

PERFORMING
DISABILITY. DANCE. ARTISTRY.
REPORT 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.

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.

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.

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/worksartists), 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.

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); 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.

