



The Kennedy Center

OPENING STAGES

A Quarterly Newsletter for People with Disabilities Pursuing Careers in the
Performing Arts

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Opening Stages Newsletter

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FROM THE EDITOR

Recently the Bravo television network broadcast a series called "The It Factor." The series followed 12 young actors in New York as they tried to fulfill their dreams of success. As the introduction to the series tells us, the odds against them are staggering: there are 100,000 actors in New York, and only two percent of them make their living from acting.

We watch these talented and exuberant young men and women as they go from audition to audition and receive rejection after rejection. We are amazed by their resilience and saddened by the way they suffer from humiliation, failure and financial insecurity. "Did I really suck?" asks one after an audition. And another complains almost in tears "I just don't know what they want."

This is the life of the artist -- hoping to be heard, hoping to be understood, hoping for a public. And, perhaps those of us who are artists with disabilities hunger even more deeply. Because we are outsiders, we long to forge a connection to others. Having an audience see what we see, feel what we feel and know what we know demonstrates that our lives are fundamentally not so different from others people's and vindicates our desire be embraced by the human community.

And, because we do suffer from bodily dysfunction and social discrimination, we have a burning need to achieve the alchemy of art -- the transformation of our suffering into beauty. We want to make our struggles a cause for celebration. But, that celebration is not complete until our audiences join in.

In the meantime our task -- like that of all artists -- is to find the right balance between attachment and detachment. We should enjoy the recognition we receive but not let its lack discourage us from doing our art.

We must continue having the courage to offer the world our unique gifts of passion and delight. And, we actually learn more from our disappointments than from our successes. By surviving, we learn how strong we are. And, as long as we remain faithful to our art, we never really lose.

Paul Kahn

WE'RE LOOKING FOR WRITERS

Have you been blown away by the talents of a performing artist with a disability? Did a great professional training or development experience change your life? Are there

competitions, grants, scholarships, residencies and the like that you want the world to know about? We'd love you to take keyboard in hand and write about these subjects -- or anything else related to people with disabilities and the performing arts -- for **Opening Stages**. Payment for articles ranges between \$75 and \$150. You can submit material or query our editor Paul Kahn at cairokahn@aol.com. Thanks very much for your help.

LETTERS

AATE

My name is Diane Nutting and I am a board member with the American Alliance for Theatre and Education.

I believe I speak for everyone on the board when I say that we are very interested in working with students and educators with disabilities. We have a conference every year, which we strive to make as accessible as possible. The conference is usually held in a large hotel in the chosen city. Most of these hotels are ADA compatible in terms of physical accessibility. We offer ASL interpretation at the conference upon request, and we have had interpreters at the past three or four conferences. At this time, we do not offer alternative format materials, but I believe that, if it were requested by someone, we would have little trouble providing it and would be glad to do so.

As far as disability/accessibility related sessions, I and about three other people have consistently led sessions and panels over the past four years. These sessions have included accessibility in a classroom/training setting; creating an accessible environment for theater patrons; and specific workshops on measures such as audio description, shadow interpreting, etc.

I would love to continue a dialogue regarding our organization. One of our goals is to increase the representation of persons with disabilities within our organization. We have a conference every year and welcome anyone who is interested in the field of theater and education. We also encourage individuals to submit session proposals for our annual conferences. You can find out more information about this year's conference and our organization by checking out our website at www.aate.com.

Diane Nutting
American Alliance for Theater and Education

TUNING IN

JEFFREY STEVENS OPERA SINGER

OPENING STAGES: What is your disability?

STEVENS: I have a form of Muscular dystrophy called Charcot-Marie-Tooth Disease (CMT).

OS: How did you get interested in a career in opera?

STEVENS: I have loved to sing since I was young and especially loved hearing my brother sing. He also plays the guitar. I just thought it was cool. I was not diagnosed with CMT till I was 20, so I wasn't sure why I could not play the guitar easily, but I couldn't. My brother also sang classically in choir at school, so I wanted to do that. And I was successful. In high school I was first chair Texas All State Baritone in my junior and senior year. I then received offers from colleges and chose West Texas State University in Canyon, Texas. There were many very talented people who attended this small college, and they inspired me to achieve and succeed. My first show was when I was 18, and I have tried not to stop since.

OS: What have been some of your favorite roles and why?

STEVENS: I have found a niche in opera and musical theater, which I love. I love to sing and I have always loved to make people laugh. I am what is called a buffo singer or character singer: I get the funny roles. I just played Antonio in "The Marriage of Figaro" for the Amarillo Opera. This part is small but very funny. He is a drunken gardener and spends 10 minutes of the opera complaining about someone jumping on his flowers. I also just sang in "The True Story of Cinderella" for Operatunity, an opera education group in Phoenix, Arizona, where I played a King "who's approaching senility." These parts are small and fun, and they demand a good sense of timing. I not only get to have fun, but I sing with some of the most beautiful voices on earth. I love that.

OS: What are some of your most notable professional accomplishments?

STEVENS: I have sung with many opera companies in the United States: Des Moines Metro Opera, Tulsa Opera, Amarillo Opera, National Opera Company and Northern Virginia Opera Company in Washington D.C. I have also participated in some other great musical experiences: I have been awarded fellowships to Boston University's Opera Institute and the Stonybrook Bach Aria Group. I apprenticed with Four Corners Opera. Last year I sang at the Connecticut Early Music Festival, and will this year be part of the professional chorus at the Oregon Bach Festival in Eugene. I have developed some great friendships, and most importantly I met my wife singing. Yeah!!!!



I have been self-employed for the past 12 years, and I sing for most of that income. I also teach voice. From 1995 to 1997 I taught at Simpson College in Indianola, Iowa, and in 1998 and 1999 I taught at Northern Arizona State University in Flagstaff, Arizona.

OS: Have you had any professional disappointments?

STEVENS: I never got to play the great love interest or young, beautiful stud, but that's okay.

OS: Has your disability affected the kind of roles you are offered?

STEVENS: I think so. Opera and musical theatre rely on typecasting. I seem to defy that pigeonholing. I have a beautiful voice, but because of my physical limitations I can't play certain roles.

OS: What have been the most serious impediments to the advancement of your career?

STEVENS: I have to audition for many people to get work, as does everybody in this business. If I am in the right frame of mind -- positive -- I can succeed. But, if I feel a person is looking at me as handicapped, I might not. My attitude has a lot to do with the other person's attitude. Sometimes that is hard.

I think that in the teaching field there is discrimination against people with disabilities, and I get really frustrated by it. People who have piano abilities win over people who do not. At one university I was in a large field of applicants. I can't say I was and can't say I wasn't discriminated against. I included with my application packet an article in the Muscular Dystrophy Association's Quest magazine that profiled me, and I never heard anything until the rejection letter. I don't blame the system for what happens, but I don't like it.

I have always had trouble with health care. We have health benefits now through my wife's work. But, when I was single, I had a lot of trouble getting any coverage I could afford. We are in an HMO, and I don't feel like my doctor is as knowledgeable about CMT as I would like. I have also had trouble with physical therapy. I have been referred to someone who doesn't know what my disability is. I have a neurological disease, so it is very important to know what not to do.

I also have had trouble getting affordable life insurance.

OS: Where did you get your professional training?

STEVENS: I have my Doctorate in voice from Arizona State University. I also studied at West Texas State University, Boston University, Peabody Conservatory and Temple University. I would highly recommend Arizona State University, Boston University and Peabody to students with disabilities. If you have the desire and talent and stamina, go for it.



OS: What are some other opera programs that are receptive and accessible to singers with disabilities?

STEVENS: Opera in the Ozarks and Wesley Balk Workshop. Des Moines Metro Opera is a great place!!!!

OS: How did you break in professionally? Were there particular people who helped you?

STEVENS: My first real opera was with a group called Four Corners Opera in Durango, Colorado. Bob Gregori called my friend Lois Mcleod and asked if she knew a funny bass-baritone. And voila! Other people who have help me are Robert Larson from the Des Moines Metro Opera; Daniel Pinkham in Boston; David Britton in Tempe, Arizona; Will Graham, Phylis Curtin and Joan Heller at Boston University; and Nora Sands of the American Institute of Musical Studies.

OS: If you need any accommodations to practice your profession, who provides and pays for them?

STEVENS: I pay for all my vocal coaching. I really can't play the piano well at all, so I hire someone to help me learn my music. I also need someone to play piano for me when I teach voice.

OS: Is your disability progressive? If so, how have you factored that in to planning your career?

STEVENS: It is a slow progression right now. Lately I have been having a lot of trouble with my hands. I can't do huge roles anymore, because I get exhausted and I have trouble rebounding my energy.

OS: To what do you attribute your success? What generally does it take to succeed in opera?

STEVENS: God, persistence, desire, talent. I also network. I keep in touch with everybody who I like and who can help me.

OS: What advice would you give to other people with disabilities who want to pursue a career in opera?

STEVENS: Don't give up. If one door closes, another one opens. And sometimes it's good that door closed. I don't do the roles I really want to. But, I do some really fun roles, and I get to hear some excellent singing.

EUGENE JONES CLARINETIST AND TEACHER

OPENING STAGES: What is your disability? How long have you had it?

JONES: I have a condition known as low-tension glaucoma. This condition is particularly hard to diagnose. Glaucoma is a progressive deterioration of the optic nerve, causing such a gradual loss of sight as to be imperceptible in its early stages.

There is usually no feeling of pain, no symptoms that present themselves to the patient whatsoever. Routine eye exams may catch regular glaucoma, abnormally high eye pressure being a primary indicator. But, with a condition such as mine, loss of sight occurs even with normal pressures. In my case, the glaucoma was advanced, and very hard to control, resulting in near blindness in my right eye. My left eye continues to function well, but the optic nerve there has also suffered considerable damage. As glaucoma affects the peripheral vision first, I still have some central vision in my right eye, which along with my functional left eye enables me to read music reasonably well. Although, under certain conditions such as dim light, it can be difficult. I have been under treatment for glaucoma since 1992. But, I must have had the condition for considerably longer, perhaps as long as five or ten years prior to the initial diagnosis.

OS: I understand that your life has been further complicated by cancer. Can you describe that history?

JONES: Yes, I have undergone surgery for prostate cancer. Being in good health otherwise and in good physical condition, I chose the surgical option as the surest way to rid myself of cancer for the future. My two-year anniversary will be in June, and so far everything is great! As a comment on my history with this disease, I might mention that my father died of improperly diagnosed prostate cancer when he was my age. I had been unhappy with my urologist's treatment of my symptoms (increased PSA level) and changed to a more competent doctor just in time.

OS: You are a clarinetist and a music teacher. Can you tell me more about the range of your professional activities?

JONES: Presently I maintain a teaching schedule involving substantial classroom activity (three classes on two college campuses) and a private studio that numbers anywhere from forty to fifty students. I am currently a member of the artist's roster for the Virginia Commission for the Arts and on several occasions have served as an artist-in-residence through its Arts In Education programs. In addition, I perform actively in solo recitals and chamber music concerts throughout the area.

OS: What are some of your most notable professional accomplishments?

JONES: My first professional position was with the San Antonio Symphony Orchestra. In my tenure with San Antonio, I performed as second clarinet, E flat clarinet and alternate principal clarinet. When I moved to Canada briefly I toured as principal clarinet with the Royal Winnipeg Ballet Orchestra, before returning to New York City, where I free-lanced and taught. While in New York, I met and performed with the Portland String Quartet, who invited me to look into a principal clarinet position with the Portland (Maine) symphony. I had the good fortune to serve as principal with the Portland Symphony and Maine Opera Association for a number of years. Leaving Maine, I joined the North Carolina Visiting Artists Program, where I began the current phase of my career, doing artist residencies, teaching and performing. As a member of the North Carolina Visiting Artist Program, I participated in the "Night of the Arts"



showcase concert held at the Kennedy Center in Washington DC, one of the most memorable arts events I have ever experienced!

OS: What have been the greatest rewards of doing your work?

JONES: I think the rewards of a performer must change with maturity in order for him to survive emotionally, at least mine have. While the joys of good performance will likely never diminish, the ability to "do good" is a relatively late development. Presently I find this fulfillment in teaching.

OS: What kinds of challenges to your career have your visual impairment and your cancer created?

JONES: Probably the greatest challenges imposed by my medical adventures have been those of delay. Recovery from eye surgery and the adjustment to visual limitation have taken considerable time. Prostate cancer surgery was much more invasive, but after a year I was able to function normally. Visual impairment is quite another thing, requiring ongoing care and concern. For instance, I had to have the surgery redone two years ago. It had begun to fail, and I lost all vision in my right eye. The surgery, done by Dr. Brent Bond at Bowman-Gray Medical Center, was a great success, though. With the right preparation and equipment -- wearing contact lenses and using reading glasses for rehearsal and performance -- I continue to be able to perform. Perhaps I should also mention that concurrent with the initial diagnosis of glaucoma, I suffered a severely broken wrist that required additional surgery and recovery time. In short, the time it has taken to deal with these events has been the greatest setback of all. Attitudes can be changed by excellent performance, but time cannot be recovered. I do seem to be blessed with tenacity and the ability to continue to labor on, and most barriers yield to unrelenting effort.

OS: Did you get your professional training prior to the onset of your disability?

JONES: I have had no training after the onset of disability. But, there are organizations without which I could not have succeeded. Chief among them is the Virginia State Department for the Visually Handicapped. The purpose of the DVH is to give financial support to those in need, enabling them to return to work, if possible. Their help, and the assistance I received from the State of North Carolina, was miraculous.

OS: Where did you get your training?

JONES: My professional training was completed at the New England Conservatory of Music, where I received Bachelors and Masters degrees in clarinet performance. I also received a fellowship for study at the Berkshire Music Center at Tanglewood, the summer home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. There were students with severe handicaps at NEC during my time there, and remember that they were extremely well treated. I would certainly recommend my alma mater to anyone interested in a career in the arts, regardless of handicap.

OS: To what do you attribute your success?

JONES: To succeed in the music field it takes talent, desire and a love for your particular art form. There is, however, an added dimension in my case as my family and I are very conservative Christians. Our faith and the support of a warm and caring church are central to our survival.

MUSIC TECHNOLOGY AND BLIND ENGINEERS **by Rick Boggs**

The greatest barrier preventing blind musicians from using digital technology to produce audio recordings is not primarily the lack of accessibility but rather the lack of awareness about what is accessible.

Background

Ever since the development of the Apple 2 GS, back in the computer paleolithic era, humans have sought to make music with their machines. The ensuing centuries, in computer time, produced a plethora of musical applications with ever-increasing power and performance standards. The first type of popular programs were MIDI sequencing applications. MIDI has little or nothing to do with sound, but instead records key stroke information, such as "play keyboard key number 32 and hold it for two seconds, then release," much like a paper roll for a player piano. Eventually, software was developed for the IBM and Apple platforms that would record MIDI as well as sound.

At every stage of development creative blind individuals found accessibility solutions. The late Nelson Hinman, a blind musician/composer, achieved total accessibility for MIDI applications on the DOS platform. When the Apple platform became the entertainment industry standard, Stevie Wonder wanted to access the programming features of his synthesizers. He enlisted the expertise of Glenn Workman to develop a specific program that would cause the Macintosh computer to act as a speech output device for a synthesizer. Mr. Workman together with Mark Bryan, a blind musician/engineer from Tulsa, Oklahoma developed and distributed a small application that provides access to the K2000 series Kurzweil keyboards. The program, "K2000 Tools" can be obtained by request at www.BlindProducers.com, the same website that tells the story of how the screen reader software outSPOKEN for the Macintosh became usable with DigiDesign's famous ProTools software. Other talented developers like Peter Elsea continue to create accessibility tools for equipment including adats, which he offers at <ftp://arts.ucsc.edu/pub/ems/accessibility/3>.

What Is Available and Accessible?

From those modest beginnings, persistent advocacy and savvy business tactics have been used to influence music software developers to produce state-of-the-art MIDI and digital audio recording and editing tools that are quite accessible in most respects. Development has continued on both platforms. The Windows platform now offers a variety of accessible music programs, including CakeWalk, Sound Forge and Cool Edit Pro. The Apple Macintosh platform offers access to the world's most renowned



professional multi-track digital audio recording/editing software, ProTools, which now also offers useful MIDI operations. The Apple platform also supports Digital Performer and Logic Audio, which are both usable by blind engineers.

Making the Decision

So, what should a blind musician use? You would do well to approach the question in much the same way that any sighted musician would. What are the best programs on the market to do what you wish to do? What type of work are you most likely going to be doing and for what purpose? Is this a hobby? A profession? Are your productions for broadcast or commercial CD releases? How many tracks will you need? How much effects (dsp) processing power will you need? Will you need to listen to some tracks while recording simultaneously? Will you need automated mixing features? Will you need sophisticated MIDI functions, or will the basics suffice? What type of equipment do you currently own, or will you be starting from scratch? Oh, and of course, everybody's favorite, what is your budget?

Beginners with low budgets and existing Windows based systems ought to look into Cool Edit Pro, which is a multi-track digital audio program that does not require a separate control surface to move on screen faders. They might also check out Sound Forge for user friendly digital audio editing and light mastering, if multi-track recording is not a priority. For the more sophisticated PC user, CakeWalk or the new Sonar system is about as good as it gets. A blind producer in New York by the name of Mike Mandel has music on broadcast television, which he created with such a system.

While Windows based PCs have made some small progress in the professional recording industry, the Apple Macintosh still dominates the market. The more affordable, entry-level systems that are accessible include Digital Performer, Logic Audio, and the ProTools LE 001 package. These are all host-based systems, which rely entirely on the computer's processor chip to do all of the audio work. The pro systems involve PCI expansion cards which host additional computer processor chips to handle the intense workload. The ProTools TDM systems are by far the most popular in this genre and are the only accessible system of that caliber.

Music software is generally not simple to use or to understand without some basic education in audio production. Every music program has its accessibility glitches as well, so blind users must be persistent and patient at times. Certain software is not known to be accessible, such as programs from Steinberger, including QBase, as well as the second most popular professional production tool called "fairlight," which runs on a Windows platform. Recent versions of E-Magic's Logic Audio program have increasing numbers of accessibility problems.

The Accessible Audio Production Work Station

An accessible audio production work station usually has certain basic components: a fast computer with an extra hard drive where audio can be recorded; screen reader



software; a MIDI control surface which acts like a remote control for certain on screen functions like track volume; a MIDI interface where devices like synthesizers are connected to the computer; and a box where audio signals can be patched into the computer such as an analog-to-digital converter.

Career Opportunities in Audio Production

While it is truly wonderful that more people with visual impairments can now make creating music a fulfilling part of their lives, it is the potential for gainful employment that might be the greatest benefit of accessible audio production software. The BlindProducers.com website attempts to offer a comprehensive guide for starting a career as a blind audio production engineer. The Media Access Office in North Hollywood, California works closely with Sound Adventures, a recording facility operated by a blind expert in the field, to train people with disabilities for future employment. A foundation called Workplace Hollywood provided a grant for this purpose. And, WeSeeTV.com, a company producing video description for network broadcast television, hires blind professionals to record, edit, mix, and check quality of video description tracks. WeSeeTV.com hopes to challenge other video description producers to do the same.

Rick Boggs is a blind actor, singer/songwriter and producer. He was featured in Issue #1 of Opening Stages.

LIGHTHOUSE MUSIC SCHOOL (adapted from web site)

Founded in 1913, the Lighthouse Music School provides students who are blind or partially sighted with the opportunity to enjoy and perform music and to become accomplished musicians. A member of the National Guild of Community Schools of the Arts and the New York City Coalition of Community Schools of the Arts, the Lighthouse Music School offers individual and group instruction in voice, a range of instruments, music theory, computer music programming and composition.

A philosophy of the School is that instruction in the arts plays a key role in vision rehabilitation. For young people with vision loss, developing musical talents can have a positive impact on all aspects of life. For adults, acquiring or maintaining musical skills is important to maintaining quality of life.

The Lighthouse Music School is dedicated to providing high-quality music instruction supported by state-of-the-art technologies. Its new Music Technology Center offers groundbreaking instructional and transcribing technologies, including a new piano lab. The School also designs and tests new technologies. In addition, it maintains a unique, accessible collection of musical scores in Braille, large print and audio formats -- a resource for students, faculty and other educational institutions nationwide.

In keeping with the School's philosophy of inclusion of people who are visually impaired in mainstream society, it encourages performances in outside venues. One example is "Lighthouse at the Met." This annual program at the Metropolitan Museum Of Art links the resources of one of the world's leading cultural institutions with the talents of Lighthouse Music School students for the enjoyment of all. In addition, students perform in a variety of community concerts alongside peers from other New York City arts schools.

The Lighthouse Music School teaching staff is comprised of accomplished professionals with degrees from respected conservatories and university schools of music, including the Juilliard School and the Boston Conservatory of Music. Former students include Jose Feliciano.

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THEATER TRAINING PROGRAMS

NATIONAL THEATRE WORKSHOP OF THE HANDICAPPED (adapted from web site)

The National Theatre Workshop of the Handicapped, Inc. (NTWH) is a non-profit organization established in 1977 to provide the disabled community with the communication skills necessary to pursue a life in professional theatre and enhance opportunities in the workplace. The founder and artistic director is Brother Rick Curry, S.J.

NTWH advocates for persons with disabilities in the theatre and offers a forum for dramatic literature on themes of disability. In addition to offering professional academic instruction in acting, oral interpretation, music, movement, dance, playwriting, theatre management and technical theatre, NTWH teaches students how to present themselves off stage as well. The wide range of communication skills that students master as performers are applicable in the workplace.



NTWH has two facilities. Performing arts classes and workshops are offered throughout the year at the NTWH-Kieran Duffy Studio, 148 Elizabeth Street, in the SoHo section of New York. The Studio is a 60-seat black box theatre, which serves as a performance space and a classroom. Semesters last 10 to 12 weeks. The NTWH-Crosby School is a totally accessible residential facility located in Belfast, Maine. Classes and workshops are offered throughout the spring, summer and fall. Students attending NTWH-Crosby are exposed to intensive 10-day programs.

Applications to NTWH are accepted on a rolling basis. Faculty, staff and students are drawn from both the able-bodied and the disabled worlds and from diverse racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds. In order to make its programs accessible to all, NTWH offers scholarships to accepted applicants. Scholarships are considered on an individual basis and are granted according to need. Most students receive partial scholarships. NTWH asks students who attend the New York facility to pay what they can afford. Scholarships can cover travel costs for students attending NTWH-Crosby. NTWH will also coordinate travel for students to and from Belfast, Maine.

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Web site: www.ntwh.org

THE TRUE STORY PROJECT AND THE HALO WORKSHOP

These two programs have been created by the educational wing of the New York-based Visible Theatre. Both are supported in part by the City of New York's Department of Cultural Affairs.

The True Story Project is an original performance project primarily for artists with disabilities. It seeks to battle against the marginalization of "the different" and against sentimentalized, stereotypical portrayals of people with disabilities. Participants translate their life stories into a tapestry production incorporating original monologues,

poetry, song and dance. The Project gives participants the opportunity to learn the discipline of acting, write original material and perform in front of audiences. It emphasizes that it is an endeavor of process, inclusion and collaboration, not a condescending display. Finished performance pieces travel around a circuit of New York City residential buildings, colleges, churches and homeless shelters.

The Halo Workshop offers acting classes for adults with disabilities, focusing on the creative process. Through exposure to a broad range of acting systems, students gain the opportunity to discover their unique approach to acting, gain self-awareness and improve communication skills. Master classes are also offered in disciplines such as mime, Shakespeare, voice and speech, comedy and improvisation.

Krista Smith, Director of the Visible Theatre says " I have always been interested in people and populations whose voices aren't heard in our society. So, when I became friends with several artists who had disabilities and began teaching people with disabilities, I received an enormous education about the struggle there. I saw it as an exciting, important way to combine advocacy with theatre. It's also a fascinating process as a director and teacher to help people with disabilities tell stories through a craft that is considered so physical. And, it is very exciting to feel we are actually breaking new ground in depicting universal truths. I'm witnessing firsthand audiences seeing people with disabilities in a more accurate way and relating to them simply on a human level."

Full and partial scholarships are available for both The True Story Project and the Halo Workshop. For More Information call Krista Smith at (212) 358-3505 or e-mail visibletheatre@aol.com.

NEWS AND NOTES

STATEWIDE FORUMS TO BE HELD ON CAREERS IN THE ARTS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The National Arts and Disability Center at UCLA announced awards to the Minnesota, Maryland and New Mexico's state arts agencies in partnership with their VSA arts affiliates to convene a Statewide Forum on Careers in the Arts for People with Disabilities. The state arts agencies were selected through a competitive application process.

The purposes of the Statewide Forums are to assess the education and career needs and barriers for artists and arts administrators with disabilities; and to develop and implement strategies to overcome barriers and advance their careers. The specific



focus and activities of each statewide forum will be responsive to the career-related opportunities and challenges of artists with disabilities within their individual states.

The Forums are sponsored by the John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts, VSA arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Forum Grantees:

Breaking Barriers - Identifying Possibilities: Career Opportunities for New Mexican Artists with Disabilities

New Mexico Arts and VSA arts of New Mexico will convene a two-day forum at the University of New Mexico's Continuing Education and Community Services Conference Center in Albuquerque in the fall of 2002. The specific activities for the Forum will be determined by the Planning Committee and will be modeled after NMA's successful seminar series, E.A.S.Y. (Emerging Artists Support Yourself). The focus of the activities will emphasize the possibilities for artists with disabilities and will include entrepreneurs who have successfully established economically viable arts businesses that are accessible to artists with disabilities.

Maryland Statewide Forum on Careers in the Arts for People with Disabilities

The Maryland State Arts Council and VSA arts Maryland will convene a one-day Forum in November, 2002 at Essex Community College. Participants will include artists with disabilities, local arts council representatives, arts institution representatives, educators, Department of Rehabilitation Services counselors and community service providers.

The Art of Employment -- A Minnesota Forum on Careers in the Arts for People with Disabilities

The Minnesota State Arts Board and VSA arts of Minnesota will convene a day and a half forum in March 2002 and follow-up one-day seminar in October 2002 at the University of Minnesota. Participants will include artists with disabilities, arts administrators, vocational specialists, and foundation and funding administrators.

The National Arts and Disability Center at UCLA is a resource, information and training center dedicated to the full inclusion of artists and audiences with disabilities into all facets of the arts. Founded in 1994, the NADC has provided technical assistance to 19,000 individuals, disseminated information to over 241,240 individuals and organizations, and provided training to 2,600 professionals, paraprofessionals, and artists with and without disabilities from 47 states.

For additional information about the Statewide Forums on Careers in the Arts please contact Beth Stoffmacher at bstoffmacher@mednet.ucla.edu or 310-825-5054.

DANCING WHEELS HOLDS SUMMER WORKSHOPS

Dancing Wheels/Professional Flair will host its 10th annual summer dance workshops. A workshop for youth ages 8 to 15 will take place June 17-22, and one for adults ages 16 years and older will be held June 24-29. Both workshops will be held at the Dancing Wheels studios in Cleveland, Ohio. They will be directed by Barbara Allegra Verlezza, Dancing Wheels Associate Artistic Director and Education Director, and Sabatino Verlezza, Dancing Wheels Artistic Director and Choreographer. Nancy Lushington will serve as guest faculty. The Dancing Wheels Company and its President and Founding Director Mary Verdi-Fletcher will also participate.

These two 6-day workshops provide the participants with an intensive experience in modern dance technique, improvisation, composition, and repertory. The workshops are offered to dancers, instructors, educators, health professionals and dance enthusiasts with and without disabilities who wish to learn the Dancing Wheels technique and style based on the teachings of May O'Donnell, American modern dance pioneer and educator. Each workshop concludes with a performance, affording the participants an opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of the information and showcasing their capacity to translate the technique to a performance level. The Dancing Wheels Company will participate in the concluding performances, which will be followed by receptions for families and friends. The workshops welcome participants from across the country and abroad and provide an opportunity to audition potential trainees and apprentices for the Dancing Wheels Company. High school students who participate in Dancing Wheels' other programs may be invited to intern during the Summer Dance Workshops. College students can earn college credit for their internship through the University of Akron and Kent State University.

Both Summer Dance Workshops are \$400 per week. Full and partial scholarships are available. Hotel information can be obtained from the Dancing Wheels/Professional Flair office. Please contact the office for deposit amounts and deadlines.

Also, Dancing Wheels in collaboration with The Cleveland Museum of Art will present the 7th Annual Theatre Arts Camp July 22 – August 3, 2002. The camp is open to children 8 to 14 years old with and without disabilities. Under the direction of Dancing Wheels directors, Barbara Allegra Verlezza and Sabatino Verlezza, participants explore art, music, dance and drama based on a theme inspired by the Museum's works of art. Past themes have included American folk art, Byzantine art, Impressionism and African art. The intensive program culminates on Saturday of the second week with a performance in the Museum's Gartner Auditorium. An outdoor reception for families and friends of the participants follows the performance. High school students who participate in other Dancing Wheels programs may be invited to intern during the Theatre Arts Camp. College students can earn college credit for their internship through the University of Akron. Classes are held at both the Dancing Wheels Studios and the Cleveland Museum of Art.



Theatre Arts Camp tuition is \$220 for the two-week program. This includes complementary parking at the museum. A \$25 non-refundable deposit is due by Monday, July 15. Final payment is due on the first day of camp. Cleveland Museum of Arts members receive a \$10 discount off the tuition price. Full and partial scholarships are available.

Dancing Wheels/Professional Flair was established in 1989 by President and Founding Director, Mary Verdi-Fletcher as a nonprofit organization that works to integrate and employ people with and without disabilities in professional careers, primarily in the arts. Through its most prominent division, Dancing Wheels, the organization provides classes, lecture/performances, residencies, workshops, camps and main stage concerts around the world, reaching more than 100,000 people annually. Dancing Wheels is an integrated dance company of professional dancers with and without disabilities. All events, artistic and educational, are presented as a part of its mission to unite the arts and disability communities in an effort to make the arts accessible and available to all.

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