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DANCE/NYC LAUNCHES DISABILITY INITIATIVE

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On this 25th anniversary year of the Americans with Disabilities Act, Dance/NYC today announces the launch of a new initiative to increase inclusion and access to the arts and culture for disabled people. As part of this initiative, it unveils foundational research, *Discovering Disability: Data and NYC Dance*, as well as online information resources available on the Dance/NYC website; and invites you to a free, day-long convening scheduled for July 8th, presented with the New York City Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD) and the City University of New York.

Developed in collaboration with a 10-person task force of disabled artists, educators, and disability advocates, the initiative insists on a future created and experienced with 800,000+ disabled New Yorkers. The planned work to be carried out through 2016 is iterative and sets the stage for additional action over time.

According to disability/arts consultant Simi Linton, a member of the Dance/NYC task force, this initiative offers the opportunity for the creative workforce to think in more progressive ways about disability. "The challenges that we confront as disabled people are real, diverse, and complex," says Linton. "Overcoming them requires the arts and culture sector to consider new perspectives, tools, and approaches. By calling attention to the patterns of discrimination, Dance/NYC is challenging the sector to reckon with its own role in this process. It is time to work more effectively to help disabled people live the life they desire and deserve."

The *Discovering Disability: Data and NYC Dance* report is the first and primary initiative deliverable, and makes a data driven case for 1) expanding dance making with disabled artists; 2) enhancing dance education for disabled public school children; 3) improving dance facilities and communications environments; 4) and extending workforce development and audience engagement with disabled people.

"There is a large accessibility gap for people with disabilities, whether we're talking about transportation, facilities, jobs--or the arts," saysVictor Calise, Commissioner, MOPD.

"Nuanced research at the intersection of the arts and disability is essential but has been hard to come by. With this new report...Dance/NYC makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the barriers to access and inclusion in the creative sector and helps guide pathways forward."

Tom Finkelpearl, Commissioner, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, offers: "As a society, we've made substantial progress since the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act was passed 25 years ago. But as we are acknowledging with my agency's diversity initiative, which encompasses disability, there's still work to be done, and thanks to *Discovering Disability: Data and NYC Dance*, we can move forward with greater knowledge and understanding of how to make sure the arts really are for everyone."

The "go-to site" for dance in the metropolitan New York City area, DanceNYC.org (and DanceNYC.nyc) is now home to the most up-to-date and useful directory of online disability resources, aggregated from service organizations and government entities.

Bookending the initiative's activity for 2015 is the daylong community conference, Disability. Dance. Artistry, on July 8th at John Jay College (860 11th Avenue, New York City). Register now on the Dance/NYC site to reserve your seat.

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