other, participants experienced significant barriers to successful performances, from inaccessible facilities and transportation options to extreme financial demands placed on disabled touring artists and subtleties of audience engagement.

Of the factors at play, the research identifies dance makers' presenter relationships as the single most important influence on their performance experience. Consistently, participants associate positive performance

experiences with presenting contexts where “soft” infrastructure (for example, information, collaboration, hospitality, training, and education) is robust and where the people doing the presenting have and sustain an “inclusionary impulse.” Coined in prior Dance/NYC research, “inclusionary impulse” means, in general terms, a demonstrated, active intent to include disabled people, rather than to merely comply with legal or funder requirements. Where it exists, there is an energizing effect for all involved. Where it does not, artists and their artistry suffer.

The report offers five recommendations. First and foremost, it advocates attention to the presenting landscape and activity to advance soft infrastructure, operationalize and replicate inclusionary impulses, and compel consistent action. It puts forward ideas that are both practical and bold, from conducting presenter access audits and promoting the use of access riders in contracts to developing a global center for disability arts, which would significantly evolve New York’s role as a cultural capital.

Second, it proposes training models to enhance artistic quality, with a focus on disabled artists, including disabled teacher training, youth pedagogy, higher degree programs, peer mentorship, and residencies. This recommendation echoes AXIS Dance Company’s study, *The Future of Physically Integrated Dance in the USA* (axisdance.org/s/axisdance-Report-danceusa2017-Final-alltagslo-res.pdf).

Third, the study calls for strengthened funding, in terms of both dollars spent and of internal and communication practices that meaningfully engage disabled artists. The Disability. Dance. Artistry. Fund shows how targeted funding can work and is a model that can be scaled up locally and adapted in additional locations. Dance/NYC is encouraged by the City of New York’s cultural plan, CreateNYC, which coincided with this research and is the first such plan in the United States with disability-specific strategies for increasing cultural access, including designated funding. In this way, the City demonstrates the kind of leadership that is needed at all levels of government.

Fourth, it recommends attention to audience literacy in disability arts and innovating in the use of disability access features at every level of dance production to create new entry points for artists and audiences, disabled

and nondisabled. Dance/NYC participated in Dance/USA's Engaging Dance Audiences program to engage audiences for dance makers supported by the Disability. Dance. Artistry. Fund, and in doing so learned the value of pooling resources and leveraging technology in this work.

Finally, the study recommends efforts to address the unique challenges of touring groups, from a "how to" touring guide to a summit for artistic leadership and touring managers in New York to familiarize groups with local presenters and resources.

Dance/NYC exhorts collaboration as the way to achieve scale and impact and intends its recommendations to apply across a wide range of stakeholders, above all, dance presenters, as well as dance makers, educators, funders, policy makers, and service providers. While the recommendations of this report are disability specific, Dance/NYC also advocates intersectional and racially explicit approaches that consider interrelated forms of oppression that are present in the dance field. Visit Dance.NYC to learn about our racial justice and immigrant initiatives.

A publication like this involves many people. I am pleased to thank The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for its leadership funding of the research; the Ford Foundation and Mertz Gilmore Foundation for their support of the Disability. Dance. Artistry. Fund; the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs and project partners for their involvement; researcher Anne Coates, with Jeffrey G. Nolan, and Dance/NYC's Disability. Dance. Artistry. Task Force for their learning with us from the inception of our disability initiative in 2014; and Alejandra Duque Cifuentes, Hannah Joo, Milena Luna, and the whole Dance/NYC staff for their work on the ground. Above all, I thank the dance makers supported by the Disability. Dance. Artistry. Fund whose experiences shaped the report. The biggest way to repay them is to turn learning into action.

Lane Harwell
Executive Director
Dance/NYC

METHODOLOGY

This study is the third research deliverable of a Dance/NYC effort to advance a cultural ecosystem that expressly and equitably includes disabled artists. It extends early learning from *Disability. Dance. Artistry. (2016)* ([Dance.NYC/DisabilityDanceArtistry16](#)) and *Discovering Disability (2015)* ([Dance.NYC/DiscoveringDisability15](#)).

The goal of the research is to identify and address needs and challenges of performing integrated and disability dance artistry in the metropolitan New York City area, from the perspective of recipients of Dance/NYC's Disability. Dance. Artistry. Fund, a funding effort called for by Dance/NYC research that has made possible six integrated and disability dance productions. Questions of interest include: What barriers do participants experience in working to engage disabled and nondisabled local audiences? How are the participants impacted by the local infrastructure—its buildings, transportation, and communications environment? What funding obstacles exist? Are there program, budget, and policy bright spots that should be encouraged and followed? How do experiences differ for groups touring to New York, and how can local learning inform work in other geographies?

The methodology embraces making meaning from three primary sources gathered from July 2017 to April 2018 to arrive at common and new understandings: first, in-person dialogue in the form of six convening organized to connect the artistic leadership of grantee organizations and their presenters with local artists, which are archived on video at [Youtube.com/DanceNYCorg](https://www.youtube.com/DanceNYCorg); second, grantee applications (27 total, 6 grantees) and mandatory narrative and financial reports (6), which invited feedback on

lessons learned and include collateral such as press and audience testimony; and third, additional content contributions from grantees, which take the form of transcripts from interviews contained in the online publication of this study. The key findings and recommendations presented here surfaced multiple times in one or more of these sources, or multiple times from one source.

In undertaking the public convening and interviews that are the primary sources for this study, Dance/NYC set out to catalyze conversations that would go beyond a pleasing and informative chat into places for research in which transformative suggestions for actions, collaborations, policies, and processes could occur. The underlying concept was to delve deeper—through the time-tested mode of inquiry—to uncover bright spots and solutions-oriented recommendations about how to advance opportunities for performing integrated and disability dance artistry and in doing so advance both the dance field's artistic potential and movements in disability rights.

The work, by design, remains iterative and encourages more inquiry, but it also offers specific actionable recommendations for Dance/NYC's stakeholders, above all, the key segment of dance presenters and their supporters.

Defining Disability. Dance. Artistry.

While differences exist in the language employed by research participants, the terms “disability” and “disabled” as used by Dance/NYC are intended as markers for identification and membership within a specific group—connected by social, political, and cultural experiences—and not intended to assign medical significance. This use of language follows movements in disability studies and disability rights, discussed in detail in Simi Linton’s seminal *Claiming Disability: Knowledge and Identity*. Further, this research encompasses all impairments—mobility and physical, sensory (including, but not limited to, vision and hearing), intellectual, cognitive and/or learning, and psychological, whether readily apparent or not.

For the purpose of this study, “integrated dance” refers to dance made by and with disabled and nondisabled artists. The terms “disability dance” and “disability dance artistry” both include work made and performed exclusively by disabled artists and signal the role disability plays as a positive artistic and generative force.

Participants, Panel & Task Force

As an underlying tenet of its equity work, Dance/NYC embraces the concept of “Nothing Without Us”: no policy should be formed without the full, direct involvement and vesting of members of the affected group.

This study is guided primarily by artists participating in the Disability. Dance. Artistry. Fund; members of the review panel for the Fund, the majority (7/10) of whom identify as disabled; and an ongoing Disability. Dance. Artistry. task force of majority (8/11) disabled artists, educators, and advocates. Established by Dance/NYC in 2014, the task force advises and assists Dance/NYC on all of its activities—advocacy, research, convening, promotion, and funding—addressing disability matters. In partnership with the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities, Dance/NYC convened the task force on June 15, 2017, to set the research direction and convened the task force, grantees, panelists, presenters, and partners on May 10, 2018, to review and interpret findings and generate actionable recommendations.

What is the Disability. Dance. Artistry. Fund?

This research grows out of the Disability. Dance. Artistry. Fund, established by Dance/NYC as part of its Disability. Dance. Artistry. initiative ([Dance.NYC/equity/disability/disability-initiative](https://www.dancenyc.org/equity/disability/disability-initiative)). The purpose of the Fund is to generate dance making and performance by and with disabled artists. This activity is intended to advance artistic innovation and excellence—and, by extension, further disability rights.

In February 2017, Dance/NYC announced the following recipients of funding:

Alice Sheppard/Kinetic Light's *DESCENT* (kineticlight.org)

Alice Sheppard/Kinetic Light's performance of *DESCENT*, an evening-length dance work tells the story of Venus and Andromeda, choreographed by disabled dancer Alice Sheppard in collaboration with disabled dancer Lauren Lawson and disabled lighting and video artist Michael Maag.

AXIS Dance Company's *Radical Impact* (axisdance.org)

Directed by Marc Brew, *Radical Impact* was created in collaboration with Composer/Pianist JooWan Kim, Artistic Director of Hip-Hop Orchestra Ensemble Mik Nawooj. Brew and Kim teamed up for the first time, exploring what it means to be human through music and movement. They investigate themes around politics and identity, while drawing on each dancer's unique experience of how they exist in the world and how their stories can be told through the medium of dance. This performance was part of Gibney Dance's POP series, a program supporting curated rental opportunities for the dance community.

Dancing Wheels Company & School's *Physically Integrated Dance: Past Present and Future* (dancingwheels.org)

Dancing Wheels' restaging of a work by Agnes de Mille, performance of current works in its repertory that were choreographed by New York City-based choreographers, and commissioning and premiering of a work by choreographer David Dorfman.

Full Radius Dance's *Do You Know What You Are Doing Now?* (fullradiusdance.org)

Full Radius Dance's presentation of a physically integrated dance performance with choreographic work by Douglas Scott including "*Do You Know What You Are Doing Now?*" "*Do You Know . . .*" speaks to how insecurity causes uncertainty and anxiety about oneself, others, the situation, and the process of creation. As noted American actress Meryl Streep said, "I have various degrees of confidence and self-loathing. . . . You can have a perfectly horrible day where you doubt your talent. . . . Or that you're boring and they're going to find out that you don't know what you're doing."

Heidi Latsky Dance's *ON DISPLAY* (heidilatskydance.com)

ON DISPLAY disrupts the urban landscape is this dance installation, a mostly still human sculpture court in public spaces where periodic bursts of movement weave throughout featuring performers ranging in age, disability, race, and size. In 2015, at the invitation of the Mayor's Office, *ON DISPLAY* began as a series of guerrilla site-specific installations across NYC to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. After activating local, national, and international sites for the last two years, *ON DISPLAY* energized iconic NYC sites with a new version featuring nuanced and daring images of varied people.

Jess Curtis & Claire Cunningham's *The Way You Look (at Me) Tonight*
(jesscurtisgravity.org)

How do we look at each other? How do we allow ourselves to be seen? How do our bodies shape the ways we perceive the world around us? Can we change how we see others? *The Way You Look (At Me) Tonight* is a social sculpture, a sensory journey for two performers and an audience. Developed in collaboration with noted author and philosopher of perception Dr. Alva Noë, leading UK disabled artist Claire Cunningham and international choreographer and performer Jess Curtis dance, sing, tell stories, and ask questions combining performance, original music, and video to wrestle (sometimes literally) with important questions about our habits and practices of perceiving each other and the world. The New York City run also featured a workshop and symposium about disability, performance, and the philosophy of perception with Movement Research.

Individual grants ranged from \$30,000 to \$15,000 and were dedicated to production costs for integrated dance performances in the metropolitan New York City area from January 2017 through March 2018. Additional support during that window included centralized audience engagement activity, convening opportunities, archiving, and research. These grantees were selected by panel review (Dance.NYC/equity/disability/fund/panel) and were among a competitive pool of 27 self-identified integrated companies that submitted applications in response to an open call (Dance.NYC/equity/disability/fund/call). Key evaluation criteria included artistic excellence; central roles for disabled artist(s) in the proposed projects and demonstrated values of diversity, equity, and inclusion; commitment to sustain engagement with disabled artists in the future; and organizational and financial capacities to execute the projects.

The Disability. Dance. Artistry. Fund by the Numbers

- **\$150,000** in total grants awarded for production expenses for integrated and disability dance artistry productions in the metropolitan New York City area
- **9,176** in person attendees to funded performances, 10–20% of which grantees estimate are disabled
- **1,000+** subscribers to online network for interested audiences (Dance.NYC/equity/disability/network)
- **168** artists engaged, including **73** disabled artists
- **30** performances
- **11** New York City metropolitan area presenting venues as well as additional creative partnerships as a result of their grants
- **10** master classes and workshops associated with funded activity
- **7** public conversations with grantees focused on driving awareness and interest, capturing and sharing lessons, and generating dialogue and partnerships
- **6** self-identified integrated and disability dance artistry company grantees from across the country
- **4** new dance works, by Marc Brew, David Dorfman, James Morrow, and Alice Sheppard
- **1** Beyond Accessibility workshop for presenting venues, in partnership with Alliance for Inclusion in the Arts and New Jersey Theatre Alliance
- **1** research publication

All figures as of May 2018. Visit Dance.NYC (Dance.NYC/equity/disability/fund) to learn more about the Fund and its supporters.

Disability. Dance. Artistry. Fund Demographics

GRANTEES

| | DISABLED | | | ALAANA | | | TOTAL | | |
|------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | F | M | Nonbinary | F | M | Nonbinary | F | M | Nonbinary |
| Board | 7 | 5 | 2 | 9 | 4 | 0 | 20 | 14 | 3 |
| Professional Staff | 5 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 11 | 4 | 1 |
| Support Staff | 1 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 10 | 8 | 2 |
| Artistic Staff/Artists | 26 | 11 | 3 | 16 | 17 | 4 | 45 | 39 | 7 |
| Total | 39 | 20 | 8 | 31 | 27 | 6 | 86 | 65 | 13 |

Alt text: The table displays the number of Disability, Dance, Artistry, Fund grantees by staff position and demographic category: board—disabled and female (7), disabled and male (5), disabled and nonbinary (2), ALAANA and female (9), ALAANA and male (4), ALAANA and nonbinary (0), total female (20), total male (14), total nonbinary (3); professional staff—disabled and female (5), disabled and male (1), disabled and nonbinary (1), ALAANA and female (4), ALAANA and male (2), ALAANA and nonbinary (1), total female (11), total male (4), total nonbinary (1); support staff—disabled and female (1), disabled and male (3), disabled and nonbinary (2), ALAANA and female (2), ALAANA and male (4), ALAANA and nonbinary (1), total female (10), total male (8), total nonbinary (2); artistic staff/artists—disabled and female (26), disabled and male (11), disabled and nonbinary (3), ALAANA and female (16), ALAANA and male (17), ALAANA and nonbinary (4), total female (45), total male (39), total nonbinary (7); grand totals—disabled and female (39), disabled and male (20), disabled and nonbinary (8), ALAANA and female (31), ALAANA and male (27), ALAANA and nonbinary (6), female (86), male (65), nonbinary (13).

APPLICANTS

| | DISABLED | | | ALAANA | | | TOTAL | | |
|------------------------|------------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|-----------|------------|------------|-----------|
| | F | M | Nonbinary | F | M | Nonbinary | F | M | Nonbinary |
| Board | 24 | 14 | 3 | 27 | 17 | | 98 | 59 | 4 |
| Professional Staff | 18 | 13 | 2 | 36 | 22 | 1 | 86 | 41 | 3 |
| Support Staff | 5 | 8 | 2 | 27 | 25 | 1 | 56 | 40 | 2 |
| Artistic Staff/Artists | 83 | 35 | 8 | 96 | 87 | 6 | 272 | 184 | 15 |
| Total | 130 | 70 | 15 | 186 | 151 | 8 | 512 | 324 | 24 |

Alt text: The table displays the number of Disability, Dance, Artistry, Fund applicants by staff position and demographic category: board—disabled and female (24), disabled and male (14), disabled and nonbinary (3), ALAANA and female (27), ALAANA and male (17), ALAANA and nonbinary (0), total female (98), total male (59), total nonbinary (4); professional staff—disabled and female (18), disabled and male (13), disabled and nonbinary (2), ALAANA and female (36), ALAANA and male (22), ALAANA and nonbinary (1), total female (86), total male (41), total nonbinary (3); support staff—disabled and female (5), disabled and male (8), disabled and nonbinary (2), ALAANA and female (27), ALAANA and male (25), ALAANA and nonbinary (1), total female (56), total male (40), total nonbinary (2); artistic staff/artists—disabled and female (83), disabled and male (35), disabled and nonbinary (8), ALAANA and female (96), ALAANA and male (87), ALAANA and nonbinary (6), total female (272), total male (184), total nonbinary (15); grand totals—disabled and female (130), disabled and male (70), disabled and nonbinary (15), ALAANA and female (186), ALAANA and male (151), ALAANA and nonbinary (8), female (512), male (324), nonbinary (24).

Dance/NYC collected these demographic data as part of the Disability. Dance. Artistry. Fund applications. It would prioritize including additional demographic categories—e.g., LGBTQIA status—and intersectional frameworks in future efforts. ALAANA refers here to any person who identifies as an African, Latina/o/x, Asian, Arab and/or Native American (adapted from Grantmakers in the Arts). The total figures are inclusive of all board and staff positions.

KEY LEARNINGS

These findings emerge as through lines across the primary sources used for this study: conversation onstage and among audience members at six convening with the Disability. Dance. Artistry. Fund grant participants; applications and reports; and interviews contained in the appendices in the online version of this report.

New York City Area Gets Mixed Reviews and Has Work to Do

"We've had a lot more support to make this work in Europe. For the last 20 years, we've flown over New York on our way from San Francisco to London and Berlin." —Jess Curtis, Jess Curtis/Gravity

The New York City area gets mixed reviews as a site for performing integrated and disability dance artistry. Long considered a dance capital with outsized reach, it is newly brimming with opportunity for the disability arts, spurred in part by a growing advocacy movement, engaged City leadership, a growing pool of interested funders, and effective promotion and program development furthered by Dance/NYC and artswide partners, such as the new Disability/Arts/NYC Task Force. At the same time, the participants find the New York City area less stellar than other metropolitan areas in noteworthy ways, in particular the accessibility of its transportation system and performing arts infrastructure, the financial demands placed on touring artists, and the subtleties of audience engagement and hospitality.

Presenter Relationships and Presenters' "Inclusionary Impulse" Are Essential

"They had the infrastructure to support the work, but also the grace and generosity to support the culture that we brought."
—Alice Sheppard, Kinetic Light

The single most important factor influencing participants' experience performing integrated and disability dance artistry is their presenter relationship. Consistently, participants associate their positive performance experiences with presenting contexts where "soft" infrastructure (for example, information, collaboration, hospitality, training, education) is robust and where the people doing the presenting have and sustain their "inclusionary impulse." Coined in prior Dance/NYC research, "inclusionary impulse" means, in general terms, demonstrated, active intent to include disabled people, rather than merely complying with legal or funder requirements (Visit *Discovering Disability* (2015) ([Dance.NYC/DiscoveringDisability15](https://www.dance.nyc.gov/discovering-disability))). When it exists, there is an energizing effect for those involved. The presenting community's challenge and creative opportunity is to operationalize and replicate this factor.

Artistry Is Keyword and Unifier

"We let the audience ask all their questions about disability, then we guided them back to the art and to the dancers and to all the stories that are there." —Heidi Latsky, Heidi Latsky Dance

"Artistry," in the sense of artistic excellence and innovation, shows up as the top recurring keyword across data sources. As signaled by participants, the pursuit of artistry—rather than educational or therapeutic goals—is a unifying theme for their work and a bridge for engaging potential stakeholders, from presenters to supporters and audiences unfamiliar with or lacking interest in disability. Critically, attention to artistry may not only advance the performance of integrated and disability dance artistry but also shape the creative output of the wider dance field.

Developing Training Models Is Vital for Artistic Quality

"There is still the issue of college and university dance departments. We need to teach the teachers how both the 'sit-down' and 'stand-up' dancers can earn the same degree."
—Mary Verdi-Fletcher, Dancing Wheels Company & School

Research sources emphasize the importance of training to enhance the artistic quality of integrated and disability dance artistry performances, with a focus on disabled performers and choreographers. In particular, participants highlighted untapped and undertapped opportunities for teacher training, youth pedagogy, higher degree programs, peer mentorship, and residencies, both in New York City and beyond. This finding is consistent with recent national research conducted by AXIS Dance Company, *The Future of Physically Integrated Dance in the USA* (axisdance.org/s/AxisDance-Report-DanceUSA2017-Final-AltTagslo-res.pdf).

Targeting Disability-Specific Funding Works

Targeting funding can work as a tool to generate dance made and performed by and with disabled artists, as indicated by the success of the Disability. Dance. Artistry. Fund across a range of early benchmarks captured during the grant period: number and range of productions (for example, 30 performances and 4 new works), the development of audiences and supporters (9,000+ attendees), reach and visibility (1,000+ subscribers to network of interested audiences) and relationships formed with 11 presenters that are an important foundation for future work. In the long term, success will be determined by broadened and sustained field and public engagement.

Funders Are Skeptical of Disability and Opportunities Are Limited

"I know from feedback on grant applications that there is a great deal of skepticism about the value of disability."
—Alice Sheppard, Kinetic Light

While there is evidence of growing interest in funding disability arts, locally and nationally, the undiluted assessment of study participants is that to most arts funders, disability and disabled artists are viewed skeptically, and that what is already a challenging funding landscape for any dance maker is worse for them. Lacking additional sources to approach for their Disability. Dance. Artistry. Fund-supported productions, participants worked creatively

to generate and redistribute income, and/or shrink costs to make their budgets whole (no deficit budgets were reported).

Top 5 Sources in addition to Disability. Dance. Artistry. Fund

1. General operating or budgeted touring funds
2. Revenue share on tickets
3. Workshops and classes for fees
4. New funds raised
5. Cut elements from program.

It Is Time for an Intersectional Approach: Disability and Race

The data suggest the workforce of integrated and disability dance artistry groups, including disabled and nondisabled workers, may be more racially diverse than the wider dance workforce, while significantly less diverse than the local New York City area population.

Percentage identifying as African, Latina/o/x, Asian, Arab, and/or Native American (ALAANA):

- 39% of the grantee workforce
- 40% of the Disability. Dance. Artistry. Fund applicant workforce
- 31% of a recent dance workforce sample (visit recent *State of NYC Dance at Dance.NYC/StateofDance2016*)
- 56% of the local population, according to census data (2016 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates).

Yet with few exceptions, the narratives on disability brought forward through this research—and elsewhere—avoid explicit reference to race and the interrelated forms of oppression that are present in the dance field and are priorities for Dance/NYC. It is time for those of us working in disability to address race, just as it is time for disability to be centered in broader racial equity movements.

It Is Time for an Intersectional Approach: Disability and Gender

The data suggest the workforce of integrated and disability dance artistry skews female, as is the case for the wider dance workforce. However, a higher percentage of this workforce identifies as nonbinary than of the wider dance workforce and local population.

Percentage identifying as female:

- 58% of the grantee workforce
- 59% of the applicant workforce
- 65% of a recent dance workforce sample (visit recent *State of NYC Dance at Dance.NYC/StateofDance2016*)
- 52% of the local population, according to census data (2016 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates).

Percentage identifying as male:

- 30% of the grantee workforce
- 38% of the applicant workforce
- 33% of the recent dance workforce sample
- 48% of the local population, according to census data (2016 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates).

Percentage identifying as nonbinary:

- 12% of the grantee workforce
- 3% of the applicant workforce
- 1% of the recent dance workforce sample
- <1% of the local population (2016 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates).

The data gathered allow for a limited intersectional analysis: namely, of gender in relation to disability and race, and percentage of the workforce identifying as nonbinary is high across all segmentations. 12% of the disabled grantee workforce and 9% of the disabled applicant workforce identify as nonbinary, and 7% of the ALAANA grantee workforce and 2% of the ALAANA applicant workforce identify as nonbinary.

Small-Budget Groups' Challenges Raise Questions About the Future

When segmented by budget size and structure, those integrated and disability dance artistry companies and independent artists with the smallest budgets are most challenged in securing funding to perform their work. While this finding is echoed in the wider dance field (visit recent *State of NYC Dance at Dance.NYC/StateofDance2016*), the high costs of access for disabled artists renders their challenges more acute and threatens the future of the genre. As one participant offers, unless a dance maker has access to other resources (such as operating reserves), "it is not possible under current funding mechanisms for independent artists to build work at this scale."

Touring Artists Face Unique Obstacles

"It sounds horrible that I would put my company in this position, but it's done by mutual agreement, and it's the difference between being presented, and not being presented." —Douglas Scott, Full Radius Dance

Participants cite a range of challenges unique to touring: a lack of time on the ground, weaker presenter relationships and knowledge of space, unfamiliar audiences, and the high costs of travel and accommodation, especially in New York. Participants also signaled that, to varying degrees and less so with groups with longer histories in touring, these challenges resulted in compromises to the integrity of their performance in the New York area. As one stark example, a touring group discovered their backstage dressing rooms were inaccessible only after arriving at the venue. The findings suggest any array of opportunities, from providing direct assistance to groups in connecting with accessible venues to helping presenters understand what accessible means and how to verify the state of their buildings.

There is Opportunity to Engage NYC Audiences in Integrated and Disability Dance Artistry

“Investing in an interpreter is an empty gesture if we don’t invest in outreach.” —Jess Curtis, Jess Curtis/Gravity

While the participants drew in and engaged audiences with varying success, they recognized the opportunity to more deeply engage New York City audiences, both disabled and nondisabled audience members, in integrated and disability dance artistry. Participants emphasize the need to address audience, supporter, and press familiarity and literacy across marketing and communications and outreach components (for example, initial promotional outreach, ticketing, experience of the performance, postperformance feedback) and opportunities for pooling resources and leveraging technology in this work as well.

Attention to Disabled Audiences Creates Exponential Value

Research sources indicate that targeted attention to disability access features and the variety of experiences possible for disabled audiences can create exponential value. It provides new entry points both for the choreographers and artists and for disabled and nondisabled audiences, advancing artistic innovation. This learning has vast implications not only for performing integrated and disability dance artists but also for the wider field of creative production.

Crisis of Affordability Impacts Disabled Artists

The crisis of affordability that exists for New York City area residents and visitors across sectors is magnified for disabled artists, who face the added burden of accessibility costs, from travel to personal care assistants, with too few opportunities for funding. One artist offers: “The only way we got here is through this funding. We would not, we absolutely would not, have been able to come to New York and present this work for the \$2,000 to \$5,000 fees I’ve been offered.”

Space Needs Are Critical

Space needs are critical for disabled artists, mirroring findings on the wider dance workforce from recent Dance/NYC research, for example, *Advancing Fiscally Sponsored Dance Artists & Projects* ([Dance.NYC/DanceFiscalSponsors2017](#)). In particular, participants highlight the need for increased accessibility, affordability, and availability of spaces to perform, rehearse and develop work, and either live or stay a while. One local artist reported having a show scheduled in October and finding no accessible rehearsal space available in September to prepare.

ADA Compliance is a Struggle for NYC Presenters

While there was evidence of presenters' capacity to move beyond compliance to "inclusionary impulse," select presenters' understanding, communicating, and executing the minimum compliance requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act were noticeable challenges. Participating artists reported a myriad of issues, ranging from inaccessible restrooms and entrances to signage. Information gaps exist around the availability and service status of accessible amenities.

Inaccessible Public Transportation is a Challenge for Artists and Audiences

"I didn't even go near public transport because I've tried many times in the past and it's just been an awful experience."

—Marc Brew, AXIS Dance Company

New York City's public transportation and parking options pose a significant challenge for disabled artists and audiences and the future of integrated and disability dance artistry. Participating artists cite as challenges the unreliability of accessible subway stations, the distance between venues and accessible stations, and overcrowding that severely impacts disabled riders. Many, including local artists, indicate a preference for commercial transportation options, such as Uber or Lyft, with minimal and intermittent accessibility, or personal vehicles outfitted for accessibility.

What is the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)?

"The ADA is one of America's most comprehensive pieces of civil rights legislation that prohibits discrimination and guarantees that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as everyone else to participate in the mainstream of American life—to enjoy employment opportunities, to purchase goods and services, and to participate in state and local government programs and services. Modeled after the civil rights act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin—and section 504 of the rehabilitation act of 1973—the ADA is an 'equal opportunity' law for people with disabilities.

"To be protected by the ADA, one must have a disability, which is defined by the ADA as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment. The ADA does not specifically name all of the impairments that are covered."

United States Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, Information and Technical Assistance on the Americans with Disabilities Act, [ADA.Gov/ADA_intro.htm](https://www.ada.gov/ADA_intro.htm).

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is Dance/NYC's overarching recommendation that work focused on advancing the performance of integrated and disability dance artistry continue and deepen.

Chief among the priorities that emerge from the research is activity focused on enhancing relationships between performers and presenters through presenting contexts with robust "soft" infrastructure (for example, information, collaboration, hospitality, training, and education) and where the people doing the presenting have an "inclusionary impulse"—a demonstrated, active intent to include disabled people. The task of building a soft infrastructure is twofold: to attend to the details that operationally connect activities, especially communication and information, and to attend to the subtleties of ethic and culture that motivate the people charged with delivering a rich, accommodative service.

The five highlights offered here are neither comprehensive nor absolute but are intended to offer the reader a framework for moving forward. Grounded in the available qualitative data, these highlights are commonly held by project participants and apply across key stakeholders, above all, dance presenters, as well as dance makers, educators, funders, policy makers, and service providers.

While generated with a focus that was discipline and geography-specific, the recommendations also invite arts and culturewide activity to advance the New York City metropolitan area as a disability arts capital as well as national and international efforts. An important next step for Dance/NYC in continuing and deepening its own work will be to leverage an organizational alliance with Dance/USA, the national service organization for professional dance, and other key partners to help put these findings and the stakeholders engaged in these conversations into action. It is only within a shared framework of responsibility that real change can be achieved.

1. Advance Presenting Landscape for Integrated & Disability Dance Artistry

- Transform the presentation of integrated and disability dance artistry and wider field of disability arts—and advance the New York City metropolitan area as a disability arts capital—by creating a new international center for disability arts focused on all aspects of creative process and production;
- Operationalize, sustain, and replicate “inclusionary impulses” in the current dance presenting community, defined as active intent to include disabled people, rather than to merely comply with legal or funder requirements, by:
 - Investing directly in presenters with an “inclusionary impulse,” as identified by disabled artists;
 - Capturing and lifting up these presenters’ practices and learning through peer-to-peer and public dialogue and publication;
- Rally dance presenters to set and achieve common goals for program impact on disabled artists, especially:
 - Growing the number and range of integrated and disability dance artistry performances presented locally, both in disability-specific context and context where the work is presented among multiple genres;
 - Copresenting and touring work nationally and internationally;
 - Developing programs focused on the creative process and artistic quality, including short- and long-term residencies for presented groups;
 - Enhancing educational partnerships to make more meaningful connections for presented groups and support disabled students from the public school classroom to the stage; and
 - Developing additional offerings for presented artists and companies, such as accessible administrative space and audience engagement programs;
- Strengthen soft infrastructure (for example, information, collaboration, hospitality, training, and education) for the presenting landscape by:

- Addressing curatorial practice; cultivating expertise with in disability aesthetics and disability rights, as well as intersectional and racially explicit frameworks; and advancing disabled curators and presenters;
 - Conducting and sharing comprehensive audits of presenters and facilities' compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and additional access features to address important information gaps, especially for artists;
 - Offering presenters “Beyond Accessibility” training to grow a culture and ethic of hospitality and accommodation, building on “Beyond Accessibility” training models developed by Dance/NYC’s partners, Alliance for Inclusion in the Arts and New Jersey Theatre Alliance;
 - Providing training on marketing, communications, and outreach for disabled and nondisabled audiences for integrated and disability dance artistry;
 - Exploring blue sky opportunities such as developing a certification program for fully accessible buildings modeled after LEED, or Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, the green building rating system;
- Address hard infrastructure (buildings, technology) issues where they exist, ideally, through dedicated capital funding, including small capital gifts, which are harder to access but critical for small-budget presenters;
 - Provide integrated and disability dance artistry groups support in strengthening presenting relationships, for example, by developing contract riders requiring access features;
 - Engage mainstream dance community in influencing presenters by utilizing inclusion riders, prioritizing access features and the presentation of disabled artists;
 - Apply intersectional and racially explicit frameworks while ensuring disabled artists are present at every stage of developing, implementing, and evaluating presenting initiatives impacting their work; and
 - Leverage presenter affinity organizations, such as the Alliance of Resident Theatres/New York, Association of Performing Arts Professionals, and the Presenter League of the New York Dance and Performance Awards (the “Bessies”) to foster mentorship and shared learning among presenters, locally, nationally, and internationally.

What are the presenting partners doing now to advance integrated and disability dance artistry?

Dance/NYC invited presenters to provide brief responses to the following statement: "From our experience in working with a Disability. Dance. Artistry. Fund grantee, our organization and/or programs have applied learning and implemented changes by . . ."

Gibney

Disability artistry is increasingly woven into the fiber of Gibney's programmatic offerings and approach. Our experience working with a number of Disability. Dance. Artistry. Fund grantees as both a presenter (AXIS Dance Company, Jess Curtis and Claire Cunningham) and as a provider of additional support for creation (Alice Sheppard/Kinetic Light), undoubtedly furthered our commitment to disabled artists. The grant offered the opportunity to not only present work of esteemed companies (to full houses) but also created space for public conversation, engagement, and artistic training. In the coming year we will continue to build upon what we have learned through the grant process. We will work closely with Disability/Arts/NYC Task Force (DANT), undergo a capital project to create seamless access between our two floors, incorporate funding for accommodations into our budget requests, expand our reach to include a diversity of disabilities, support a variety of work by emerging artists that celebrates integrated and disability artistry, and continue to provide a variety of ongoing opportunities for training and education.

Friends of the High Line

At the High Line, equity writ large, and mirroring the diverse identities that make up New York City, is a central part of our mission. Thus, working with artists and catering to audiences with different abilities is a priority as well as a continuous learning process. Our collaborations with Heidi Latsky Dance and Our Voices (vimeo.com/178207108) have definitely spearheaded this process, providing opportunities to assess our physical, structural, and staff's accessibility, both for artists and for visitors. We reevaluated our production schedules and planning; we conducted basic ASL training for staff and partnered with ASL interpreters (students at LaGuardia Community College); and we did targeted outreach and included encouraging language for all New Yorkers to participate in our programming, making accommodation available. We now aim to integrate those lessons into everything we do: we are working on a Best Practices Manual for the larger organization and considering an artist-led accessibility audit next year—to evaluate everything from signage to programming content and bathrooms. Through working with other organizations and initiatives such as Dance/NYC, we aim to strengthen and broaden our work, continually expanding our roster of artists and outreach opportunities, so all people can truly feel welcome and like they belong here.

Lincoln Center

Dance/NYC's case study research on the Disability. Dance. Artistry. has been a phenomenal resource for us, both through connecting to disabled artists and educating on topics of the field as a whole. The symposium and convenings throughout the year provided exciting dialogue to deepen understanding of disability arts through the lens of dance, and has made staff more thoughtful advocates within my organization. From an institutional perspective, the research and convenings have also helped shape Accessibility at Lincoln Center's goals to focus not only on audience engagement and staffing, but also representation of disability on our stages.

New York Live Arts

From our experience in working with a Disability. Dance. Artistry. Fund grantee, our organization and/or programs have applied learning and implemented programming changes by increasing our commitment to being more inclusive in our residencies, classes, and commissioning programs; improving etiquette and communication practices with disabled patrons; and fundraising for structural improvements to make our theater and lobby more accessible to audiences and artists with disabilities.

New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Jerome Robbins Dance Division

The Jerome Robbins Dance Division received a separate grant from the Mertz Gilmore Foundation (MGF) to document disabled dance from 2017–2019. All dance companies recorded so far as part of the MGF grant were Disability. Dance. Artistry. Fund grantees. The Dance Division supports the efforts of the MGF grant, and is committed to documenting, preserving, and making accessible the artistry of disabled dance. One important takeaway we learned in this process is the need to include an ASL interpreter in a recording if one is part of the event. It also came to light that our usual camera locations in theaters we are documenting in were often in designated wheelchair seat areas. This made us rethink our camera locations so that these seats will remain available to audience members in wheelchairs whenever possible.

Are you programming an event and seeking access resources? Check out Dance/NYC Tools.

Events Accessibility Guide

[Dance.NYC/uploads/Events Accessibility Guide_Final.pdf](https://www.dance.nyc.gov/uploads/Events%20Accessibility%20Guide_Final.pdf)

Events Accessibility Self-Evaluation Toolkit

[Dance.NYC/uploads/Events Accessibility Self-Evaluation Toolkit.pdf](https://www.dance.nyc.gov/uploads/Events%20Accessibility%20Self-Evaluation%20Toolkit.pdf)

2. Train & Develop Disabled Artists

- Improve artistic quality of integrated and disability dance artistry performances by:
 - Providing choreographers and dancers with the space, time, and resources they need to hone their craft in the form of short- and long-term residencies, ideally at presenting venues, and rehearsal space subsidies;
 - Expanding instructional offerings for disabled artists in both disability-specific and mainstream settings, from choreographic centers to dance studios;
- Strengthen the pipeline for disabled artists by:
 - Expanding dance education opportunities for disabled children, particularly in the public schools and with a focus on inclusion settings; address compliance and access issues in public school buildings and their dance facilities;
 - Growing partnerships between integrated and disability dance artists and companies and schools;
 - Meaningfully integrating disabled students into conservatory and university dance departments, including graduate programs;
- Advance educators of integrated and disability dance artistry by:
 - Refining and broadly disseminating relevant pedagogy, including teacher training, using an intersectional and racially explicit framework;
 - Training, certifying, employing, and investing in disabled dance educators;
- Pursue intersectional opportunities for training and development, including partnerships with organizations focused on training African, Latina/o/x, Asian Arab, and Native American (ALAANA) artists;

- Support complementary training initiatives: for example, Disability/Arts/NYC Task Force Disability Arts Boot Camp, grounding artists in broad disability issues and building advocates and allies; and
- Create opportunities for mentorship and shared learning locally, nationally, and internationally by:
 - Pairing the artistic leadership of emerging groups with that of midcareer or established groups, as may tie to history in the field and budget size; and
 - Fostering dialogue among presenters, educators, and disabled artists at and across every level of the pipeline about training and development.

Seeking public school dance education resources?

NYC Department of Education

The New York City Department of Education's Office of Arts & Special Projects is strengthening its emphasis on arts education for disabled children. During the study period, the office worked with community partners, including Dance/NYC, to publish the Arts and Students with Disabilities Online Resource Compendium (schools.nyc.gov/offices/teachlearn/arts/files/swd/Dance_SWD_intro-resources.pdf) as a support for general education arts teachers who are also teaching students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms. The department's Dance Education for Diverse Learners: A Special Education Supplement to the Blue Print for Teaching and Learning in Dance (schools.nyc.gov/offices/teachlearn/arts/files/Blueprints/Dance/Dance_Spec_Ed_Supplement.pdf) is a practical resource for dance educators and other educators who use movement in the classroom.

OPPORTUNITY SPOTLIGHT:

Develop Disabled Artist Residencies

As one example of how to improve artistic quality of integrated and disability dance artistry performances and build critical relationships between performers and presenters, consider developing targeted short and long-term residency programs for disabled artists. Such programs could provide artists with honoraria; additional stipends for access costs that may be necessary, for instance, travel stipends for personal care assistants; rehearsal space time; dance classes in both integrated and disability dance forms and other genres; administrative space; private or public studio showings, open rehearsals, and/or public talks to generate dialogue and feedback; and in-kind marketing, communications, and outreach to drive visibility for resident artists. The residencies effort could be piloted at multiple sites and coordinated in partnership with local service providers to provide critical training to presenters and drive mentorship and shared learning among artists and presenters. If shared widely, the learning could be leveraged to inform future training and development priorities and to achieve scale, including the uptake of case studies and best practices by the wider presenting community.

3. Strengthen Funding for Performing Integrated & Disability Dance Artistry

- First and foremost, invest in the artists and companies performing integrated and disability dance artistry by:
 - Advancing disability-specific arts funding initiatives, both project funding initiatives, such as the Disability. Dance. Artistry. Fund, and general support initiatives;
 - Integrate disability as a funding priority in existing arts portfolios, including production and touring awards;
 - Allocating discrete funds for disabled artists' access purposes, for instance, additional travel or personal care assistants;
- Secondly, invest in the wider ecosystem of integrated and disability dance artistry, from presenters to service providers, with a focus on soft infrastructure and capital expenditures needed to guarantee compliance;
- Expand purview of funding to ensure small-budget groups, fiscally sponsored artists, and independent artists are served (Visit *Dance/NYC's Advancing Fiscally Sponsored Dance Artists and Projects* [[Dance.NYC/DanceFiscalSponsors2017](#)] which suggests disabled dance makers may be finding a home in the fiscal sponsorship arena);
- Strengthen collaboration among funders traditionally focused on the arts and funders focused on disability, race, and broader equity matters to grow the pie of resources available and to define and achieve common objectives;
- Support integrated and disability dance artists and companies in identifying and accessing funding by expanding technical assistance and training, especially for newer and smaller-budget groups;

- Transform internal practices by:
 - Training funding decision-makers in disability aesthetics and disability rights;
 - Improving funders' facilities and communications to ensure equitable access for disabled applicants and grantees; ensure adequate time frames (six weeks minimum) and also offer flexible deadlines for grant applications;
 - Overhauling data-gathering practices to better understand grantees' engagement with disability and inequities that exist in funding to drive accountability over time;
 - Employing intersectional and racially explicit frameworks while ensuring that disabled artists are present at every stage of developing, implementing, and evaluating funding initiatives impacting their work; and
- Leverage funder affinity organizations, particularly Grantmakers in the Arts, which can do more to move the needle with respect to funding by demonstrating best practices to their members, cultivating partnerships, and delivering relevant field advocacy, research, communications, training, and convening.

Disability. Dance. Artistry. Fund

Dance/NYC's Disability. Dance. Artistry. Fund provides a model for continued funding in the New York City metropolitan area, as well as, critically, a model for colleague funders or regrantors to deploy in additional geographies.

The model can be expanded and adapted to meet local needs and resource environments. Complementary activities pursued by Dance/NYC include:

- Convening, especially to connect touring artists to local dance communities and to connect grantees to each other to share learning;
- Centralized audience engagement activities to grow disabled and nondisabled audiences for participating groups and the genre;
- Archiving, by the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts;
- Research, grounded in survey research and dialogue; and
- Professional development for presenting communities.

Dance/NYC's priorities for any future round of funding are to include new grantees; increase geographic diversity within the grantee cohort, especially by including more international artists; identifying more grantees working in disability exclusive contexts, in addition to integrated (disabled and nondisabled) contexts, to encourage this work; identifying artists with disabilities (e.g., blind artists) not represented in the current grantee cohort; and pursuing complementary activities, with a focus on providing additional training and resources for presenting venues, additional training and financial resources for touring groups, and incentive funding for groups to act on unique opportunities identified through local activity.

As a natural next step, the project could be simultaneously adapted in one or more cities or regions—potentially, one of the sites of AXIS Dance Company's The Future of Physically Integrated Dance regional convening initiative (axisdance.org/s/AxisDance-Report-DanceUSA2017-Final-AltTagslo-res.pdf)—with an active disability arts community and a funding entity and service provider positioned to manage the program.

Creating a framework for shared learning among sites is requisite for driving national and international change. For more on Dance/NYC's Disability. Dance. Artistry Fund, visit Dance.NYC/equity/disability/fund).

City of New York's CreateNYC Cultural Planning

CreateNYC, the City of New York's first cultural plan released in 2017, is the first such plan in the United States to address disability equity and serves a valuable model. Echoing recommendations from past Dance/NYC research and consistent with recommendations offered here, the cultural plan commits the City to support people with disabilities at all levels of cultural life through these eight strategies:

1. Provide support to access-related services such as American Sign Language interpretation and audio description for audience members and for artists;
2. Begin to specify in all Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) communications including requests for proposals and surveys that terms like "diversity" and "underrepresented groups" include disability;
3. Support disability arts, artistry, and artists with disabilities as part of supporting culture;
4. Encourage organizations to include information on accessibility accommodations and point of contact for public events;
5. Increase inclusion of cultural stakeholders with disabilities on DCLA and regrant panels;
6. Participate in regular discussions with the disability and disability arts communities;
7. Support organizations that promote disability arts and employ, support, and serve New Yorkers with disabilities; partner with DCLA grantee organizations on professional development and capacity building to increase employment of artists and cultural workers with disabilities; and
8. Create opportunities for increased access and inclusion at DCLA-funded cultural capital projects for artists, cultural workers, and audiences with disabilities.

Identified partners include the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities, Department of Design and Construction, Arts Councils, and the wider cultural community. For Dance/NYC, the plan represents an important milestone and also a platform for continued advocacy to ensure these strategies are operationalized, funded, measured, and refined over time. Excerpted from CreateNYC, the City of New York's cultural plan.

createnyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/CreateNYC_Report_FIN.pdf

CreateNYC Disability Forward Fund

As announced in May 2018, the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) has established the CreateNYC Disability Forward Fund, a pilot initiative designed to support new and ongoing efforts to engage people with disabilities as artists, cultural workers, and audience members.

The goals of the CreateNYC Disability Forward Fund are to:

- Support substantive projects that deepen cultural organizations' engagement of people with disabilities, including artists, cultural workers, and/or audience members;
- Support new work created by and/or with people with disabilities;
- Advance the employment of people with disabilities working as artists and cultural workers;
- Encourage the cultural sector to think creatively and resourcefully about the equitable representation and inclusion of individuals with disabilities in its program offerings; and
- Promote exemplary models of diverse and creative approaches to engaging disability communities through cultural programming.

The Disability Forward Fund is providing \$350,000 to arts organizations and cultural institutions. Grants range in size from \$10,000 to \$35,000 and are awarded through an application process open to the more than 900 organizations currently supported by DCLA through the Cultural Institutions Group or the Cultural Development Fund.

Visit the DCLA website for more on the Disability Forward Fund:
nyc.gov/site/dcla/about/disabilityforward-application.page

4. Grow & Engage Audiences in Integrated & Disability Dance Artistry

- Address challenge of audience and supporter familiarity and literacy in integrated and disability dance artistry by:
 - Delivering messaging and storytelling at every level of marketing, communications, and outreach (for example, initial promotional outreach, ticketing, experience of the performance, postperformance feedback) that is grounded in the lived and learned experiences of disabled artists;
 - Exploring varied media platforms, for example, video, to amplify messaging;
 - Mobilizing disabled and nondisabled audience members as allies, equipped with messaging and platforms to educate and encourage new audiences;
- Address compliance issues and promote full accessibility in marketing, communications, and outreach to disabled audiences by:
 - Providing in-person and online training on best practices to performing and presenting groups and relevant staff and consultants;
 - Preparing and publishing accessibility protocols; and
- Seize the opportunity to explore and innovate in the use of disability access features at every level of dance production, creating new entry points for both choreographers and artist and for disabled and nondisabled audiences.
- Leveraging technology to achieve efficiencies of scale in marketing, communications, and outreach by:
 - Deploying centralizing platforms such as the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities events calendar (nyc.gov/site/mopd/events/calendar.page) and Dance/NYC's website Dance.NYC, which has a Disability. Dance. Artistry. Dance Maker Directory (Dance.NYC/equity/disability/workartists), performance listings, video testimony, and ads, among other features;

- Building and using local and national databases of audiences interested in integrated and disability dance artistry, such as Dance/NYC’s Disability. Dance. Artistry. Network model (Dance.NYC/equity/disability/network);
- Explore nontraditional venues, outside of the proscenium theaters, and new ways of making dance to connect with audiences in new and unexpected ways;
- Pursue intersectional opportunities for audience engagement, including partnerships with organizations focused on engaging African, Latina/o/x, Asian Arab, and Native American (ALAANA) audiences;
- Address challenge of press literacy and engagement in integrated and disability dance artistry by:
 - Convening dance press and disabled artists, potentially in partnership with the Dance Critics Association, to generate relationships, dialogue, and learning;
 - Preparing and publishing writing press-focused protocols and language guides;
 - Cultivating disabled dance writers; and
- Create opportunities for shared learning among presenters, artists, and audiences of integrated and disability dance artistry about audience engagement, including failures and bright spots; and for sharing learning with the wider field of dance.

Join the Disability. Dance. Artistry. Network!

The Disability. Dance. Artistry. Network is a community dedicated to promoting integrated and disability dance artistry, and advancing inclusion and access to the art form for disabled people. As a member of the DDA Network, you will receive e-newsletters with information on integrated and disability dance artistry in the New York City metropolitan area. If you would like to receive the latest industry news, and join the DDA network, please opt in here: surveygizmo.com/s3/3572845/Disability-Dance-Artistry-Network-Opt-In

Dance/USA's Engaging Dance Audiences

Engaging Dance Audiences, administered by Dance/USA and made possible with the generous funding of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, helped Dance/NYC engage audiences for integrated and disability dance artistry by cultivating, showcasing, and disseminating the stories of disabled artists connected to participants in this study. In doing so, it generated learning for Dance/NYC's future activity in the metropolitan New York City area and models that may be adapted elsewhere.

Dance/NYC undertook three primary audience engagement activities:

1. Centralized Online Marketing/Communications at Dance.NYC

Dance/NYC provided centralized, pro bono online marketing, communications, and outreach services to each participating dance group to coincide with their local productions, including listings, e-communications, banner ads, and platforms for audience engagement at Dance/NYC. It developed the Disability. Dance. Artistry. Network for interested audiences.

2. NEW YORKERS FOR DANCE Video Campaign

Dance/NYC extended its audience engagement campaign NEW YORKERS FOR DANCE to produce and promote accessible video statements by integrated and disability dance artistry creators, performers, advocates, educators, and audiences on the role and value of their artistry. Visit Youtube.com/DanceNYCorg for videos produced by Dance/NYC as well as those inspired by colleagues.

3. Disability. Dance. Artistry. Dance Maker Directory at Dance.NYC (Dance.NYC/equity/disability/network)

Dance/NYC grew content, functionality, and conducted marketing, communications, and outreach for an online directory of disabled artists at Dance.NYC.

Of special value to touring groups, which lack a local audience, these activities resulted in significant new audience engagement content development by disabled audiences; individual and collective learning among participants about how to engage disabled audiences that will encourage ongoing activity; greater organizational capacity at Dance/NYC to engage disabled audiences; and greater engagement of audiences for integrated and disability dance artistry as measured by its online network, now at 1,000+ subscribers. Dance/NYC convened participants to drive shared learning for their individual and collective audience engagement.

Dance/NYC recognizes as key local opportunities continuing these activities to engage audiences in ongoing dance activity, deepening its commitment to digital storytelling to address persistent issues of audience familiarity and literacy that are critical to engagement, and further motivating its online network as ambassadors for the work.

The activities Dance/NYC has carried out could be adapted by presenters or service organizations elsewhere, especially those who are working simultaneously with a number of disabled artists and can achieve scale. A framework for shared learning among those doing local audience engagement work in different geographies, and for building shared online audiences, could catalyze national engagement.

For more of Dance/NYC's learning in Engaging Dance Audiences, visit the webinar recording of "Engaging with the Body: Disabled, Black, Liberated" at vimeo.com/267809180.

Looking for accessibility resources? Try Theatre Development Fund (TDF)

TDF Accessibility Programs provides a membership service for theatergoers who are hard of hearing or deaf, have low vision or are blind, who cannot climb stairs or who require aisle seating or wheelchair locations.

These four services are available to TDF Accessibility Members:

1. Accessible Seating
2. Audio description at select performances
3. Open captioning at select performances
4. Sign language interpreting at select performances

Visit the TDF website to learn more: tdf.org/nyc/33/TDFAccessibilityPrograms

Audimance, a Mobile App for Listening to Dance

Kinetic Light is developing an open source web and mobile application that increases access to dance for blind, visually impaired, and nonvisual audience members. Historically, access for these audiences members has taken the form of audio or verbal description. Kinetic Light asks the questions "What if you could listen to dance? What if dance were both an aural and visual art form?" spurred by awareness that audiences wanted a more "encompassing aesthetic experience," thereby moving accessibility into a space that reaches beyond accommodation. The app, designed to be compatible with the users' own phones and tablets, allows audience members to create their own auditory experience of dance. Content for the app includes traditional description, a prose dramatic script, a poetry cycle, and a track recording the sounds of the dancers themselves. The app is designed and developed by Kinetic Light member Laurel Lawson. (alicesheppard.com/disabilitydanceworks/audimance-mobile-app-project)

5. Address the Challenges of Touring Groups

- Create and support existing and new touring opportunities for integrated and disability dance artistry by:
 - Continuing and expanding the Disability. Dance. Artistry. Fund to bring groups to the New York City area, and adapt the model to different geographies;
 - Exploring opportunities for touring split bill programs to achieve logistical efficiencies and cost savings, foster shared learning, and drive collective audience engagement, including both integrated and disability dance artistry-specific programs and programs including this work among multiple genres;
 - Pursuing targeted program opportunities for local and United States-based integrated and disability dance artistry groups to travel internationally, and for international groups to travel here, driving cross-cultural dialogue;
- Pursue intersectional opportunities for touring, including partnerships with organizations focused on engaging African, Latina/o/x, Asian Arab, and Native American (ALAANA) audiences;
- Address touring groups' need for greater awareness and engagement of local presenters and resources by:
 - Piloting a summit for artistic leadership and touring managers in New York to familiarize groups with local presenters and resources;
 - Centralizing information about presenters, including their access features, and local resources, such as including travel, accommodation, and rehearsal space;
 - Preparing and publishing a guide on best practices for touring, including sample rider for presenters with access requirements;

- Grow audiences for touring groups by developing local and national database of audiences interested in integrated and disability dance artistry, building on Dance/NYC's Disability. Dance. Artistry. Network model ([Dance.NYC/equity/disability/network](https://www.dancenyc.org/equity/disability/network)); and
- Create opportunities for mentorship and shared learning about touring integrated and disability dance artistry by:
 - Pairing touring and local disabled artists and companies;
 - Pairing those without touring experience with experienced groups;
 - Advancing accessible online platforms to share touring experiences; and
 - Fostering dialogue about touring integrated and disability dance artistry locally and through national affinity groups.

APPENDIX: PARTICIPANT PROFILES

Alice Sheppard/Kinetic Light

Dance.NYC/equity/disability/worksartists/view/Alice-Sheppard-Kinetic-Light

AXIS Dance Company

Dance.NYC/equity/disability/worksartists/view/AXIS-Dance-Company

Dancing Wheels Company & School

Dance.NYC/equity/disability/worksartists/view/Dancing-Wheels-Company-School

Full Radius Dance

Dance.NYC/equity/disability/worksartists/view/Full-Radius-Dance

Heidi Latsky Dance

Dance.NYC/equity/disability/worksartists/view/Heidi-Latsky-Dance

Jess Curtis and Claire Cunningham

Dance.NYC/equity/disability/worksartists/view/Jess-CurtisGravity

APPENDIX: CONVERSATION SERIES

Organized around New York City metropolitan area performance activity at the nexus of disability and dance, the series featured leading artists working at that nexus in conversation with their presenters. The goals of the series are to drive awareness and interest in dance made by and with disabled artists, capture and share lessons learned by featured artists, and generate dialogue and partnerships among attendees.

Conversation and Master Class with Heidi Latsky Dance

[Dance.NYC/programs/dancenyc-events/2017/08/Disability.-Dance.-Artistry.-Conversation-Series-Conversation-and-Master-Class-with-Heidi-Latsky-Dance](https://dancenyc.org/programs/dancenyc-events/2017/08/Disability.-Dance.-Artistry.-Conversation-Series-Conversation-and-Master-Class-with-Heidi-Latsky-Dance)

August 1, 2017, 6:30 p.m.–8:00 p.m. Conversation; 8:00 p.m.–9:00 p.m. Master Class

The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

Featured Speakers: Heidi Latsky, Artistic Director, Heidi Latsky Dance; Jerron Herman, Development Consultant and Company Member, Heidi Latsky Dance; Jill Sternheimer, Director of Public Programming, Lincoln Center; Daniel Soto, Associate Producer of Public Programming, Lincoln Center; Miranda Appelbaum, Assistant Director of Accessibility and Guest Services, Lincoln Center; and Jordana Phokompe, Director of the David Rubenstein Atrium at Lincoln Center

Conversation with Dancing Wheels Company & School

[Dance.NYC/programs/dancenyc-events/2017/10/Disability.-Dance.-Artistry.-Conversation-Series-Conversation-with-Dancing-Wheels-Company-School](https://dancenyc.org/programs/dancenyc-events/2017/10/Disability.-Dance.-Artistry.-Conversation-Series-Conversation-with-Dancing-Wheels-Company-School)

October 8, 2017, 4:00 p.m.–5:30 p.m.

The Ailey Studios

Featured Speakers: Catherine Meredith, Rehearsal Director, Dancing Wheels Company & School; and Mary Verdi-Fletcher, President/Founding Artistic Director, Dancing Wheels Company & School

Conversation with Full Radius Dance

<https://www.dancenyc.org/programs/dancenyc-events/2017/10/Disability.-Dance.-Artistry.-Conversation-Series-Conversation-with-Full-Radius-Dance>

October 14, 2017, 8:30 p.m.–10:00 p.m.

Harlem School of the Arts at The Herb Alpert Center

Featured Speakers: Alfred Peisser, Artistic Director and Director of Theater, Harlem School of the Arts; Aubrey Lynch II, Dance & Musical Theatre Director, Harlem School of the Arts; Douglas Scott, Artistic Director, Full Radius Dance; and Lindy Dannelley, Company Member, Full Radius Dance

Conversation with AXIS Dance Company

<https://www.dancenyc.org/programs/dancenyc-events/2017/11/Disability.-Dance.-Artistry.-Conversation-Series-Conversation-with-AXIS-Dance-Company>

November 17, 2017, 6:30 p.m.–7:30 p.m.

Gibney Dance: 280 Broadway, Studio D

Featured Speakers: Gina Gibney, Artistic Director & CEO, Gibney Dance; Kara Gilmour, Senior Director of Community Action & Artist Services, Gibney Dance; Marc Brew, Artistic Director and Choreographer, AXIS Dance Company; and Gregory Dorado, Rehearsal Director, AXIS Dance Company

Conversation with Jess Curtis and Claire Cunningham

<https://www.dancenyc.org/programs/dancenyc-events/2018/01/Disability.-Dance.-Artistry.-Conversation-Series-Conversation-with-Jess-Curtis-and-Claire-Cunningham>

January 16, 2018, 11:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

University Settlement, Speyer Hall, 184 Eldridge Street, 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10002

Featured Speakers: Ben Pryor, Founder, Curator, Producer, American Realness, and Director of Performance and Residency Programs, Gibney Dance; Claire Cunningham, Performer; Jess Curtis, Artistic Director, Jess Curtis/Gravity; and MARRISA PEREL, artist

Conversation with Alice Sheppard/Kinetic Light

<https://www.dancenyc.org/programs/dancenyc-events/2018/03/Disability.-Dance.-Artistry.-Conversation-Series-Conversation-with-Alice-SheppardKinetic-Light>

March 26, 2018, 5:00 p.m.–7:00 p.m., Facebook Live

Featured Speakers: Alice Sheppard, Artistic Lead and Founder, Kinetic Light; and Janet Wong, Associate Artistic Director, New York Live Arts

Field Notes from the Disability. Dance. Artistry. Conversation Series

By Kevin Gotkin, Moderator, Co-Director, Disability/Arts/NYC Task Force

The Disability. Dance. Artistry. (DDA) Conversation Series offered an opportunity for each grantee to reflect on the state of integrated and disability dance artistry. These events were free and open to the public, becoming highly anticipated programs during the companies' time in New York.

I had the privilege of moderating all six conversations from August 2017 to March 2018. As a disabled academic and artist myself, I found it a rare and wonderful chance to learn from so many artists who center disability in their work.

We learned that we need more concerted attention to race and racial justice in our thinking about disability dance artistry. One-third of the conversations featured all-white panels. And when we named the prevailing whiteness, the instinct was often to add a person of color to the speaker roster, which risked making race a matter of optics rather than an interrogative vector in all the work of a company and venue.

In 2006, disability scholar Chris Bell wrote that the academic field of Disability Studies failed to “engage issues of race and ethnicity in a substantive capacity, thereby entrenching whiteness as its constitutive underpinning.”¹ Similar dynamics are at play in disability dance artistry. Those making and presenting the work are largely white. And though disability is a complex and expansive tool for dance artistry in the field, the DDA Conversation Series featured, with a few exceptions, very little of the same complexity with regard to race.

But there is plenty to mine. Company directors, presenters, and venue leadership can share their action plans for racial justice within their organizations. Choreographers can talk about how racial diversity enriches their artistic tool kits. Above all, everyone can study and name the intersecting forms of exclusion that produce the field's predominant whiteness.

What calls artists away from this work? How are these urgencies differentially distributed across different bodies and minds?

We also found that several of the presenters and representatives from venues were hesitant to participate in the Conversation Series. Many said they felt uncomfortable speaking about disability dance artistry. They insisted they didn't know enough about the field to be on a panel about it. They didn't want to be quoted as experts. As we reviewed the questions we would ask in our pre-event planning call, the apprehension was palpable.

These were well-intentioned hesitations. The presenters wanted the voices of disabled artists to be at the center. They didn't want to project a false sense of confidence about a field they know has a long and rich history.

However new and partial the presenters may have been, though, they still had vital information about the work of lifting up disabled dance artists. For all the stunning progress the DDA Fund grantees have done to make integrated and disability dance into a veritable institution, the field still lacks mainstays in education, employment, and sustainability. What presenters may not realize is that even seemingly simple and preliminary reflections on work in the field helps sustain the work necessary to further disabled dance artists.

When they spoke candidly about working with the DDA Fund grantees, presenters taught us a great deal about what it means to support and advance the field. This simple decision—to report on one's learning—is a crucial turn from an inclusionary impulse into forms of support that disability dance needs to thrive and sustain.

1. Chris Bell, "Introducing White Disability Studies: A Modest Proposal," *The Disability Studies Reader, Second Edition*, ed. Lennard Davis (New York: Routledge, 2006), 275.

APPENDIX: APPLICATION & REPORTING TEMPLATES

Application and Budget Form

[Dance.NYC/uploads/DDA_Application Form.docx](#)

[Dance.NYC/uploads/DDA_Budget Form_Final.xlsx](#)

Reporting Templates

Narrative Report

[Dance.NYC/uploads/DDA_Regrant_Fund_Grantee Report_Final.docx](#)

Budget Report

[Dance.NYC/uploads/DDA_Budget Reporting Form_Final.xlsx](#)

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APPENDIX: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Researcher Anne Coates conducted one-on-one interviews with each Disability. Dance. Artistry. Fund grantee to consider the following questions:

Artistic Vision

- What is your artistic vision for your work in integrated and disability dance artistry?

Disability Rights

- In what ways, if at all, does your work advance disability rights?

Venue

- Where did you perform and how did you choose that venue?
- Did you experience accessibility issues at that venue? If so, how were they resolved?
- Did local transportation options and realities affect your work and presentation of work in NYC?
- What is different about producing work here in NYC, as opposed to other places you have performed, nationally or internationally? Were there things not possible here? Were there things only possible here?
- What, if anything, would you do differently, and how would it have changed your experience presenting in New York?

Audiences

- How did you engage and reach audiences for your performance?
- How did you reach out to them?
- Did you experience challenges or obstacles? If so, what were they? Were you able to mitigate them?

Funding

- Were there obstacles to pulling together the funding? If yes, what were they and how did you address?
- Other than the DDA Fund, where did your funding come from for this performance?

The Future of Integrated and Disability Dance Artistry

- What do you think the future of integrated dance is? What will make that possible?
- What advice would you offer disabled artists and nondisabled dance artists and administrators for how to contribute to the future of integrated and disability dance artistry?
- What would make NYC a place where integrated and disability dance artistry could thrive?

Interviews were transcribed by GoTranscript, copyedited by James Walsh, and included in chronological order in the online version of this report.

Interview with Heidi Latsky, Heidi Latsky Dance, July 31, 2017

Can you share your artistic vision with us for your work in integrated and disability dance artistry?

The mission of the company is to redefine beauty and virtuosity. That's at the core of it. Doing that for me means honing the unique attributes of the dancers I work with. That means all of them. Especially when I first started working with people with disabilities in 2006, I quickly learned that I could not necessarily start with my own movement. That changed along the way when I started introducing more of my movement to see someone like Jerron do what he would with that movement. The vision that I have is for a society that accepts difference. I've always been like that even before I was a dancer. I have a psychology degree. I think I went into psychology with this idealistic notion that I could save the world. It makes sense to me that even in my career, I've always wanted to have my work operate on many levels, some political, emotional. This work excites me the most because it's right out there. It's visible. It's visceral. It's clear even when the work may not be so clear in what I try to do with it. It's not like I'm trying to portray my vision of acceptance of difference with people who all look the same.

In what ways does your work advance disability rights?

Well, one of the things that are very important for me as a choreographer, especially with people with disabilities, is that whatever they're doing is virtuosic. My mentors in 2006, when I started this, were always saying this cannot be sentimental. This cannot be a pity party. You have to push us as hard as you push everyone, which I was doing anyway. I feel like the company model. The way I work is that everybody is on an equal plane. I don't treat anybody differently than anybody else. I demand that my dancers, all of them, work with incredible rigor. Even with *On Display*, which is still, that stillness is bare. It's bare. I'm very interested in endurance. A lot of my work has been dancing really quickly with a lot of fierceness, and then there are these vulnerable moments of stillness, but it has to have this virtuosic component. To me, it's not pandering to the disability community. This is really pushing the dancers that I have forward as dancers first.

How does that relate to the disability rights movement?

It's treating people with respect, honoring their difference and honoring who they are, and incorporating them into the fabric of the company. Right now, we also have people on our board who are disabled. We also have people in our administration who are disabled, like Jerron for instance. His role in the company has become really integral as a partner to me. My original dancers in *GIMP* were political activists. It was a pure collaboration, and it still is. I hear in the disability community, "Nothing without us." I hear this idea of wanting leadership roles. I'm very sensitive as a nondisabled choreographer and leader. It's very important to have people with disabilities leading with me or leading alongside me.

You've been performing at Lincoln Center, High Line, and the Whitney. Would you say that there are obstacles to making and presenting integrated and disability dance artistry in the metropolitan area? What are they?

Yes, there are obstacles. I think it's changing. For instance, I remember when I first started working with people with disabilities, I thought, "Oh, we'll be able to raise all kinds of money," and Lawrence Carter-Long, who was in the piece and is a disability activist, said, "You're wrong." He warned me that there wasn't that kind of money in disability organizations and in dance organizations—that we were falling outside of it. Most disability organizations wanted to give money to research. We're not looking for the cure.

It was difficult. It was also difficult in New York City to get any recognition from my dance roles. I think it's shifting, but it made it difficult to get people to present me. I had to be very patient. I felt like I kept coming up against these obstacles. I would be told, "I don't know if our place is accessible because of your wheelchair users." At the time I had no wheelchair users. There was an automatic assumption that the people I was working with were wheelchair users.

The other thing that I have found is resources. Thankfully Dance/NYC has funded us and has this focus. I would not have been able to do the Whitney or Lincoln Center or even Victory Dance without that money. For instance, Lincoln Center has produced like three other works of mine,

but the only way I could do it is with outside resources. There were no resources, not enough allotted to what I was doing. I had to push for it. Again, I think that's also shifting, and the venues that we're a part of are amazing for their work. They were really supportive, but the funding source wasn't there for them to produce something like this.

Did you pursue more funding with them?

No. They were very clear about what they have. They are wonderful, and they really want to see this kind of dance happening. When we were at the Atrium, Jordana was able to get a little bit more money, but I had 35 performers. It's also my fault in the sense that it is my choice to have all these performers. I think because of the vision to show diversity and inclusion, I can't just do a duet. That's been an obstacle for me. That's because my choice is I need at least 15 people in the work that I am doing now so that they can get a sense of the integration and the inclusivity for what I'm interested in now. That's been an obstacle from the beginning. The money is part of it. The funding is part of it. We've been very lucky in that Victor Calise invited me to be a part of the 25th anniversary of the ADA. Again, he could help get the venues, and he supported it as much as he could, but I was really going out and trying to find the venues and trying to find places where we could just go and do it. A lot of places fell through. Then we did it at some really spectacular venues. It was like my little guerrilla art that I always wanted to do.

With respect to the performances you just had, Dance/NYC helped make it possible. Did you have other funding that came in to support these performances?

No. The venues themselves gave me a fee. Like I said, it's because I had so many dancers. At Victory Dance, for instance, I had 10 dancers and there are 11 shows. I had to subsidize the fee. We were very lucky this year in that we have a patron who came forward at the beginning of the year. I have some resources to pull from as I develop the work to do this kind of stuff.

Did you seek additional funding for these performances?

Yes.

None of them came through?

No.

Were there other obstacles for you or for your dancers for these particular performances?

Well, the Whitney was really interesting because we were on two balconies, down by the entrance, and on the High Line very close to the Whitney. One of the obstacles was the elevator because the balconies were on the seventh and eighth floors and the entrance, and I had to activate each space. For me, that was an obstacle. There were also many, many people. What I just found the next day is that people touched them. Shocking. Never happened before. We've done so many installations, but for some reason, people felt that they could touch the performers. I remember their set up as sculptures.

Did you have the same wall label that you had at the Atrium where you encourage people to approach and to look in proximity rather than stand apart?

Yes. That was another obstacle. Because of the Whitney's rules, we could not have signage. The High Line had some signage but not with that language. What we ended up doing was to have flyers. Well, in my experience nobody wants to read these flyers. You give them out, a lot of people don't take them or read them. I've had this all over. When we were in Athens, we had three performances, and the signage wasn't there like we had discussed. I said I really need a sign because I know how important that sign is to the audience's experience. They made flyers and nobody read them. I mean, some people read them. The next day, I made them do something. They put some kind of signage up, which I think really, really helped. I learned that I have to be much more adamant about that for people to get the experience that I want them to get. I have to be really strong about that.

We haven't really debriefed about people touching the dancers, but most of my performers were okay with it. But it was shocking to them, and they went

with it. They totally went with it from what I've heard. I haven't heard all the stories yet because it just happened. I thought that that was really interesting because they are right out there, but most people don't touch them. Somebody said, well, the Whitney is known for interactive installations, which I didn't really know, perhaps it was because it was Friday night when it was open to the public. I don't know. I mean, it is a risk you take.

I remember we did it in Chinatown years ago. Actually, this is the only time I had been aware Leslie, who's so beautiful, was doing her thing. She's so focused, and this woman came up to her. First the woman went up to each performer and put a sticker that read, I Love Chinatown. She went up to each performer and put it on and then she went up to Leslie and said, "Jesus loves you," and hugged her. I was watching this and going, what do I do? But she handled it really well. I can't remember exactly what she did, but the woman stopped. And I've never done site-specific work before. I started thinking about that. Where are the boundaries? And how much do I enforce that boundary, as the leader in this? We started talking about that as a company. I think we are going to talk about it now and more. Do they want me to protect them more? How was it for them? Do they feel invaded? Was it really uncomfortable? That's when you have the signage. You can say something like, "Please do not touch," which we didn't have.

I'm just wondering if the word opportunity is not quite right for this situation, but I could imagine it might spark something for you artistically?

Yes. I mean even at ADF where we just did this. I had a very good friend of mine who's an older woman and this guy sat beside her and started saying, "You're so beautiful, and I'm going to come back to see you," and she freaked. And I had no idea that he was talking to her like that. But it totally ruined the experience for her. Well, you have really no control over that. You can't start saying, you can't do this, you can't do this, you can't do this. It's a setup. This is all brand-new.

This just happened in the last few weeks. These incidences that we need maybe to talk about as a company. This is where I think I feel that in terms of the disability rights movement or any kind of social justice or making sure that people have a voice and have agency. Now's the time after these experiences

to sit down with the company and say, okay, what do we do? What do we do? I'm not going to make that decision. I'm not the one out there.

How do you reconcile disability rights and the inappropriateness of contact and treatment of disabled people over hundreds of years? Do you have an obligation?

Absolutely. Of course I have an obligation. That's what I'm saying, the people who talked about it, and it wasn't just people with disabilities who were touched, but people were laughing about it when my dancers and I were talking about it.

So, we're not really in rehearsal right now, but I think it is going to be very important that we debrief about that and then we talk about it. Now, what did that feel like and what do we do? We don't perform unless there is a sign that says not to touch. It's not in the sign anymore. It used to be and then we took it out, cause it really was never an issue, but it comes up, and especially when performers are in stillness, they hear all of the conversations and that's overwhelming and interesting in and of itself that they're privy to what people are saying about them, about the installation.

This is not your typical dance performance. They're art, right? When we're dancing, you don't hear what the audience is thinking, unless they are kids, which we have been performing for kids and they are pretty vocal, but I know that for some of the performers, they have to really give themselves up for it, especially if there are kids in the audience who are like, just say whatever comes to their mind.

So you perform in Lincoln Center and the High Line and the Whitney, how did you choose those venues? How did that happen?

We approached the High Line during the ADA, the anniversary and that was— Victor helped me with that and we had a long talk and then we were supposed to do a little performance and we ended up not doing a performance because I did not get in touch with them until too late, so we—not that I did not get in touch with them, we didn't communicate. We didn't get it together.

So we did a rehearsal on the High Line and it was lovely and so I approached the person who is in charge and I said, "I want to take over the whole High Line next year." I want to do an *On Display* sculpture court like the spine of the High Line and then I want to have all these ancillary events. I wanted ten wheelchair athletes on the road and people dancing through the intersection. I had all these ideas and he went with it and said, "You have to help me raise the money," which is what I tried to do.

And then the High Line had an issue with crowd control, they got a little—it became a real issue because they had so many people in the High Line. So he said, "I really don't think we can do this because we got too many people visiting there." And then I lost contact with them and it wasn't until—so I lost contact with them, but in the meantime, I was talking to The Whitney about what I was doing at the High Line and they were interested in doing something with the High Line, and then I was stymied because I was to talk to the High Line. It eventually worked out the person that I had talked to had left. You know how these things go. So I had no idea and we had a meeting and we decided to do this together. It's great. I mean, it was just fantastic. I was ecstatic.

Apart from you being able to get from place to place at the Whitney, did you or the dancers have accessibility issues or that you know of the people came to see you?

They were really good about that, and I do want to talk about Lincoln Center and how I got there. The main issue with the Whitney that I never took into account was the elevators. It's not their fault, when they have that many people there. They can't designate an elevator for us.

The sixth floor where I had gone to rehearse was beautiful. It was the biggest balcony there. They closed the exhibit and so we could have done it on the balcony, and this is where they were wonderful, but the only way people could get there would be via the stairs and then it would be not accessible to people who are in wheelchairs. So they said you can't be there, which was great. I mean, it was at the last minute, so we had to come up with another solution, but I was really impressed that that's what they were thinking of, that we cannot have a venue that's inaccessible for this

event. I don't know. Everything was accessible. Some of the spaces were a little tight because I made them tight. But other than that, I don't think people had an issue. So the High Line may be a little different because it was at the very— but no, then you can get onto the High Line, you can get onto the High Line.

What about at Lincoln Center, how did you choose that venue?

So I've been doing things at Lincoln Center, and we want high traffic areas. So I approached them and asked them if they would be interested in doing it again, doing something again during Disability Pride Month because that's what we did two years ago, and they were open to it and I sent them a video of it and we decided to do it around a reflecting pool and they couldn't have been more gorgeous. I mean, the Whitney was chaotic and there's people there and the dancers felt really isolated but at Lincoln Center, it was a very different experience because they were all like statues around the reflecting pool. It was very quiet and very still and then I had some people in the grove and I couldn't have gotten two more different sites, two very, very different experiences for everyone.

Did you have accessibility issues there?

No.

Did local transportation affect your work?

Yes. So things like, beginning of last week, we were at Kings County Hospital in Brooklyn and it was raining and so it was like some of the wheelchair users had a problem getting there and then we had to go from Brooklyn to Harlem, and we finished in Brooklyn at 1 and the next piece was at four and one of the performers who was a wheelchair user got there at four. It took him that long. I mean, I think he stopped to have lunch but he was, he was pretty, I think, upset about it. He took the bus and the subway. What subway stop is accessible, and what subway stop is not? It was a whole journey, and so that was an issue. I have noticed some, especially with the wheelchair users, who oftentimes have trouble with transportation to get to rehearsal on time.

Everyone's having trouble now with the subway system, but it's particularly difficult and to be honest, I went with Donald, who uses his chair. Sometimes he doesn't, but we went from the Duke to the Whitney and I went with him on the route. You get in one place, you got to find the elevator, and you climb the elevator, it takes so long and I guess I hadn't experienced it that much because I don't have to do that. In Greece it was an issue too, Greece was a major issue of accessibility but that's Greece, not here.

What is different about producing work here as opposed to other places that you've performed? Are there things not possible here that were for instance possible in Greece, or vice versa?

I had one wheelchair user with me in Greece, and he's like a daredevil. I could not believe what he had to do to get around. Their accessibility is not very good. It's better here. It's definitely better here, also Athens is all hilly. It's really hilly so he was going downhill and uphill.

I'm trying to think, there's other issues with— I have a blind dancer and a lot of times, for instance at the Duke, she was supposed to be in the piece and the space is so small. This particular venue, it's three marleys deep, which is very little, and this is very chaotic, lots of dancing and Krishna is in the middle, and I knew this is not going to work and I took her just in case and it was scary for her because it was so packed, it was just too difficult, but that's the nature of one venue.

Q, who works for the Department of Transportation is the performer I'm talking about who was in Athens with us, and he was doing work the whole time about accessibility, especially for the visually impaired. What they have on the streets for them to feel, so that was really interesting. I'm not always aware as I should be of those issues.

Were you more aware when you were in Greece?

For him yes, I was.

Is that because of the familiarity for you here in the city and for your dancers because you're here and you've navigated and you've done your work rounds?

Well, also they're independent. They're not with me, I'm not with them. I meet them in rehearsal or I meet them and the reason why I know some of these issues with transportation is because of people being late or what I hear about what's going on.

So in terms of the infrastructure, what if anything would you do differently and how would it have changed your experience for these performances?

Well, I would definitely have signage. I would have made that really clear from the beginning. We need signage. I now have to think and talk to my dancers about what did it mean to be touched, and do you want to put them on the site because we're doing this all over the world. So we have to think about. You don't want to tell audiences too much about what they should do because you want them to feel comfortable, and you want to open it up, right?

We're trying to create a safe place to really look, but the other reality is that we're looking at them. So what does that mean if somebody touches a performer? They can touch—yes, I mean, this has opened up a whole other dialogue now with this sculpture court idea and what do we do with it.

On Display is set up that way to do is to in your face about this objectification but then turning it on its head and saying, "You're being viewed too so you're the viewer, but we're looking at you, so at any point performers can open their eyes and engage with somebody and really look at them, and I think that's the beauty of the agency that these performers have. They make the decision whether they keep their eyes open or close so they can have their—they can be downcast the whole time, they don't have to engage with anybody or they can.

And you're right, there are three things going on that I didn't really think about, like when people are saying that they're privy to it. They hear it because they're so close, especially at the Whitney, people were really

talking a lot right in front of these performers, not at Lincoln Center so much, well a little bit but not so much. It was staged so that people keep their distance a little bit more, but then a touch phase adds a whole other, like you said, dimension and do we want— what do we want to do with that? Do we want to avoid it? Because we can't. I can make it so that no one will touch them or do we want to leave ourselves open to that possibility? And what does that mean for everyone?

How did you reach your audiences, and did you work with the Whitney and Lincoln Center? How did that happen?

It's more than those two venues, right? We're trying to cultivate audiences everywhere. I don't want to forget that I did my first inclusive fashion show in Hurleyville. That was a few weeks ago, which was fantastic. It was a small audience because it's Hurleyville, in upstate New York. They absolutely loved it. Every dancer loved it. It was so, so much fun, and I felt like, "Wow, this is a whole other way of introducing people to integrated dance," and it was a blast.

Hurleyville did all that. I didn't do anything for that because that was out of town. In terms of what we do to cultivate or to bring audience is we have a newsletter that we send out. I know that the Whitney, Lincoln Center and High Line all put it on their websites, and actually we were in *Time Out* and *The New Yorker*. I did not do that. They did that for Victory Dance also, which has had a lot of publicity, and that brings them to view the misinterpretations of what we're doing.

Time Out said something, wrote something about Lincoln Center that it would be disabled performers. So there was nothing about the integration that just said featuring disabled performers, and one of the things that it does for my company, and I know AXIS has talked about this as well that the nondisabled performers become invisible and that's an issue that we're constantly addressing with audiences because: for example Alexandria Whales, after we did the American Dance Festival in 2015, she had a meeting with me, and she said, "I'm really upset"— Alexandria is deaf—and she said, "I'm very upset for Julianne and Meredith. Nobody talks about them. Nobody asked them questions, and I really think we need to look at

our postperformance talkbacks. Instead of just opening it up, we should not necessarily moderate it but guide it so that everyone has a voice. I love that because she really had empathy for these dancers who've been with me the longest and are giving everything they have like everyone else on stage and feeling unappreciated.

At the Whitney in 2015 when we had a performance there, that's what we did. We let the audience ask all the questions about disability, and then we took it back, guided it into the art and into all the dancers and all the stories that are there. We're trying very hard because our company is all about integration. It's about everyone who's there. With our audiences, we're actively trying to guide the conversation if there's a postperformance talkback or if there's press releases that's going out there to really

Is that, and the press, one of challenges with your audience once you have them?

Yes.

Were there other obstacles with respect to audience?

Well, there have been many over the years. Yes. I mean, if you want to focus just on now. If you want to think about the larger picture over the years, it has been very hard for me to get some of my colleagues to come in the dance world. It has been very hard to get people outside of the dance world. I've had to say things to people like it's not depressing and it's not weird. In *GIMP*, we purposefully put into the performance Lawrence, who has cerebral palsy, looking at the audience and telling them everything they say to us, which is like, "I thought you were going to be weird. I thought you were going to be straight, but you're not. You're really beautiful." He would say this to the audience, "You're so brave. You're really brave. You're just going for it." I almost took it out of New York because I thought, "Ooh, my dance. . . . It's going to be too spoon-feeding or something." Like it's not sophisticated enough, but I'm so glad I didn't do that because it was so apparent. It was so clear that what Lawrence was saying was what so many of those people were thinking, right? That's a huge obstacle, huge for audiences. What are we doing in the modern dance world?

There's a sense that what I'm doing is community work. I heard this. Again, I think this is shifting. What does community work mean? Why do you think that my dancers are from the community? Because they're not technically trained dancers? I mean, how do you know that they're not? How do you know that they're not? Just because I have people with disabilities, does that mean that they're not trained? I trained them. Some of them come trained. A lot of them, I have found untrained. Having an incredibly interesting facility and just a physicality that I adore naturally or just naturally beautiful, that excites me almost more than technically trained dancers.

A lot of what I do now, I find some of the people who are not training them not just talking about disabled dancers, I'm talking about just anybody. What they do in my sculpture work, sometimes so much more interesting than my really trained dancers. Because oftentimes they have a different mind-set going into it that takes them out or maybe sometimes their authenticity. There's always this trade-off. That was a beautiful thing about *GIMP*, that we found that the disabled dancers in *GIMP*, they feel inadequate sometimes when they would look at someone like Meredith who was more of a ballet dancer and could do all this technical stuff.

Meredith, as an example, would be crying and worried because she doesn't have the emotional life that Leslie had. I remember when that happened between those two women, I thought this is it. This is why, for me, inclusivity works because they have their individual strengths that they bring, and then they learn from each other. That's what we want the audience to see. Often, they're afraid because they don't know what it is. They don't know what they're going to come and see. That's what excites me about what's happening now because there's more support out there. There's more than just I think the quality of the work is rising.

How are you going to build audience? How are you going to mitigate those barriers?

I mean, one of the things we're doing is with *On Display* Global. We're trying to get people to do *On Display* all over the world, in their cities, where a lot of people who have no experience. We feel that that kind of exposure or getting people to really commit to something like this, invest in it, they're

going to— My brother, for instance, in Toronto, he met some of my dancers. He'd seen some of my work. When he started producing in Toronto, all of a sudden, he had to think about accessibility: "Was this venue accessible?" He started running up against trying to get museums or venues to buy in. We're hoping that the more people who do *On Display*, the more awareness will be out there. We put our videos in Times Square on these big digital billboards. We were lucky enough to have that beautiful—to see a slow, black-and-white film with all these different people in the middle of Times Square with all these gorgeous traditional model types, fast-paced, and color was unbelievable. Did it do anything? They say that there's 400,000 impressions made. What was it that figure that we had? A day or something? It was a lot. We were up there the entire month of November almost every five minutes.

Are you seeing your newsletter subscribers go up?

I don't think so. I don't know if that's a function. I know that our Facebook is going up. I feel in terms of the newsletter, that's our bad. In the sense that my infrastructure is not strong enough. I don't have the personnel to make sure that goes up. I don't have the resources to really push for new audiences. I just don't. Until we have that, I think we're at the mercy of it. When you ask, "Well, what did you do to get people to the Whitney, we sent that newsletters. We did reach out to certain funders and presenters. We targeted some people. We don't have the capacity to really push it. It would be really nice if we did.

What do you think the future of "integrated dance" is?

I think it's looking really good. I've been doing this now since 2006 where it was not looking good. I feel even just dance and to have an organization like that, pull the community together because they have the resources and the infrastructure to do that, was really an incredible catalyst. I think it's happening all over. I mean, the disability is entering into our culture, period. I have high hopes. I feel like there's been a shift. I don't know . . . me from my company. I do what I do. I'm as tenacious as many choreographers. I can't seem to stop. I am committed to this portfolio of *On Display* works. I'm just going to keep pushing forward and see what happens, but I'm

excited about the—I did this. I curated this evening with Alice Sheppard, Jerron Herman, and Toby MacNutt, and Mark Rivera. It was a crowd with disabilities. It was so exciting. My hope is that this will just keep growing and also that the artistry itself will get stronger.

What will make that possible?

It was from my momma at one of these co-meetings. I said, “To have a person, a presenter, a funder who believes in you, to have Lincoln Center bring us back numerous times, it motivates an artist to do more.” When you don’t have that, it’s like you’re in this vacuum and you’re trying to make the work but also to find places for the work. I think the more presenters and funders get interested in this integrated and disability dance, I think the more opportunities for people to come forward. Also, with more resources, they can take more time. I remember years ago, do you know DV8? They were based in London. I was really good friends with Lloyd Newson. A lot of choreographer like with a lot of support from the British government. He once said to me, “You should never take less than a year to make a piece, Heidi, because you’re only as good as a piece that somebody has seen.” I remember saying to him, “That’s not possible. You can do that because you have all the support of most American artists. We don’t have that support.” I actually think he’s right, but it’s very rare that you have the luxury of that time. You need it because, without that time, you throw out stuff that doesn’t have the depth of the resonance that I think— A painter can take as much time as they want. Oftentimes, there are visual artists. Dancers are a paint. You need to have time with them in the studio. They need to work with you a long time to understand what you’re trying to do. I think that’s a very important thing right now for up-and-coming artists, for artists like me who’ve been around for a while to be able to delve deeper.

What advice would you give to disabled artists and non-disabled artists and administrators for the field?

Well, the first thing I would say is that the art has to be first. It has to be good. Whatever that, it has to have a high standard, the best that you can do, because that’s the most important thing. I think it’s a disservice to the art of the field and to people with disabilities if it’s not. Everybody

has a different aesthetic, but to honor your own aesthetic with as much integrity as you can. I think we get very hung up on language, but I think language is really important. I think communication is really important for administrators. It's my experience with disabled and nondisabled artists. The dancers in my company, they work it out so beautifully or they have. For the most part, it just happens in rehearsal. I think that respect is there already because most dancers understand. It's not easy. Everyone works hard. On the other hand, I have experienced people who are new to the field. I realize maybe too late that they don't understand what the protocol is. I think it's very important whether it's a disabled artist coming in for the first time or nondisabled artist who doesn't have a lot of experience in the dance field that those of us who have, communicate what's expected. My experience of late is that when I have 35 people in that room and I'm the only one in charge, it would be really nice if I had an assistant. That would be really nice. If there is no assistant, that everyone understands the situation and has empathy for and understands what needs to get done to get the work done, which most people do.

What would make New York City a place where integrated and disabled dance artistry could thrive?

Well, I do think more theaters need to be accessible. I know, for instance, New York Live Arts, I really wanted to do something there and my legacy is there like Bill T. Jones. I danced with him for seven years. He's the one who taught me about the beauty of difference. I would love to do it there and there's not enough space for people in wheelchairs. They have very limited capacity. I feel like more theaters that are more accessible would be more studios. More studios, period.

It's just not enough for a dance space. I don't have any rehearsal space right now for September and I have a show in October, so I have to find that. More accessible studio space and more resources, funders who are interested in integrated and disability dance and presenters, and also critics who are more savvy writers about this field. For instance, CNN just made a feature. They called me up and asked me, "Could we talk to one of your disabled performers? Who would you recommend? We want to do a piece

with a great big story for this." He wanted to pitch it, and so I chose Jerron because he's very articulate and a beautiful performer. They made one of the best features we've ever had because we've had many. This film was so beautifully sensitive and focused on him as a dancer. It went viral, it went viral. I think it went viral because it was so authentic and honest and no pandering and no sentimentality. It focused really on his experience as a dancer. Bringing everything else into it in such an incredible way. I went to Sebastian. I just said this was so beautifully done. I mean, at least in the dance world, it shied away a little bit because I feel like so many people feel they don't know how to talk about it. If people don't know how to talk to a person with a disability because they're not sure what's right and what's wrong, you can imagine a journalist who is reviewing it, how do they navigate this? I have always said this, I think that there has to be some education here about what it is we are trying to do and how do you talk about it. They don't have to say they like it or anything, it's not about if they like this better or if it worked or not, but just to understand how to talk about the integration, how to talk about the people with disabilities, how to talk about the people without disabilities. That's something that I would very much like to see happen.

Is there anything else you want to say?

One of the main issues about going into this field right now is what happens to the allies? What happens to those choreographers who are not disabled, who want to enter into this field? Is that okay? Do you know what I mean? Like, how is that going to play out? I think that's interesting. I think it's going to happen more and more as disability becomes more visible in the arts. That's just the question that I have.

Interview with Mary Verdi-Fletcher, Dancing Wheels Company & School, October 17, 2017

Could you share with us your vision for working in integrated and disability dance artistry?

Yes. The Dancing Wheels Company and School is now in its 37th season. Its initial vision was to make dance inclusive of both dancers with and without disabilities, and provide a training ground for the development of professional level dancers with disabilities. The company has grown in its scope of inclusiveness now to include age, ethnicity, and gender. So it's very, very inclusive, and we feel like that makes not only for the company's work to be basically a melting pot of experiences and abilities, but also allows us to reach out to the community to set an example of what inclusivity should be, and is.

In what ways, if at all, does your work advance disability rights?

Well, I feel as though some of our pieces really reflect the history of disability rights. Not all of our pieces, and certainly with a body of more than 65 works in our repertory, it's a broad spectrum of pieces, but particularly those that we presented at the performance in New York truly gave a strong message about disability rights. In fact, one of the pieces is taken from actual occurrences of the Capitol Crawl, which was a real happening for the disabled community, where they literally crawled up the Capitol steps to get the rights that were outlined in the ADA.

Because of my work as an advocate even prior to the development of Dancing Wheels, I worked at an independent living center and I did a lot of legislative work and worked in the area of rehabilitation. So I feel like not only are those pieces reflective of that, but also the dialogue that we have in the community. We did a lot of outreach, and educational programs, assembly-based programs, in the school. I purposely did that because I want our young people to have a vision of ability, and see that no matter what your disability is you can achieve at whatever level that you work toward.

I felt like we were diminishing the idea of inability when we talk with our young people and it seems as though stereotypically, people have, down through history, created a mindset about all kinds of things regarding gender, about women, about men and who should be what. We're hoping that we can dispel that at a very early age and change their attitude even before they are, maybe, strongly developed.

Do you do talkbacks after your performances normally?

Yes. I think, at least from our standpoint, it seemed that the people that did come to the town hall definitely were in agreement. They were shaking their heads in agreement. I think that in some respects it opened and broadened their minds to directions of where we need to take this "level of advocacy" to.

How did you choose that venue?

Well, we were looking for a venue that had name recognition obviously, where people would know to go. We were told that it was under renovation, so we were looking for accessibility. We wanted a venue that could hold the number of people that we were hoping to bring to the theater, so there were, kind of, multiple reasons for that. Some people have been in partnerships with their venues, but we really just rented the theater and created our own concert.

Did you experience accessibility issues at the venue?

Well, given the composition of the audience with the pitch, I see that they provided seating down on the floor and also up higher, so giving people a choice of where they wanted to sit, if they were in a wheelchair. We did provide our own sign interpreting for the concert. And backstage, I would say that it was accessible. We were able to navigate and get into dressing rooms and on stage very well.

Did you have any issues backstage that you needed to solve?

There's not much wing space. We're so accustomed to touring and having all kinds of different theater compositions and issues to contend with. We just needed to figure out our entrances and our exits because it was pretty narrow.

The resolution was on your adaptation?

Yes. I would say other than bringing the wings in and making the stage smaller, I don't know that they could have done much more about it because there's a wall that goes out to a hallway. They did have a crossover. I'm not sure that they could do much more than that but yes, we figured it out.

Did local transportation options and realities affect your work and the presentation of the work?

Well, again, we're very used to touring. We have two vehicles, two vans that we use when we're on tour, so that's what we did. Again, we took care of our own transportation. When I came in at another point in time, like a month prior, I took a cab that was supposed to be wheelchair accessible and it was a very difficult trip. The driver was driving erratically and the strap downs were uncomfortable and basically had to hang on the whole trip. So I didn't find that to be very comfortable. We did not take public transportation because we stayed by LaGuardia, so we had to drive in each morning.

What's different about producing work in New York City as opposed to other places you've performed?

I don't know that to say that it's particularly different. I know that in different parts of the city as we were wheeling around or walking around together, we found that there were inconsistencies of accessibility in curb cuts, and I attribute that partly to the age. When it's an older section, it's probably not being attended to as easily. But we virtually have gone to almost every state and it's pretty much the same in that accessibility is contingent on the age of the location that you're at, and also the inconsistencies as well. We find, I find, that almost everywhere I travel to.

Were there things that were not possible in terms of your work and the presentation of your work in New York City that might have been possible somewhere else?

No, other than presenting a piece that has like a fly system and able, there was a Pilobolus piece that we did with which we would fly up the dancers.

We thought out our work, and what we wanted to present, and knew the dimensions of the stage and the theater that we wanted to present it in, and it all worked.

Were there things that were only possible in New York?

No. Well, the work is made to be toured, so if it worked in New York, it'll work somewhere else. It'll work in Chicago or wherever.

What if anything, Mary, would you do differently about performing here in New York City and how would that have changed your experience presenting in New York?

We wished we had the vehicle to draw a greater audience, I would say. No, I'm not based in New York, so we were kind of at the mercy of trying to get the word out among our choreographers, that mostly were New York-based choreographers. Then the work that Dance/NYC did. But we would've liked to have had a fuller house, I would say. Ticket sales attribute to earned income and even though we did have a very nice grant through this, the costs were pretty steep for us to do it.

How did you reach the audience that you did, other than through Dance/NYC?

Well, we primarily worked through the choreographers who—some have companies in New York, and then some of our additional friends that live in New York, and then we did the press release and such, but that's about all we could do. We did put out our constant contact - our newsletter—that reaches a lot of people, but many of them are not from New York.

Did you use social media, Facebook, and Twitter?

Yes.

Did you find out those that shared out to other networks?

Yes, we asked them to do that, so it looked like they did, from what we could see.

How do you think you might have done that differently?

I don't really know. Social media is one of the biggest ways to reach people. We had considered doing two shows, and I'm kind of glad we didn't. I don't know that a Saturday night was the best option. Everybody has different things going on generally when it's on Saturday night, so I didn't know if it would have been a better night or not.

Was that the only night of the week that was open to you?

We were not given very many choices at the venue. We probably could have done—and I can't even remember now with the contract—might have been able to do a Friday night. But we felt that it . . . we, at the time, felt a Saturday night would be a stronger sell.

Were there obstacles to pulling together the funding?

Well, a lot of it was just based on general operating that we get every year to do different projects, like the Ohio Arts Council, the National Endowment for the Arts. I don't think that we had any other than the Dance/NYC-specific funding to actually do the performance.

Did you seek specific funding from other sources for it?

Well, it was included in a lot of our grants.

Would you mind sharing some of those general operating funders?

Well, like I said, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Ohio Arts Council, the Cleveland Foundation, the Cuyahoga Arts and Culture Organizations, some family foundations that support our efforts.

What do you think the future of integrated and disability dance artistry is? What do you think the future is?

Well, as I mentioned in the town hall, I would really like to see it branched out, reaching more strongly to the dance community as a whole. There needs to be development for training. We talked about our manual, and our

DVD, and our virtual classes, but I think that that availability and knowledge need to spread both to the dance community and artists coming up the ranks with disabilities as well. We would like to see ourselves, we would like to see commissions by choreographers that have disabilities. But there's a lot of sort of new artists on the horizon, artists with disabilities who haven't refined their skills yet and would need mentoring to do so.

Also, there's still that issue of colleges and university dance departments. And I keep saying "separate is not equal." You should be able to wheel into, or if you have a different disability, be able to go in to a dance program at a university, take your classes with your nondisabled peers, and get a degree in dance. The same degree that they do.

What will make that possible?

Teaching the teachers. I think that there's a vast number of teachers in academia, dance teachers in academia, who are fearful of it. They don't see how a class can be taught to both the "sit-down" and "stand-up" dancers—those are terms that we use. We really have proven over the years what the benefits are. I mentioned that we had done a teacher-training a couple years ago and people say "Well, why would a sit-down dancer/wheelchair dancer take a ballet class?" I had talked about how it parallels: the arms, the hands, the ankles, and the feet, and how they're strengthened for the stand-up, and the sit-down has to strengthen; their hands, and their wrists, and their arms to have that agility, to have that beat. Then the second thing is that ballet is based on vocabulary and as the sit-down dancer develops a knowledge of the vocabulary, they in a sense can teach an all-stand-up ballet class. There's no reason why a sit-down dancer can't teach a stand-up ballet class, or an inclusive ballet class.

So those kinds of things are not happening. Universities and colleges may try to have a special class, or a integrated class, but that's not what I'm talking about. What I'm talking about is equality all the way through from the time you come into a track to be able to get a degree in dance.

It's probably a little ahead of its time, but I have seen throughout the years that we have kind of been ahead of our time since years ago so I think we

need to keep pushing the envelope and keep insisting that this inequality is present through college level, into dance companies. Somebody with a disability should be able to be a part of the dance community as a whole.

What advice would you offer disabled artists and nondisabled dance artists and administrators?

Well, a lot of this has to do with being open-minded. When we audition for both disabled and nondisabled dancers, a number of them have read in their history books about Dancing Wheels, or I get a ton of calls from young people who are doing their thesis and they want to do it on integrated dance. I think that there's interest, but I think that again academia is closing the door on the true concept of it.

We have a college right down the street from us where I know the head of the department very well. We did a series of teaching sessions, three sessions in two days, and we had people from around the country that came, and it was successful. Part of the physical therapy department came as well. It turns out that the head of the physical therapy department is vastly interested, and she wanted to get Dancing Wheels in there to be able to create this programming.

The head of the department said, "I think it would be better served in the physical therapy department." Meaning to her, it's not "typical dance," it's more "therapeutic dance," which it's not. That's a very old-fashioned, antiquated way of thinking, but that's what I see in academia.

In your terms, what would make New York City a place where the kinds of things that you talked about can thrive, and where this integrated dance artistry could thrive?

Well, because you have your organization, I think that that's a good start. You are an organization that has a commitment to this initiative. I don't see any other city that really has it in terms of its name and the execution of the work that you've done to bring people in. I would say keep doing it and keep looking at the abilities, and the skill sets, and the knowledge of the ones that you did bring in, and capitalize on that.

What am I not asking you? Is there something I should've asked?

Just inquisitive as to—it'd be interesting for me to hear from the other companies that are either going . . .open-minded after they present, like coming together to talk about all of our experiences, because I think each one is going to have something different. Some of the people, some of the groups are from New York and other ones came in from other cities, states, to perform. It'd be nice to get us all together and have just a final sort of think-tank and talk about their feelings and such. Not so much the feeling, but their outcomes.

Did you reach out to any New York City based groups that are doing this kind of work in advance for your planning?

I know a number of them quite well, so— We've been in dialogue—like Heidi Latsky and I have known each other for years. I presented one of her pieces on our program. I didn't specifically reach out to them for anything related to us or our planning or our arrangements because we were, like I said, we're accustomed to touring so we are self-sufficient in that.

Do you think that they might have been helpful in the outreach?

Well, I did reach out to them to help. I reached out to David Dorfman, Heidi, James Morrow, those are people— Dianne McIntyre. We did, we reached out to all of those. We had seven pieces on our programs. Six out of the seven . . . the other person is Daniel Jobe, but he's out of the country. Yes, we did, we reached out to them in that respect as choreographers and as a people who would have a pull of people too.

I'm wondering if you have any final thoughts or comments, thoughts, questions.

My comment is that I'm very appreciative for this opportunity. We felt quite honored to be in the midst of those chosen to present our work. It was just really a pleasure to work with you all and to be a part of it in such a strong way.

I'm going to let you have the final word.

Well, thank you. Again, I just am extremely appreciative, and I hope that our presentation was up to your expectations as well, and that we fulfilled what we've said we were going to do in the way that we said we would do it.

Yes, I guess one other thing I would just add is we connected while we were there with the—Dance for PD with Mark Morris. They asked that we do a presentation like that Sunday. We talked to them about the performance and they brought a group, pretty large group. Connecting with those groups . . . I think it was a special conference, or something... that they came together . . .but there may be volumes of people that can be included in this. The other thing that we did was we connected with Van Breen, the actor and entertainer. He asked after our performance if we would go out to Kessler and do what we call a lecture performance. It's kind of mini excerpts of pieces, and some information and such.

We did that on Monday, and there was a whole host of people there for a huge showing, and they really loved it. You could see for those with the onset of a new injury, or disability from an illness—it just opened their minds and their hearts to what could be possible. Maybe they don't become a dancer or—but they felt something, you could see that in their faces. Again, a lot of our work too is reaching out to those groups, because you want to give people hope and you want to give them a different insight of what their life can be because they may have never even thought to dance or be a part of the arts prior to their injury, and maybe they find a new thing within themselves, a new spirit. We've seen it happen.. . .

Years ago, I had a gentleman who was a construction worker and he was injured, unrelated to the construction work, but he became a quadriplegic. Once he became a quadriplegic, he thought, well, his life was over and what he had known as a kind of a robust man was no longer. Then he saw what we did and he began to remember that he used to play the guitar when he was very, very young. He's very musical. He decided that he would start taking classes with us and eventually he became a beautiful dancer and an artist. He just had such a presence. It's kind of like rediscovering yourself.

Sometimes I think nondisabled people don't think of the arts as a pathway for them. Most people don't think it is gainful employment, which we all know there are starving artists, but they forget, or they quash their artistry to go out into the corporate world, or the work world in another way. Sometimes it brings people back around. And with this group at Kessler, the one thing that stuck in my mind so strongly was 'why do people dance, and who dances, and who's allowed to dance'?

There was an older couple, and he was in a large wheelchair and he had the use of only one arm and his wife was pushing him from behind. We showed them in a demonstration how they could partner facing each other and she could assist with the wheelchair, but also hold his hand, and have an equal partnership, and their faces just lit up. I was thinking, "I bet prior to his injury, they probably went out dancing socially. That was probably something that they did together and they thought it would be no more." It was beautiful, and you could see that it opened the door for them in their relationship.

When you referred to Kessler, is it Kessler Foundation?

It's Kessler Rehabilitation out in Orange. I had Ben in rehabilitation there for about three months. He had several surgeries on his spine. And while he was there he thought about us and he thought about what this kind of joy can bring to families, and people, and try to . . . the disabled community sometimes doesn't like the word inspired but inspired would not be from a sappy point of view, inspiring would be to awaken you.

Interview with Douglas Scott, Full Radius Dance, October 26, 2017

Could you share with us your vision for working in integrated and disability dance artistry?

My company is in its 26th season, and 22 out of those 26 seasons, I've been concentrating on physically integrated dance. It really is my passion. Started out with what I call a traditional dance company. All the dancers I employed were dancers without disabilities, and then in '93, I started teaching classes for all types of bodies, including people with disabilities, and that's when I really found my path and my passion. I was so intrigued by how a body that didn't fit what the society thought the dancer's body should look like, and discovering the artistry, and how to integrate bodies with and without disabilities together really feeds me, and it's my passion. Dance, everything is guided by what we call our vision statement which is that your body is perfect, your body has undiscovered movement, and your body should experience dance.

In what ways, if at all, does your work advance disability rights?

I ran away from embracing anything that even approached advocacy in my work for many years, and then just in the last four or five years, I got more involved, and I joined Society for Disability Studies, attended their conference, and really wanted to say, "What's the larger context of our work beyond its artistry?" I fully acknowledge now that every time we take the stage, we're making a political statement by having these bodies present onstage, and the physical equity that our work displays between dancers with and without disabilities.

It's not that one is relegated to the background, one type of body is not relegated to the background, or one type of body is not pushed to the foreground. They're all equal. They share the same space onstage. Even when someone walks by the studio and looks in the window, and there we are in there, working, I think we're advancing disability rights. You got to be out there. The disability has to be present in the larger society. It has to be visible in the larger society, and embrace, and I think that's what our work does.

Where did you perform, and how you chose that venue? Did you experience any accessibility issues, and if so how were they resolved?

Our venue was Harlem School of the Arts, and we were introduced to the venue by a mutual friend, who is a choreographer of some renown, based out of here in Atlanta. He had seen our work, and I had actually presented it to him in a festival here, made the connection for us to go New York to Harlem School of the Arts. They were excited about having us there. They were wonderful collaborators instead of— I don't know if we should share this with the other recipients, but instead of paying rent to them they just split the ticket proceeds with us, so that made it possible for us to be presented in New York without losing money.

The venue was challenging. We were told it was accessible, and it was accessible for audience members however, I got there, did the walk-through. The bathrooms weren't accessible. They weren't accessible for the audience members, so we arranged to have the school right next door, the lobby of the school stayed open before show, and postshow, and during the show, so audience members could use that restroom, so that was solved pretty easily.

Backstage was inaccessible, and it sounds horrible that I would put my company in this position, but it's done by mutual agreement, and it's the difference between being presented, and not being presented.

We're dancers. We problem solve all the time. We problem solve in the studio so can we problem solve backstage? How can we make this venue work for us? A venue that's not fully accessible. One dancer would just get out of her chair bump down the step to get into the dressing room, and drag her chair. Another dancer set up himself on the side of the stage, back side of the stage, out of the way and used that as his dressing room. It's difficult to find smaller venues that are accessible. Many smaller venues in my experience here in Atlanta as well as what I've seen in New York City predate the Americans with Disability Act. Unfortunately, it hasn't been a priority for them to make their venue accessible because there haven't been artists with disabilities prominent out there that they would want.

They don't realize the artistry, the value that having artists with disabilities in your venue, what that can mean. Particularly, a place like Harlem School of the Arts, which we associate is maybe being more forward thinking. It's because they have their own issues. They've experienced many issues of themselves, and I would expect that population to be a little bit more sensitive, but that's not the case. I'm not saying it's not bad, it's not good, it's just that now, I think us being in this space has opened up a conversation about accessibility for them.

They were interested in bringing us back to work with the school, and things like that. Would this conversation even have happened, if we weren't presented there? I would say no. You're not going to solve a problem that you don't know exist.

Did local transportation options, and realities affect your work, and the presentation of your work in New York?

Yes. The Harlem School of the Arts was like one block from the subway except that entrance of that subway didn't have an elevator. There was no way. The nearest accessible subway stop was three, four blocks away. It was uphill from that subway to the Harlem School of the Arts. I did it the first time, and then the second time I said, "I'm sorry, I may go to the closer one. I'm hauling the costumes." We ended up doing Lyft and Uber most of the time for the dancers to get there. My dancers were able to transfer out of their chairs. That would not have been an option for all companies, because Ubers and Lyfts—I don't know how long it would have taken to get someone who had a wheelchair-accessible van. I don't even know if those exist in the in the ride share world. I don't know about the taxi situation in New York either.

It didn't affect the work as much as it made the experience just a little less pleasant that we had to separate. It's fun as a group to travel from the hotel, travel together to the theater. It's the preprocess of performers. We start coming together. We travel to the theater together, we warm up together, et cetera, and to just have to come from different directions to get to the theater, perhaps made it a little bit—made it take longer to get into that performance mode, that feeling of camaraderie that we need in our work.

What's different about producing work in New York City as opposed to other places that you performed? Were there things that were not possible in New York, and the converse, only possible in New York?

I felt tremendous pressure about being presented in New York, because for many people, like the song, "If you can make it there, you can make it anywhere." New York still has this cachet of being the dance capital of the United States. It's important to see your work presented there, and it looks good on your resume, and grant applications, and all that. I don't know, besides the added pressure of being in New York, I don't know what— I really can't think of what was possible there, that's not possible any other place.

Were there things that were only possible somewhere else that aren't possible in New York?

Since this is our only time we've been in New York, it's hard to answer that. I do know I felt it's cheaper other places. The hotel expense was probably double what it would be in another city. It would be very difficult for us to do an extended run in New York, which would be possible here in Atlanta. It's possible in some other cities that we've been to, that we've gone and stayed a longer period of time, because the hotels are cheaper, meals are cheaper, transportation. Just the added expense associated with New York is a hindrance.

I know it's a hindrance to a lot of the dancers I know in New York who have to commute from the Bronx or Brooklyn or outlying areas to come into rehearsals. Yes, the rehearsal expense too. We were fortunate that we rehearsed here in Atlanta, flew in, we had access to the theater the next day after we were there, so we had that rehearsal space, but if we had to go in, and rent rehearsal space as well as the theater space, it wouldn't have been possible for us even with the generous support of this grant, because we definitely did not want to go to New York and lose money.

What, if anything, would you do differently next time? How that have changed your experience presenting in New York?

Next time I would come to New York earlier, maybe about two or three months before the actual performance to lay more groundwork than I was able to do this time. Groundwork meaning I'm going to the venue, problem solving then and saying, "This is what needs to happen, let's work on this." Getting there and having more time maybe to do some audience development work instead of doing it all virtually. I don't know what that would look like, but it would be sitting down with people that dance in NYC, or disability rights organizations, and saying, "Hey. We're coming. How can we partner?" Some things that I'm able to do here in Atlanta, because I'm here all the time, it would be lovely to be able to figure out how that can translate on tour?

How did you engage and reach your audience for your performance? How did you reach out to them?

First we took advantage of Dance/NYC's lovely support with ads on their website. I personally reached out to friends and dancers whom I knew in New York and said, "We're coming, can you spread the word?" Did a Facebook post, add to the Facebook ad that we paid to have it sent out to the New York City area, but most of the people that came I think were largely dancers with disabilities that had some involvement with the disability community, or were personal contacts of the dancers. The majority of many dance companies audience are personal contacts.

Did you experience challenges or obstacles with respect to audience?

Yes. Part of that, I think, was the venue location. We loved being at Harlem School of the Arts, but I don't know— That's not known as a destination for dance in New York, and this is just conjecture on my part. Would we have gotten more audience if we were at Gibney Dance or Alvin Ailey. I would tend to say yes, because they're known as dance venues. I was going to say that's just conjecture on my part.

Did you experience funding obstacles, or challenges pulling together the funding? How did you address that?

We experienced very little funding challenges, because the support from Dance/NYC, and the additional money that Dance/NYC provided really made it possible for us to be there because our budget was under a hundred thousand. The money that we had to put in just came out of a surplus budget that we can dip into all before instances like this, so, yes, the funding from Dance/NYC was very generous.

You didn't have to go to other funders. You went to your own little fund?

Yes. Our own operating reserve, and it was just minimal that we really had to draw out of there. We're thrifty. We're a very thrifty dance company, and I suppose dance companies have to be.

What do you think the future of integrated dance is and what will make that possible?

I'm trying to be very optimistic about the future of physically integrated dance. I guess it depends on the day, the challenges that I face, but I think maybe we're on the cusp of something big right now. I'm now, along with Judy Smith the artistic director-founder of AXIS and cochair of Dance/USA's Dance and Disability Affinity group, which is brand new and a great way to start connections nationally, and that kind of conversation has to happen.

For too long, we've been too separated, and in this digital age, one of the great things is that we can do what we're doing right now. We can sit down and have face-to-face with people. We have to have deep and perhaps difficult conversations about what the future of physically integrated dance is. There is professional physically integrated dance. There is physically integrated dance training. There is dance for social dance.

It's trying to embrace the entire community, but with an eye out for what is artistic excellence in the field and what that means. I know this is a difficult conversation in every art form, but we've got to sit down, and we are doing this. We are sitting down and talking about what it is. What if we're trying to further the professionalism of physically integrated dance companies?

That's a different conversation about broadening training in physically integrated dance.

We have these conversations in Atlanta, just among the dance companies of "dance studios who are excluded from this organization." It's like, yes, we have to really define what we envision the future of physically integrated dance to be. Individually each practitioner, each company has to do that, but we need to see if we can come together as a field and say, "This is the goal, this is our ultimate goal." That may happen, it may not happen, but I'm hoping at least a small group can come together and say, "Well, we shared this. We may not share everything, but we shared this ideal, so let's put our energy behind that."

What advice would you offer disabled artists, and non-disabled dance artists, and administrators about how to contribute to the future of integrated dance?

Find out what's out there. The web is a wonderful thing, and so many practitioners in this field, those of us that have been around for a while, and as Judy always says, are professionally interruptable. Just send us an e-mail. Give us a call, and 9 times out of 10, we're going to sit and have that time to sit down and talk to you about it.

I keep going back to visibility. If you're a dance artist with a disability, go out, go see things, go to classes even if you're the only and you're likely going to be the only dancer with the disability in the class. Put yourself out there. Make that teacher uncomfortable. That happens. Then, they start thinking, it's like, "Yes." Otherwise, it's the same old, same old. They see the same bodies in class with the same people at performances. Visibility is the key. Visibility is the key. Get out there, submit your work to festivals, submit your work to open studio things, go to classes, make yourself seen at performances, and go up and talk to the people afterwards, the presenter, the dancer that was on the stage.

Dance is sometimes such an isolated process, particularly if you're a solo artist, you're in the studio by yourself, or with a small group. There's so much importance about getting out of the studio, getting out into the larger world, and realizing that you can make a difference.

What do you think would make New York City a place where integrated, and disabled dance artistry could thrive?

One thing that springs to mind, well, two things. One, I know there are very few rehearsal studios that are accessible in terms of physical access, and accessible in terms of finance. If there were more venues available for dance artists to work in, that would be great. Second thing, I would challenge dance presenters in New York to actively present dancers, physically integrated dance, at least once a season. I joke about this a lot, but when was the last time a presenter said, "No, we can't have a disabled dance company on our show this year. We had one two years ago." That's what they say, "No, we had X dance company two seasons ago. We're not going to program again with dancers with disabilities."

I would challenge presenters. I don't even know, has the Joyce ever presented a physically integrated dance company? I'm sure maybe somewhere through their history, but if there was like some of the bigger venues wouldn't make the commitment. I think that would have a real difference. Not only in New York, but all over, all over.

Is there something I'm not asking that should be asked, or do you have any final thoughts?

My thought for New York in particular, just because of the venue we were in, is perhaps that there needs to be a little bit more pressure by the funding agencies, the state, the city itself to say, ADA was passed almost 30 years ago. You need to get your venue up to code. If an audience member with a disability, or a dancer with a disability knows that they're going to be able to go to a venue, going to be able to get into through the bathroom door, they're going to have a choice of seating, then they're going to go out more. They're going to support more.

I know I'm horrible, but if there's not parking nearby here in Atlanta sometimes I go, "That's too much of a hassle. I'm not going to go to that show." If I know beforehand, there's parking here, I'm more likely to go. All the venues need to be open and accessible to everyone and they need to be able to publicize that.

Interview with Marc Brew, AXIS Dance Company, December 4, 2017

Can you share your artistic vision with us for your work in integrated and disability dance artistry?

My vision as artistic director and choreographer with Axis Dance Company is really about moving this work forward, to really get as much exposure, and to present the work in different capacities. It's also for it to be represented on the main stage, as any other dance company would be represented. So, it's about raising the quality of work, and also the exposure of the work being seen at different venues and festivals. For me, what is really important is the next generation. We are looking at training opportunities to really help, and support, up and coming and emerging disabled artists to have access to training, and opportunities to develop a clear pathway for them to enter into the dance world.

Can you talk about the ways in which the work that you are doing with AXIS Dance Company advances disability rights?

The one thing about working in integrated dancing, and with dancing with or without disability, is about it being seen, about it being witnessed, about it being experienced. So for me it's about having the work out there, and to be engaging with audiences. And not just facial audience, but what are other ways that we can present the work to be seen to a wider audience? And one thing, it's about having people with or without disabilities onstage. You know, it really is about there-and-then changing people's perception about their own condition and background, or understanding of what disability should be or shouldn't be. But they're barely very much exposed to what can people with their disabilities can bring together. So it's about changing people's perceptions through the art and through it being experienced.

I also feel through our advocacy and teacher training, and artistry and advancement platform we are really trying here at AXIS to really create opportunities for people with disabilities to gain more experience. And one of the things is that we are doing a choreo lab next year for emerging

disabled choreographers, to really support disabled choreographers, in developing their skill and practice and confidence in creating work. As well as, we are doing a three day teacher training, which will be traveling around to different locations around America in the next couple of years. And for me the teacher training is really important because it is for education.

And also what is really wonderful is, what I really enjoy is, working with the kids of today, and we do a lot of assembly programs and workshops where we go into schools. Like when we were in New York we went to the IDEAL school on the Upper West Side and did an assembly. So there we are changing, not changing, but making people aware about disability, about dance and about what we *can do* and straight away there we've got kids whose minds are just being opened, straight away, by, "Wow, look at what can be achieved, look what we can do," rather than what we can't do. So that's very important to me as well; working with children and opening up their perceptions around disability and dance and art for all.

How did you choose the venue in which you performed (Gibney Dance)?

Well, we started building a relationship with Gibney Dance when AXIS did their first convening a year ago in January 2016. We did a first-off national convening around the future of physically integrated dance, and we held it there at Gibney Dance, and from then having a cohort of people who work in the field, people with or without disabilities attending Gibney Dance this weekend it really made the team at Gibney Dance, and Gina Gibney in particular, really aware about their space, and what we brought by being there and having a presence in that space. That's when conversations began about us coming back and doing more while we were there.

So we toured a workshop when we were there for our convening, and then we came back and we taught a three-day "dance for all workshop" that we had there, and we also did a three-hour workshop. So since the convening we've been in conversation with Gibney Dance about other ways that we could engage with the dance community in New York and to work with them about really exposing what they are already offerings of classwork and teachings, and residencies to do more work around integrated dance. So, we've been continuing that with different residents. And when we were

just there performing, quite recently we also did a three-day choreography and performance training, we did a three-hour teacher training. I also curated a four-day master class series where I had people who work in this field and are teaching master classes there with myself who taught one day. I had Mark Travis Rivera from Marked Dance Project, had Heidi Latsky and also Alice Sheppard.

So it was really exciting they really feel this buzz; it's like Axis is taking over the venue for a week where we got to engage in a whole variety of activities, and of course a lot of that was made possible due to our grant through Dance/NYC, the DDA grant, which made it easy for us to be there, and the support that we got to be there.

But the relationship between Gibney Dance very much started from our first convening and when we were looking at venues to perform at, it just felt like a real natural collaboration because we could all say that we performed, it was accessible, and also we could do all these engaging activities around it as well in one space.

The staff, everyone at Gibney Dance have been so amazingly welcome, and whenever I saw anyone they would be like "Is there anything we can do for you, is there anything you need?" and you feel welcome, it's really important. And I know through my background and training as a dancer and acquiring my disability that when I started going back to classes again, I didn't feel so welcome. So it's really great that we had to be in a space that is welcome. They are doing what they can to really ensure that they make the classes and activities accessible to everybody.

So did you experience any accessibility issues there?

The only one which, you know, Gina and they all know clearly about it is just the wheelchair accessibility access isn't great because you have to go through the council pilot building and through security all through the back way. So we don't get to enter through the Gibney Dance entrance, but that's about to change because obviously they are getting new studios built, and they are going to be building in a new elevator which means we get direct access from street level to Gibney dance. The biggest one is that whole thing about having

a different route to have to go on because you need wheelchair access which can divide. But we know that there's a goal and there's going to be a lift in the future, so I'm very much looking forward to that.

A lot of people would may not even take that on. A lot of people would say, "We've already got this alternative route, so why do we need to build another one?" But I think they really understand that it's really important that we all enter treated the same way and not to have to go through that: our bags getting checked everyday. They think we are going into council building. That we get to enter as our fellow colleagues and friends would be entering to get to Gibney Dance.

Anytime you go through it, the protocols change. One day I heard someone say, "We need to check your bag." Another time they just took my name. So it was never consistent about what we had to do. Even though they did try, Gibney Dance did really try to organize really well with them about what the procedure would be and who the names of the people would be, they never did it the same way each time. It was a bit ad hoc. I'm looking forward to the change in the future and then getting a separate list.

When you were in New York, did local transportation options and the realities of using those options affect your work and the peace whenever you work?

I moved to the Bay Area to good access in May, and obviously being in the Bay Area there's a lot with the disability community, there's a lot that's been done in terms of infrastructure here in the Bay Area to make it accessible to everybody. Since I arrived in New York there was a real—you know I've been to New York many, many times but I think you can easily get used to, you know, have much good access is in a way in the Bay Area. I did know straight away. Just around the corner from my hotel where I wanted to get breakfast because it was a discount and I couldn't get in there because there were steps up there. I didn't even go near trying public transport because I've tried many times in the past and it's just been an awful experience, and being stuck and squashed on trains and not all the elevators are working or not. All the stations have elevator service? Luckily our hotel wasn't too far away, but also I can't really push very far due to my

shoulder. I was needing assistance just with access to get around, due to the sustainability of my arms and my strength to get to and from Gibney Dance. I very much just went straight from the hotel to Gibney everyday. Unfortunately it didn't want you to access a bit of their time as well. Didn't get much time to really explore and do a lot of other things around New York city because it is a difficult city to manage with a physical disability.

Did you take cabs or did you arrange for a car?

Yes we took Ubers, and I use my manual chair. But it is a difficult city. Especially if you don't know as well— I don't visit there a lot. So if you live there, you get to know a lot more about how to get around the city a lot better, but it's not always clear with regards to the search for accessibility and whatever are the ways to get around. We would take a car if needed.

What is different about producing work here in New York city as opposed to other places, nationally or internationally?

New York obviously has its history of—its history of dance, of arts, of performance art and all the wonderful people whom it has created and lived there and worked there and presented their work there. So it is a real—no it's definitely on the top of the list of places wanting to present work, and bringing produced work in New York, because of that history.

I feel New York has been a bit behind with regards to dance and disability, but I feel like now, through the support of Dance/NYC, it's like now that we got more in the spotlight, it's being noticed. I do look forward to there having more opportunities, or seeing more presenting opportunities for disabled artists to present their work. For us at AXIS, we have performed in New York on different occasions as part of other bills, other programs that work, but it was really exciting for us to present our own mixed bill of programs that we presented at Gibney Dance. That was a real buzz to have it in New York, and I was really nervous as the new artistic director as to how it is going to be received. In New York audiences see a lot of work and the work could be very different as compared to what is in the Bay Area. But obviously I've come from the UK and I've been exposed there to a lot of diverse types of work. I didn't know how the audience is going to respond.

But thankfully everyone was really positive about the work that we presented and I felt people really enjoyed our presence and I thought that was important for us, as part of our thirtieth anniversary, for AXIS to be in New York and have a season there and I really do hope and want a bill that allows for AXIS to be in New York on a yearly basis if possible.

Were their things that were not possible in New York in terms of your producing work in the city?

Well the not possible things were with regards to the theatre that we were in, which was wonderful but it wasn't as—we weren't able to fulfill our ten equal requirements to its full capacity in regards to—of the space and the limited space and also the limited lighting that we had. We had to make some choices around that. I don't feel the audience would know that but as obviously the director, I'm also aware of the standard quality of work that I do want to present. We had to make some choices around the work and how it was presented due to the limitations of the space and lighting.

Did anything about the infrastructure affect who you could bring to the performance from your company?

We pretty much brought everyone that we needed to. I would mention Judith Smith, who is founder and director of the company. She uses the power chair, which I know she always dreads in regard to getting to New York, it being a real difficult place to manage using a power chair. It was unfortunate that she was unable to come. It wasn't primarily for that reason, but I know that it is often a difficult one if you use a power chair as well. I, at least, using my mini chair in New York was able to get in and out of cars, but with a power chair you do need to have an accessible taxi or an accessible car that has a wrap, and that just limits the possibility of transport to get around a lot more.

We obviously taught there at the IDEAL school. So the dancers had to get there from rehearsal at Gibney Dance, all the way to the Upper West Side so we had to do that via Uber and so forth. But the two dancers who use chairs can transfer and commute many chairs and have a system for the other dancers. So that's how we were able to manage that. But using a power chair makes it a bit limited in regards to getting around.

Were there things that were only possible because you were in New York?

The fact that we were performing in New York. That it is only possible to be in New York to perform in New York. To say that we performed in New York, and also had some press that came from in and around New York as well. So having that New York press coming to see the work. Also the New York venues as well. We got some people from the Joyce and also from BAM who came. Being able to have access to other presenters in New York to come and see our work, who wouldn't probably come and see our work if we just were presenting it in Oakland. That it was possible to be able to engage with the New York dance scene.

So what if anything would you do differently, and how would it have changed your experience presenting in New York?

Looking in retrospect, it's very interesting. I think we tried to pack a lot in our time in New York. Because there is that feeling of, we have to make the most of this. We need to engage with as many people in different capacities as we can." So I feel like if I were to do it again, I wouldn't do as many wrap around elements, or engagement opportunities. Even though it was valuable, it was just looking at capacities with regards to energy levels. So I told myself and also everybody, the dancers and all of that crew. I would look at really being specific about how many engagement activities we do as well as performance elements. Also, one thing that was great was having a dance/NYC town hall, and having their support enabled me as the new artistic director to really engage with the dance and disability community, which was great.

How did you engage audiences or reach them for those performances?

Obviously through the Dance/NYC, DDA, we got a lot of support through their marketing, and through social media. So we did get a lot of social media activity happening around that. This was obviously publicized on Dance/NYC, our website, and also the Gibney Dance website. We also were very fortunate due to the kindness of Gibney Dance. They also offered some support through PR. So their PR agent had pitched some options for us to get some media exposure which was great. I did one interview

with Dance Enthusiast, before we came, as a preview. Also, they got some people from different papers and so forth to come to our show, which was great. And through our different activities such as the master classes and the school assembly that we did, through our teacher training and through our choreography and performance lab, through the engagement in those activities helped also with building our audiences also. And you know, I know Gibney Dance isn't a huge, big, massive auditorium. But as it said on the website, each of our shows, as the website said, was sold out. It was really exciting to have that real buzz of people wanting to come and see our work, and talk about it, and engage in a conversation about it.

Did you have challenges or obstacles with respect to audience?

Yes, one of the challenges was just the way Gibney Dance does ticket sales, and also they wanted to be aware of allowing the first row, which I use as pews. And then the row behind that, they block out because of viewing, limited viewing they call it. And also the back row as well, they block that actually for limited viewing. So these are the things that we are unaware of, and we thought that we would be able to get full capacity with all the seats, but actually we weren't able to use all the seats. So there was a learning curve around that with regards to the limited seating and how many people could actually get in there.

Just the way that they—the system: if you needed specific seating or you had any excess requirement, I think, they always just waited till before the show to know who needed it. So there could have been a better way or a better format for people to give their access requirements. I don't know what that could be, but I felt like it was a bit unclear every day or every night before the show about who was going to turn up and what the access requirement were. They plug out all this space and don't say anything because they don't know whether they needed space or not.

Did you experience any obstacles in pulling together the necessary funding?

We wouldn't have been able to do it if it wasn't for Dance/NYC's DDA funding that we received. There's no way: one of the things about being in New York, I suppose like the Bay Area, is it's really expensive. For us to get there, accommodation, travel. There's no way we could have done it without the funding that we received, the extra support that we got.

Did you get additional support beyond dance/NYC for the performance?

I believe we used some of our own operational cost and funding to get there, as well as income that we could receive from the other engagement opportunities. That's why we also tried to build a lot of activities around us being there, to get as much income as we could, just because of the cost of being there.

What do you think the future of integrated dance is and what would make that possible?

What is the future of integrated dance? It can be what we want it to be. But for me, having more presence, having more opportunities and for the work to be supported and to be presented, that would be really important about the future: that this grows and the opportunity for the work by integrated companies and work by disabled artists is supported and is presented. You know, the other thing to do is regarding the way what we are making is going to be presented. We need to get venues and presenters on site to really realize how important this work is, and to book this work so it is presented.

From my experience, I work with some presenters, "Yes, we presented one disabled artist this year, we don't need to present anyone else," If they tick the box of "We've done that." Actually the work by integrated companies and disabled artists is all very different. Not one company and not one artist works the same way. The wonderful thing about the work is that we all have our own different perspectives, what we present, and that connects with people. The future of integrated dance is about creating more opportunities for the work to be seen, for the work to be made and also as I mentioned earlier, creating pathways and opportunities for emerging and disabled adults who are interested in getting into dance to have a pathway to that career in dance and disability.

What advice would you offer disabled artists and nondisabled dance artists and administrators about how to create those pathways, how to contribute to the future of integrated dance?

I will say the first thing is not be afraid. Not being afraid by making it. You've got to make those opportunities to not always feel like we can wait for them. After I acquired my disability, I had to really research for opportunities and actually if there wasn't any, I had to make my own. Luckily now, 20 odd years on, there are more opportunities than there were 20 years ago for disabled artists to engage in dance and have a career in dance, which is great. And there are a lot more companies now that work in integrated dance, and a lot more choreographers who want to work with a diverse cast of people, which is fantastic. Not being afraid to take that leap of faith, and jump at opportunities, and also to make your own opportunities, as daunting as it may seem to go into that first dance class or to engage with a university to get into a degree. Sometimes you've got to be the one to make that change. Having that first conversation or arriving at that first class or getting yourself into a studio where you can explore your ideas. These are beginning steps that are important to furthering a career, furthering the field, or both.

What would make New York City a place where integrated and disabled dance artistry could thrive?

New York is a wonderful place where the unexpected thrives. It just needs to create space for integrated dance to thrive and that's about trying to eliminate initially the boundaries, all the physical barriers. But not only physical barriers, but also accessible barriers, and financial barriers, and then also the barriers of perceptions and attitudes. The way that happens is by it having a presence, and by being there, and it being seen, and being experienced. New York is an exciting, bubbling place where anything can happen. There are a lot of artists there that are creating work. They now need to be given the space and, I suppose, the funding and support for their work to be seen.

Is there something that I'm not asking you? Something you expected, or that I should be asking you?

We were just very lucky with Gibney Dance, but the goal of our work is about finding the right partners. Dance/NYC is an amazing partnership and advocacy for this work, which is great. That's also because Lane and all the people that work there are really wanting and investing in this. I feel like Gina Gibney, and Gibney Dance, the whole team there is finding that this work is important and are investing in it. But I imagine not everyone is wanting to do this type of work or invest in this work, whether it's about offering space or support wherever it may be. So think about finding good partnerships, to help the work flourish.

Creating space for other conversations to happen, for the work to be seen, and for it to be a specific experience. I'm just repeating myself now, but I don't think it's just one angle. There are multiple layers and angles for this work to be come at.

One thing I am really interested in doing, I was trying to do, and it may take a while, is with our performance work. I feel very empowered through my own work that I've been doing in the UK. I do make all my work in UK as accessible as I possibly can to everybody, to a wider audience. Not just through accessible seating and so forth, but also through audio description and captioning, ASL interpretation. Dance/NYC does that for the Town Halls that we've been doing, which has been wonderful. But also, a lot of artists are missing the opportunity here about engaging in that as a medium for creativity for their work. A lot of the bigger productions of course, whether it's on Broadway even, always do access as an extra added thing. Something I mentioned at the Town Hall was we create an access line in our budgets in the UK. When we do apply for funding, there is access there to cover those elements. But not how we just add it on at the end, but how do we engage it from the beginning, and bring in an audio description, captioning and interpretation as part of the creative process that is in the work.

AXIS has done audio descriptions in the past and some ASL interpretation in the past, but more can be done here. For AXIS, we're also going to have to build that into our budgets because I haven't really been in there as strongly as it should. That's something I'll be working on the next few years to try to make happen more.

My new piece I just made for my own company back in UK before I came here was called Brew Band. It was a music gig. It's an Indie rock band with dancing musicians who have made this band. I incorporated three projections captioning and sign language interpretation that's embedded into the piece as well as the dancers using sign language as well as a full audio description that is done for each show. It's not just one show is done like this. Every show is done like this.

I really want to look at what are the funding streams for that because that's where things are very different to me as part of my learning. I can apply in the UK to Create Scotland or Arts Council England for my work, for my funding, for my project, that encompasses all these things. Production costs, accessibility costs, all those things. But here I've got to look at all the different funding streams and all of them may offer different things. So it's a bit more of a jigsaw to put together.

Kevin was saying that he was working with the New York City Council Cultural Fund. I may need you to correct me about what is actually . . . by looking at policy with regards to funding, and putting in a line for access, which they are just beginning the conversations about. Yes, and finding ways to allow people to experience what you are talking about so it is not so abstract. This is essential because it is hard to piece it together when you're just reading it, but what it really looks like and feels like. And everybody can understand what the benefits are, but what tips it into something that is actually funded? Because it is an experience. It's not just accessibility as you say: access as an add-on. It's part of the entire experience.

Interview with Jess Curtis, Jess Curtis/Gravity, January 19, 2018

Could you share your artistic vision with us for your work in integrated and disability dance artistry?

As a nondisabled artist—I don't identify as disabled—my artistic vision has mostly been to work with really interesting disabled artists that I have come in contact with and met along the way in various ways. I think I have a number of artistic visions around working with physical diversity and working with physically diverse performers and casts in a variety of ways.

For me, each project presents itself individually. Claire and I have been working together for about 10 years, and this particular project came about as a result of our desire to co-produce something in a way that we haven't worked before. I would say that my vision is quite project specific.

Let's talk about disability rights for a few minutes if we can. In what ways, if at all, does your work advances disability rights?

I think, one—again, using this project as an example but in all of the pieces that I made that have involved disabled collaborators there's a whole lot of education going on as we travel. We've actually gotten to the point where for this project when we work with presenters, we have in addition to our tech rider, we have an access rider to our contracts that just basically is stipulating but often actually educating the presenters in this country but also in Germany, less so in the UK. In the UK, where I've worked quite a bit, presenters are in general much better informed about access issues.

Here, I would say education is a big part of what we do in terms of educating presenters on those issues. On one level, it just is quite politically advantageous in making diverse bodies visible in culture and in providing context for professional disabled artists to be seen and be seen—again, in this country—aim the light, in the frame of professional artistry, and not as social work therapy, community social theater projects. That's very political. Then I feel like in most of my work, there is also an element of

just thematically, the work addressing issues around physical diversity and social justice. Projects like previous pieces for nonfictional bodies address the idea of fictional ideals of bodies and the kind of harm these perfect normative body ideals have on all of us.

In this piece, I think that a lot of the political balances has to do with really examining the way that we see each other and the way that our skills and habits or perceptions, create the perceptions that we have of the world and of each other. Actually that those skills and habits can be altered. By becoming conscious of them we can actually affect them and learn to see across the lines of difference more in other ways that we might prefer.

Where did you first perform, and how did you choose that venue? I would like to also keep in mind the rider that you just talked about because that's interesting.

Coming from outside of New York, I know Ben Pryor and had actually proposed a few works in the last couple of years to American Realness the festival, and had been looking for opportunities to bring my work to New York and to various places. When this came up, Ben seemed like a really ambitious fit. It seemed like something that American Realness was lacking in terms of its programming, but was also quite open too. I feel like Ben's ongoing agenda of evolution of the programming that he's doing is very interested in recognizing, if it's not being inclusive in certain ways. He's done a really great job of being able to do that and was quite interested, so we met.

When we proposed, we met a pretty open response from Ben, and then in that conversation—Our first proposal was around playing at American Realness in general, and then between the two venues that Ben uses for the festival. It seemed like Gibney made a lot more sense and had resources to support our project that Abrons, which is the other main venue for the festival, didn't have. Also that Ben had just recently been—I'm not sure exactly what his position is—but had just taken on the new position at Gibney made that all fit nicely. Knowing that Gibney also then had in the midst of all that, relationships with AXIS and Alice Sheppard, and I feel is in the midst of really expanding their view, their participation in collaborating with disabled artists.

Did you experience any accessibility issues at Gibney?

Yes, we did. Again, to frame it as like we experienced Ben being really receptive to communicating about those. For us, yes, it's a little bit problematic, this necessity of having a separate second entrance. Even before the new construction started, that was pretty clearly an alternate, not very well maintained, not very well clean. Which is, in my experience, a trope of disability arts and touring disability arts is that often level rolling access, entrances are often through some back doors or somewhere up some bitten elevator and have a very sort of second-class feeling about them.

In our work we really try to work differently than that and encourage presenters as much as possible, and we have a choice about it. When we're presenting with the presenters, if there are two entrances, we as much a possible ask the presenters to bring everyone through the accessible entrance to a venue or theater space that didn't make so much sense here.

Again, I feel like the Gibney staff responded really positively to welcoming folks that wanted to use or needed to use the accessible entrance. I think, it's not all in Gibney's choices. They have to deal with their landlord or their neighbors and that whole security thing. Even though it was—I mean, we kept testing all because we're coming to rehearsal and different crews of security guards would respond to Claire and I when we're coming into the entrance on crutches and I use a cane currently.

Mostly we found people pretty welcoming. Although, there was often an immediate challenge from one or the other's security guards going, "Why are you coming in here and where are you going?" and then as soon as we clarified we were always sort of admitted. I think we had to do the metal detector once when they weren't expecting us or something. I would say there is that. To use the accessible bathrooms, one has to go through the dancer dressing area. It's not perfect.

We did have an experience where somebody who was coming to one of our shows through the 53A entrance, and the security there didn't understand that there was a separate accessible entrance. I'm not sure what they didn't understand, but they told somebody who uses crutches that was coming

to an event of ours, that they should just use the stairs because it's only one flight. It seemed like both an issue that whoever is the provider of that security person had not briefed this person on an appropriate way to address clients or to direct them to the accessible entrance.

How did you resolve that one?

We only found out about it after the fact. The patron, the person, the crutch user who came actually did just made the effort and got up the stairs, even though it wasn't the choice they would have made if they had known there was an elevator on the other side of the building, and reported to us afterward about that. That wasn't ideal.

We're doing another event there on Saturday and Sunday. Before we go into that, Alice made a note to make sure that whoever provides those security people, which seemed not to be under the purview of Gibney make sure those people also have a briefing on how to be respectful of disabled clients.

Are you going to do a debrief with Gibney afterwards?

We will. At the moment we're still in the midst. We haven't scheduled the debrief with Ben or the space. There have been various levels of debriefs in terms of this rev art technical crew as they were loading out. Basically, we had a great time. We had a really warm welcome at Gibney, so we haven't had yet the opportunity to talk about when we might debrief the overall experience.

Would you be willing to share what some of the elements are in that rider, that accessibility rider?

The rider—I forgot how many pages, maybe 10 or 12 pages. It explains a number of our access strategies such as, what is a touch tour, what is audio description, our relationship to a sign language interpreter.

We, for this show, required that at every venue where we perform there's at least one night with the sign language interpreter. We discussed and gave some tips to Ben, who might not be used to hiring sign language interpreters, how to go about that, and some ideas about outreach to the

deaf community or blind vision-impaired community for the touch tour and audio description. There's a section on front of house on ways to make sure that front of the house staff are welcoming to disabled audiences.

We have also a second document that is written. I call it a cheat sheet. I wrote from my perspective as a nondisabled person coming into, working more and more in the space of disabled communities or disabled arts communities that's trying to demystify for people that might not be familiar and give some basic language tips around current terminology that is more preferred since then other older stuff. Basically trying to help people to not be afraid to engage especially in the dance space.

Claire and I have, in a number of contexts, been asked to talk to teachers in Berlin about whether or not they might make their technique classes or their improvisation classes overtly available to disabled dancers, and what their concerns are, what their fears about doing it wrong are.

Anyway, some of that document is just to encourage people like we're all working at it and making a good faith effort. You're for sure going to stick your foot in your mouth sooner or later and that's part of the work and don't be afraid of it. Mostly, no one's going to chop your head off if they see that you're making an effort. Although, I have seen that happen occasionally. Someone making an effort and making it badly and somebody responding really badly.

We also have in that access rider some tips around marketing and ways that people might reach out to different communities. I think as simple as some stuff around just formatting of websites and formatting of materials to be accessible to screen readers and font size stuff for visually-impaired people, suggesting options like audio programs on MP3s or having things available on the web that the program might be available in a number of formats as audio. There's some specific stuff about access to our performance space and our show.

We actually had the audience seated on the stage and which, in different places, has proposed different issues that a lot of stages aren't easily accessible by their rolling access. Giving a heads up that we're going to be

pushing, we require that wheelchair users have access to having as much choice about where they sit as everybody else. Just remember that one of the things in studio H at Abrons is a very limited wheelchair access. . . . Seating for wheelchair users is pretty limited to just right on the floor, except, in our situation, it was getting a lot of seats because we used the whole floor. It seems like that studio has a pretty limited set of places where wheelchair users can sit.

Anyway, the access rider is that. It also has a bunch of resources and a number of websites, particularly from the UK, there's one like—I forget its name—something like accessiblearts.co.uk or something. Anyway, there are also a few different websites that provide even more detailed access to information that we give to presenters.

Do local transportation options and realities affect your work and the presentation of your work?

I wouldn't say so. We've toured enough now that we actually have a pretty hefty access transit line item in our budget. In general, we just put enough in the budget for Claire to be able to do Lyft or Uber to and from the theater everyday.

We've done that enough to have anticipated that in our budget. Actually, at the moment, I'm recovering from hip surgery and it's very useful to me too. We didn't actually have to engage pretty much with alternative transit stuff because that's just how we do it. In the past, in San Francisco, when we brought Claire and another disabled artist from the UK and tried to work with SF Paratransit system. It's just unwieldy, and you can't really count on it to be punctual and end up wait tons of time. I don't know exactly how that is here but we've had enough bad experiences with that in various places to just go now with just Lyft.

In this production, Claire's mobility is the main issue as far as that goes for wheelchair users and the need for anyone to transport with a power chair. For the event this weekend, the one person that's coming to speak at our event who's a power chair user is a local New York resident, Sunny Taylor, and she has her own knowledge of how to get around. It hasn't really affected us very much.

What's different about producing work in New York City as opposed to other places you've performed? Were there things that were not possible here or only possible here in New York?

This is the 11th city that we've performed it in and I would—I don't know if it's necessarily about New York as much as about our being on tour. There are a few things that I think we have experienced in general on tour as opposed to at home.

The one that comes to mind right now just because I was writing to our sign language interpretation service about it was that it didn't seem like the venue or Dance/NYC, or our local hosts seem to have much relationship with the deaf community or the visually impaired or blind communities. Even though we had sign language interpretation, we didn't have any deaf clients come to the show or deaf patrons. Which we've found to be challenging and it's an ongoing conversation with us around providing that access. Where is that motive? Are we actually making work that's relevant to deaf audiences? How much are we investing? Investing in an interpreter is an empty gesture if we don't invest in outreach. In places where there's not already a relationship, nobody's going to come because you're buying your first ad in the local deaf newspaper or at the local blind radio station. That was a little unsatisfying here and also understandable with the staff resources.

We did little bit of outreach through connections we have in San Francisco. Even finding an appropriate sign language interpreter was a little bit tricky. We ended up working with the agency that Alejandra recommended, which seemed fine and actually felt like, "Oh, this agency is actually much more set up for conferences and meetings and was somewhat surprised by the nature of our task." We had already reached out to a couple of individuals that were recommended to us who weren't able to do it. That match up felt a little bit odd.

The festival and the culture around performance in New York I think is, if not unique, is certainly one of the important centers of contemporary performance and that feels really important and that's something to come here at this time and be able to play and have the number of international

folks and presenters that were here and that came and saw the show from Sweden, and Germany, and Belgium and all over was really an amazing opportunity. I think we had similar opportunity when we played in London. That's both New York and the timing that we were able to do really made that possible.

It was really cold. The ice on the streets was a concern for Claire at a number of moments. That's not unique to New York necessarily.

What if anything, would you do differently? How you would have changed your experience presenting in New York?

I would have liked to, from our side, done a little bit more outreach through our connections to deaf and vision-impaired communities. I think our work in particular addresses sensory diversity. I feel really good about it as something that has—We've gotten really good feedback from vision impaired audiences and deaf audiences about our making the work accessible as well as the content of what the work is, and how it relates to them. If I could mobilize it, I would invest more effort in that sooner. Although we were up against our own organizational capacity limitations. We did have the intention to do more than we did also. I was hoping that Ben through the connection with Dance/NYC, there would be already a little bit more of that in place when we got here. Other than that, I think it feels pretty good. We're definitely working hard. Claire and I are teaching at movement research this week as well. We did a reading group on Wednesday night and the town hall on Tuesday morning, and the weekend.

We had a lot of ideas. I was laughing to someone. Usually you have five ideas about different things you could do surrounding a project. If you're lucky, two or three of them manifest and then you do them. All five of the things that we proposed, happened and hit. We're like, "Oh, wait." We're really busy. That feels great on one level, but it's a little bit like, "Wow, okay." I'm looking forward to Monday when we're going to be through this gauntlet.

How did you engage and reach audiences? I know that you said you in your rider, you were working with the presenter to do that, and then you hoped that more would be in place with Dance/NYC and Ben. How did you do it?

We do a lot of social media stuff. We have our own e-mail list. It's not very extensive in New York. Alley Wilde, my administrator, is pretty good around knowing how to make all the Google ads and the Facebook ads, actually how to work with the filters to get them to show up. They were sharing with me this week that they were really happy with the click through rates that we got on several of the Facebook events and Facebook posts, and the paid advertising that we had. We had quite a good view and click through rate on stuff like that.

I feel like being at Realness and providing them with all of our materials was the main thing that we did in that structure. We did consider for a little while hiring a publicist separate from the Realness publicist. We negotiated to the point of getting a bid from a PR firm publicist, that was seemed like it was way too expensive for the benefit that we would actually drive out of it. Ben did a really good job of getting publicity out. We got a New York Times review the day before yesterday which unfortunately was after we had closed.

It's great that all of those people that happened to read the art section might read about the work. We got some good pull quotes out of it, some usable pull quotes out of it. It feels like actually the symposium is enjoying the benefits of all of the other events. Now our registration for it is quite full. I wish if we had a little more time or had a review come out sooner, it would have been nice. We had a lot more chairs available in the theater every night. We were never really close to capacity.

It was also interesting how we were at Marissa Perel's show the other night and feeling like maybe something to do with the fact that physically diverse work or work by disabled artists is something new to the communities around American Realness that we maybe didn't have the hipster cache that a lot of the other very sold out shows that we were at have. It will be interesting and nice to see if a continued investment in artistic disabilities making contemporary work will pay off in that direction or will begin to develop that. In general, we're quite pleased with the people that came to the work and their responses were really quite satisfying. It's nice to have more butts in seats.

Were there obstacles to pulling together all the necessary funding for your presentation in New York? If there were, what were they, and how did you address them?

Basically for our presentation. We had already a work that was created and existing and touring already. We used our DDA funding just for the presentation here and found it more or less sufficient. The extra \$5,000 we got for publicity and outreach was really helpful. I think that we got after the fact of the initial grant. It's helped that we're in the middle, so we brought Claire over.

This is the first engagement of three. We're going on to Vermont and Chicago now. It was very helpful that all three of—well, those other two presenters are splitting the cost of her visa for instance and the transatlantic travel. Being able to simply do that block booking lessened the direct cost for us coming to New York. Those other two gigs are also supported by National Dance Project.

There were a few things that when it came down to adhere, we had to rent screens and projectors for our video art that happens on stage here. They were pretty expensive. Even before we knew exactly what they were going to cost, we were able to commit to deciding to do that because we knew we have a bit buffer and surplus on those other two gigs. If we went \$500 over here, it wasn't going to break the bank. It was going to be okay.

We didn't really plan. At one moment, Barbara Brown from Movement Research suggested, when we've started to run these projectors and screens, it costs us around \$4,000. We did consider applying to a fund that Barbara recommended that was like an emergency arts fund here. Alley had actually said they had already applied for it last two years with another client of theirs and thought it was pretty much of a long shot. We ended up being able to make that thing work without applying for that. Pretty much the DDA money for the most part has covered our expenses.

What do you think the future of integrated dance is?

What do you think will make that possible?

It's interesting working as I do between California and the UK, and Berlin. I feel like I get to watch three different communities and three particularly different phases of development. What I see in the UK with artists like Claire is that history of real investment and disabled artists, and not just in the presentation of disabled performers.

I think that that is something that's going to be important and won't be important to hear. I feel like the first generation disabled bodies on stage, the Canducos and the Blue-eyed Soul, and the Dancing Wheels. Access have been a really important generation of making physically diversified bodies visible on stage. That to a large degree have often been not disabled artists and makers in theaters making work on disabled bodies. That's including integrating disabled bodies, disabled performers.

It feel like what I've got to see at festivals likes Unlimited in the UK were that have a real limit of funding and supporting the work of disabled artists to make and to commissioning work. I think that's going to be important. I think in that hand in hand with that is the need for more inclusive indoor physically diverse training models for both performance and makers. Yes, finding ways to get to that more diverse artists have access to professional training. I'm actually training all along the spectrum from beginners through professionals.

I think what that results in is much more community integration. It feel like there is still quite this sense, and everywhere just to varying degrees, but of the disabled dance community every year it's someone from the rest. I feel like as more artists become more mature and get to have more experience that disabled artists start appearing in more non-ghettoized, to nondisability specific contexts. I remember a couple of years ago with one of the presenters that I was trying to get to sign on to my National Dance project proposal that year.

She was like, “Our disabled festival, I’ve already booked everybody in our disabled festival.” The sort of like, “Actually, I’m not asking to be part of that festival. The fact that I have two disabled artists in this cast, I want to be in your ‘real’ festival.” Or in that, “I’m not looking for that specialty festival.” It was really satisfying to see two years ago Claire brought her solo, *Give Me A Reason To Live*, two times in August. I think it was the first time, I think, I remember being part of the discussion. Whether it was the first or second time in the history of times that there has been a disabled performer or maker. Going, “Yeah, right. There are some really amazing artists who should be in more of these festival and not only when they’re doing the physically diverse thing,” or whatever it is.

What advice would offer disabled artist and non-disabled dance artist administrators for how they contribute to the future if integrated and disability dance industry?

Educate yourself. I think there’s something about specificity, paying attention to diverse artist and diverse situations. Do not settle for lumping the people into large categories of this or that, getting more specific around what you’re doing. I think there’s something around recognizing this sort of—even in situations that are already working on a certain kind of diversity, that show up around queerness or race, ethnicity or gender. There can still be this amazingly narrow band of nomadic bodies that get access to being on stage or get access to being in your theater.

That not everybody is a skinny, fit 25-year-old. Just thinking a little bit beyond, in one way adding one more intersectional access to thinking about that. I think being here, one of the questions that I want to ask of a lot of the nondisabled makers—and then, there’s not range of choices here. I really appreciated some and thought I would really want to just ask this artist if they even thought about this. Around access in nontraditional spaces in particular, seeing their own spaces that are built around an installation model or something where there is no sitting. Everyone standing to watch. There’s not really any attention to what if I’m 55 years old and I don’t want to stand for an hour or can’t? I don’t want to push through the crowd and sit on the floor at your feet. What are you?

Claire and I were at an installation in Berlin last year. She framed it as a lot of young dance performance makers, they're making their audiences, they're inviting their audiences into a situation as though their audiences were all exactly like them. It was it was a very tiny performance space, everybody standing around. Unless you sum up and the people push forward, and sat at the edge of the stage, even though she kept exhorting them to stand back up. It was like. "Is that really—is this inherent in the statement you want to make? That people should only stand and your performance is only for people that are standing and emulating being in a lab or something." That felt disappointing. I ended up leaving after about 20 minutes. I was like, I'm not doing this.

Yes, that question I think, is one of the things around accessing the art. I think in terms of the disability in general, anybody who's working in the field, I would really highly recommend getting up to the UK, driving to a couple of festivals like Unlimited, where really experienced professional disabled artists are getting support and real funding to make really amazing professional work. That has pretty much blown my mind, as I've seen performers like Dan Dark, Ellen Vordich, or Marc Brew. There's a lot of people some of whose work I don't even like, but I'm like, "Yes there's a whole range of possibility out there that's not just sort of work with a certain kind of social therapy agenda going on."

What would make New York City a place where integrated and disabled dance artistry could thrive?

I want to say, I think the things that are difficult for integrated physically, the larger picture just as a dancer, as a dancer who doesn't live in New York and has pretty much for the last 20 years flown over New York on the way from San Francisco to Berlin. It's like funding. The only way we got here is through this funding. We would not, we absolutely would not have been able to come to New York and present this work for the \$2,000 to \$5,000 fees I've been offered from places like DanceSpace or PS 212 back in the day.

That regardless of dance or disability. If you want work that's national or international to come to New York and have the New York dance scene understand that it's actually, maybe not as central to the dance discourse as it used to be. In the world, that yes, bringing more international work, having funding. I think the history, I feel like in a way as an American, I'm being able to bring this roots here largely because we had a lot of support to make this work in Europe, in Berlin and London. The work that I've made that's just Californians or just coming out of California. I'll be surprised if it has the opportunity to come here, without that kind of support. I think that's the reality. It's a kind of a cheap answer that funding would make it better.

Do you have any final thoughts?

This is more a kind of meta comment about the program itself, was that and maybe you've already got this. I know talking to a couple of the grant recipients, who are friends and we've kind of agreed, this is problematic about the program, was the timing, the timeline of when we found out about the grants and when we were supposed to have spent all the money and how that lined up with if you were just getting knowledge of it. It was very tight, unrealistic about we were lucky to have actually, that I had already initiated some conversations with Ben. I was totally cold calling him. Therefore, it could even work out to have our shows happen three weeks after the end of the grant period. Then, we were able to, my administrator Alley was able to sort of jump through backwards through some hoops to figure out how to spend the money that we needed to spend before the deadline.

Then, it was—we had to submit a final report three weeks ago, which is—Okay, do one other final report after we're actually done? This doesn't actually really mean anything, it's not at all final. I would say at several points through the process it felt like, "This is kind of a pilot thing that's being set up and there are a few things you haven't thought all the way through." Just even on that logistical level about the timing it takes to make things work. The C.F.P. should be way further in advance and have a signet a longer time to enter. I know Alice still hasn't done her presentation.

Anyway that sort of problematic at a few points. I'm really happy getting here and meeting everybody. There were some moments like, "Who the heck are you people?" It had a little bit of a bureaucratic tone to things. You are assuming that we are way more organized about setting up the systems that you are requiring us to fit into, then that you've done a really good amount of research about figuring out what we need and what would actually work for us in the real time production of things. Especially, for people coming from out of town.

Other than, it was great. We had a great—yes, it felt like a town hall the other morning was really awesome. We are really looking to the symposium that we are doing that we are only able to do because of you. Back to your question of what can happen in New York that can't happen other places. The really brilliant people that live here, Simi Linton and Sutton Taylor, and Alice, who also lives with us, but is also living here. That we could bring Bill Shannon here, and that coalescing of people for the symposium, it feels there are not many that could make something equivalent to that could happen in London maybe. Not even in California I think would be find this sort of aggregation of really smart people around disability and activism in our history.

Interview with Alice Sheppard, Alice Sheppard/Kinetic Light, March 26, 2018

Could share your artistic vision with us for your work in integrated and disability dance artistry?

I think I want to stake three seeds to the ground. One is to put down some work that is very different as an artistic art form for dance that is not just work that is performed by disabled artists without nondisabled artists, but also an art form that is rooted in disability art, culture, and aesthetics. It's not just about "Who is onstage? Who is making it?" but also where its origins and seeds are. Also, to claim for that, a part of it is intersectionality about race and cleanliness, so we're not just constantly focusing on disability, which is too white anyway. All of that is stake one.

Stake two, I want to think about as pushing disability art in a different direction, into the third wave maybe, in resistance to the politics of identity, in resistance to the assumption that work is tied to the politics of identity, and to the constant interpretational practice that work for race and disability must be tied to and ask for justice, equality.

I don't yet know how to really put words on this one, but it's key to really look at intersectionality. Identity root that is true. I guess I hate the word "true," and I hate the word "authentic," and I hate all these kinds of terms. I want there to be something legibly different.

In what ways does you work advance disability rights?

In part as an artist, that is exactly the thing that I am talking about not doing. In the civil rights model, rights are legal. They are social, and they are political. For the moment, I want to work in the realm of art and culture. While we can tie art and culture to the practice and advancement of rights, I don't know that we always have to, and so the question is an assumption that there is this connection. In one way, I believe that the question remarginalizes and inhibits the "advancement of the art form."

How did you choose New York Live Arts as your venue?

I was committed to La MaMa because they believed in us really early. The ethics of La MaMa, the women led the history of Ellen Stewart, and all of that mattered to me as an artist. Structurally, La MaMa is attestable. They were talking about making advancements in access, and they would have had to because that lift that they were talking about for the downstairs would never have held all the wheelchair users who came in the end, up and down and up and down, but they were really interested and committed. As a venue, this made sense to me.

However, for the work, as it turned out, the ceiling was too low. As the artistic vision depends, the technical requirements of the show outgrew the original venue, which was an ethical match. I wanted a venue that had an ethics match. I didn't really know anything about Live Arts going into this other, and I didn't know that it was going to be an ethical match. My first take was, "It's accessible. It's free at the date that we need it. Let's just do it," but it turned out to be an incredible ethics match. I guess I did this differently from everybody else, I don't know, but what I wanted was a venue that could support not just the work, which it totally did, but also the culture that we wanted to bring.

That's the thing that I want to stress about venue, is that the venue had the infrastructure to support the work, but also the grace and generosity to support the culture that we brought, and I mean everything about our culture. We did two different kinds of trainings with them. They came to understand not just their own building but their role in themselves, their identity in the building, what their job is, and how to welcome people with hospitality training and also accessibility training. They pulled out the first row and seats because we were like, "Look, we're going to have 13 to 14, maybe a minimum of 6 wheelchair users a night. We can't just stick them around the side in the tiny spaces that you usually use or stick them at the back." We were just like, "We're going to need this and we're going to need that. By the way, we need these things for the box office." They changed their practices to deal with the sold-out show. They just were like, "Okay." We mopped up their venue. I hope when we leave, it wasn't transactional

for them. I don't believe it was, but for us, the joy of that particular venue was that they allowed us to move our culture in for that week and the time before it. They did the backstage work to support the culture moving in and not just like, "Here's the theater, write the check, and we'll give you this. We'll put in for this, you put in for that." They didn't just do that.

How did the trainings come about? Did you offer them, or did they ask for them?

We did it. In part, that was because we knew we would have to, and especially because they weren't part of the original DDA audience training. La MaMa did that. We knew that we would have to do something, so we did a pile of trainings. We worked this venue over from top to bottom. The thing about it was that Janet Wong showed up. I don't mean that Janet Wong just said, "Okay." I mean Janet Wong showed up in person and led her staff. That's what I mean by moving in.

Even after those trainings and all of the dialogue, did you still experience accessibility issues and were they all resolved?

Well, one, access is a practice and a process. Two, access needs conflict. Three, there is no perfect access. Four, as artists performing in the space, we did not experience access issues. Our bathrooms were accessible, our dressing room was accessible, the stage was accessible. We planned for deaf access. We planned for visual impairment access. We had representation for disabled people and disabled people of color in front of house and the ushers in welcoming.

We learned, for example, that the show sold out, which was great, but that caused a set of access problems because it was overwhelming for some people to be in the space. Of course, there were always access problems. We know, for example, that the signage for the bathrooms was an issue, but again, Live Arts allowed us to do stuff, to change, to alert people to the bathroom. So when you look at our ticketing messages and our communications to ticket holders, we have a whole paragraph on the bathrooms. We have images and signage to prepare. Yes, of course, access is a practice, but as an artist in the space, that was, to me, a pretty damn good accessible performance. It was so because Janet Wong led that.

Did local transportation options and realities affect your work and presentation of work?

We ran a transportation pilot to figure out how to partner with groups to use paratransit options for audience purposes to move people around and help our audiences get here. We investigated different ways to think through the subway and all of that. Then the show sold out before we could actually finish the transportation pilot for our audiences. We thought about this. We had a plan. I had a team in place doing the research. We had done tours. We had worked through access. We had looked at different options for local transportation. Then the show sold out before we could get the tickets organized.

As for artist accessibility, we ended up using two different hotels because the hotel that had offered us the best discount had the worst access so we did not ask anyone disabled to stay there. In order to avoid the transportation issue, knowing that New York City transportation sucks, the company ate hotel costs close to the venue so that the disabled artists who were not able to navigate transportation could get there under manual power. Instead of eating transportation, we had lodging costs.

Tell us a bit about other places that you performed and what's different about producing work here. Were there things that were possible here or not, or only possible here?

I've performed in a wide variety of places. This is the mythology of New York. Frankly, in some ways, no, it is perfectly possible to build performances like this anywhere. More places than we think have access and more places than you would suspect can have access made quickly and readily with some small adjustments. Even though of course, the fully accessible theater is not a thing. New York Live Arts, there is not a fully accessible theater. Let me go back and double on that one. Their booth is not accessible to Michael. That freaked them out. They didn't realize that we were bringing a disabled lighting designer. The grid, I have been in places where there actually is an accessible lighting grid. New York Live Arts does not have an accessible lighting grid, but not every theater has a catwalk. I think the meat to this question is attention between structural access and actual culture. Structural access can be found and made in many places, and can be found and made in New York.

I think the question that's different is, what is the conversation around the work and the possibilities? Now we're in a different conversation. Now we're in a conversation where the work that the Dance/NYC Task Force has done over the past three to four years has changed the conversation in New York. That work should not be underestimated. That is part of what is different in New York and from other venues.

How has the work of the task force changed the conversation?

It's fair to say that over the course of the three to four years that Dance/NYC and the DDA Task Force has been in existence that certain segments of the New York dance culture have come to think of disability and dance as viable artistic practices, and that has expanded the world out of it, and it has made people take us a lot more seriously. That is a significant change. That would not have happened without the work of Dance/NYC. That is good news for us. It's a significant culture shift. I will say though, I do not think that the culture shift has yet translated itself to the mainstream dance audience. We still have a way to go on that front.

What, if anything, would you do differently? How would it have changed your experience: venue, the training, any of the elements that you've described, if anything?

Too early to tell actually. It hasn't settled. There are things that we could have done. For example, we still have a year's worth of work to do on the app. We could have held more wheelchair users if we had a slightly bigger venue. The show sold out before the *New York Times* picture. Now what do we do with that? I don't know what any of this means yet. We will process, we will review, and we will think through everything.

Can I change the question? I think that everything we did from the work with the venue, the app, the seminar (we did a seminar yesterday for four hours), we built a model—the transportation pilot, the seminar, the app, the trainings, the usher development, the whole work. We built a model that will obviously need to be reviewed, processed, and thought through, but this was the first time that we did it. It's not even 36 hours later, it's not even 24 hours later, it's not even 12 hours. Really, it's too soon. We did a tremendous amount

of development work. Even the seminar for disabled artists, that's not just audience development, that's artistic membership and growth in that field too. We will process, review, get feedback from the people who were in it, who helped it along, and the people who experienced it, and we will learn that way. That is going to be a months-long process. This is brand-new.

How did you engage and reach your audience?

People came from all over the US to see this, and I actually don't know the answer to that. I have not been through the final attendance list to really process who came, but here's my understanding of what happened. People came because word got out on the disability grapevine. Once they were in town, they came and they saw the show two or three times. I can say there were between 25 and 30 people who came from across the US to see this. That's an incredible investment of time, bodies, money, and heart. I'm stunned by that. I am moved by that, I am in a place of disbelief and incredulity. I don't really understand how or why. I don't understand, but I am so grateful still stunned. It was my dance and I can't believe that you believed in me so much. People came, and other people came because they came.

Other people came because they were involved with the project, and people brought their parents. I think this is the thing about our audience. We invited funders and presenters. Some of them came. That was good. We did all of the usual things that you do to promote a show. We used mailing lists and emails, Dance/NYC's platform and social media, but the show sold out prior to any of that, probably because of the disability community leadership.

That's not everybody. There's a gap in the middle that I don't yet fully know because I haven't been through the numbers. It's too soon, but there were a pile of disabled people. There was a much smaller pile of funders and presenters and dance industry professionals. The middle gap, I don't yet fully know, but it wasn't an audience of dancers. It was an audience of people who somehow got the buzz from somewhere, and it wasn't a mainstream dance audience. It was people who are interested in art and culture and ideas, maybe people who knew me or heard something about me, but it was the disability people who came, and that made it real in a very different way.

Were there obstacles to pulling together the funding for the production?

In terms of the dance world, I would say this is an incredibly well-funded project. We have funding from the DDA Fund. We have funding from the Mertz Gilmore Foundation through DDA. We have funding from Mertz itself separately. We have funding from Rubin. We have funding from MAP. We have funding from NDP. We have a lot of high profile grants, and that money barely covers. It does not cover half of the costs.

You were able to mitigate the costs somehow?

Yes. This is a huge project with a huge amount of structural costs, like the ramp. Moving the ramp around is a significant cost, building the ramp is a significant cost, storing the ramp, renting trucks for the ramp, rehearsal costs. Actually, the reason this project happened is that a lot of the costs were absorbed elsewhere. I'm going to say two things. I don't know what people think about disability at the funder level because I was very successful, but I also know that I'm a first-time artist. I also know that there is a great deal of skepticism at the funder level and at the presenter level. I know, for example, in feedback for grants I applied for, there's a tremendous deal of skepticism about the value of disability. I also want to say that I'm not an institution, so unless you have access to other resources, it is not possible under current funding mechanisms for independent artists to build work at this scale. Access could have supported this work maybe, but it is not possible under current funding mechanisms to do that.

Can you say a little bit more about the skepticism around the value of disability for funders?

This is both the good and the bad about the DDA Fund. The DDA Fund elevates six grantees and offers other funders a pilot of work that is acceptable. It's complicated about how people read that. In one way, the DDA grant advances the work. In the other way, it confirms the boundaries of the work. If the funder has already seen work and not liked it, the DDA Fund confirms that this is what the field is. I think the boundaries, the complexity of the independent artist scene versus the company scene is difficult and not yet known to funders. I also think that there are complexities in the work

barriers, like understanding that if you've seen AXIS, it doesn't mean that you've seen Full Radius. If you've seen Full Radius, it doesn't mean that you've seen me and my stuff. I think that that's one of the risks of the DDA Fund, is you canonize six. There isn't other work that is worth it out there. It's complicated, and at this stage, it's also an interesting intervention.

The field has been around for 30 years and it's been growing steadily, deepening, and developing. Then all of a sudden, thank goodness, New York has this conversation. There's the Task Force. Then there's the DDA grant that breaks apart this slow progress and slow growth. Maybe not even slow expansion, maybe it's slow stagnation. Prior to the day of DDA Task Force work, I wouldn't have been able to get myself funded. I do think this scale at which you can work is limited by funding mechanisms. It's complicated.

What do you think the future of integrated dance or disability dance sits? What will make that possible?

Clearly, the answer is getting more money. I don't mean more money in a little way. I mean in the multimillions of dollars for supporting the existing companies, for decentralizing the work away from existing companies, for training for artists, for conversation sounds, workshops for artists, for artist growth and development, for classes, for workshops. Geographical development, like you telling me there aren't any disabled dancers in Arkansas? Missouri?

Maybe there's one in Oklahoma.

I also think, frankly, there needs to be funding for crap work because we need to be able to take risks and fail. Other artists in other fields have the chance to fail without the whole field catapulting into disrepute. I know Judy Smith has made that point, and she's right.

We need physical space to rehearse in, affordable physical space to rehearse in. We're getting there. We need places to stay, to communicate across states. All of the things that dancers do, we need, but because the field hasn't done it, the practices that are invisible in the field of dance are now being visible. We need conferences, seminars, and it needs to be not run by AXIS or Full Radius or Dancing Wheels. They can be part of it, but they cannot control the shape of the field.

What advice would you offer disabled artists and nondisabled dance artists for how to contribute to the future of disability dance artistry?

The advice thing is really hard. This is the sappy answer, but it's not sappy. It's very real. We need to talk to each other. Even though we are often in zero-sum funding situations, we need to work together. I don't know how to do that. We need to study, train, talk, develop, deepen, grow. It's unclear to me how to make this work. I have a very clear idea of how I am here. Here is an odd place to be because it's not yet anywhere. This is what every artist experiences. This is what every nondisabled artist experiences, you work so hard, you do something, and the value of that is not really known until 10 years later. I think the one thing that would make my world better is not to be working in isolation.

Can you take that thought one step further and expand that into what would make New York City a place where disabled dancers could thrive?

I think that eventually, we move in with Gibney literally. Gibney has the physical infrastructure and the openness to disability that we look for in partnerships. We build a partnership with Gibney. We build a partnership with DANT (Disability Arts/NYC). We build a partnership with Dance/NYC. We actually get in the studio and have classes, workshops, and moments. We regularize disability. We make disability not a special event. It could be carefully defined events like classes for disabled artists, classes for non-disabled, whatever it is, but it just needs to be ongoing, and it needs to fail. We need to have things not be right the first time and have that not be the end of the initiative until we find the right thing, but we need space, we need infrastructure, we need time.

Final thoughts?

I think we're onto something. I think the field is exchanging and growing. I would ask independent artists to please continue the commitment and the regularity to disability. Help us grow. In the end, I have to say thank you to the DDA people for believing. At the point that I applied, I was the person who shouldn't have applied because I was young in the organization, young in the field, an independent artist, barely stretched or eligible, barely with a piece of work, no track record. I was the person who shouldn't have applied, so I have to say thank you. It means a lot.

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