



# The Kennedy Center

## OPENING STAGES

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

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## FROM THE EDITOR

In times of great turmoil, like those we are living through now, some people question the relevance of the arts and artists. In answer I can do no better than quote the man to whom this great performing arts center stands as a memorial.

Speaking on October 26, 1963 at Amherst College, President John F. Kennedy said, "Our national strength matters, but the spirit which informs and controls our strength matters just as much."

"When power leads men towards arrogance, poetry reminds him of his limitations. When power narrows the areas of man's concern, poetry reminds him of the richness and diversity of his existence. When power corrupts, poetry cleanses."

Referring to the artist's crucial role as social critic, JFK stated, "The artist, however faithful to his personal vision of reality, becomes the last champion of the individual mind and sensibility against an intrusive society and an officious state.... If sometimes our great artists have been the most critical of our society, it is because their sensitivity and concern for justice, which must motivate any true artist, makes him aware that our Nation falls short of its highest potential. I see little of more importance to the future of our country and our civilization than full recognition of the place of the artist."

Opposing censorship, he went on to say, "If art is to nourish the roots of our culture, society must set the artist free to follow his vision wherever it takes him. We must never forget that art is not a form of propaganda; it is a form of truth.... the highest duty of the writer, the composer, the artist is to remain true to himself and let the chips fall where they may. In serving his vision of the truth, the artist best serves his nation."

I earnestly hope that all of us can as JFK did "look forward to an America which commands respect throughout the world not only for its strength but for its civilization as well."

Paul Kahn

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## LETTERS

I attended a 1999 D.C. conference on the extremely negative impact of SSI (and also SSDI) regulations on people with disabilities pursuing careers in the arts, and I wonder if anyone is interested in following up on that theme.

With SSI, I got the impression that the regulations most harmful to artists involved their inability to accept awards, honorariums, etc. without risking losing their benefits in the short term or the long run. As a writer who receives SSDI, I have been told that any attempt to enter the mainstream (say, by accepting a publishing advance in excess of \$750) would lead to an unspecified nightmare of red tape and review.

It seems to me that a group of concerned artists could put productive pressure on the Social Security Administration to make changes, or if Social Security responds that it lacks the authority to do so, to seek a legislator to sponsor legislation to require Social Security to adopt new policies regarding artists and works of art.

I am proposing a workshop on the general theme of identifying the special challenges that disabled artists face (with a view to proposing possible solutions) at an upcoming conference on the many cultures of disability in the southwest. I feel I need to have other presenters working with me on this workshop, so that we have a broad enough topic to really speak to the interests of the many kinds of disabled artists in our community. I'd welcome suggestions on how to broaden the topic beyond my own personal interests, and I'd appreciate being put in contact with anyone who might be interested in working with me.

Tennise B. Morse  
tbmorse@juno.com

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## LET'S KEEP DANCING

*In this section we feature two dancers who survived catastrophic illness and kept true to their art.*

### HOMER AVILA'S ODYSSEY OF DANCE by Ruth Celia Kahn

Last summer, dancer Homer Avila performed at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. during the annual ADA/504 Coordinators and Accessibility Managers in the Cultural Arts Conference. Homer has performed with Twyla Tharp, Bill T. Jones, and Mark Morris, among others. He presented work created during the year since losing his leg to cancer.

After the dances, Mr. Avila expressed his pleasure and honor at premiering a new work at the Kennedy Center. "The first two pieces were finished pieces. The last piece is an improvisation," he explained. "During the improv, there was a very live presentness in that moment of contact on stage. In a sense, it's my way of likening dance to real life: there's no rehearsal. Sometimes, you go with what you are given, and that's something I've learned in many ways this past year. And that is a tribute to everyone that gets up every morning and faces the incredible difficulties and obstacles that will be presented to them that day, for both able and disabled bodies."

Homer generously answered questions from the audience:

Q: How long did it take you to learn to keep your balance and dance at the same time?

A: It's an ongoing process. My very first classes started a month-and-a-half after my operation. My first experience where I finally felt that I could dance again came at the end of an improv at Alonzo King's dance intensive workshop at the San Francisco Dance Center in July, 2002. I had some compositional ideas, and I went into them, constructing my own dance. When I came out of that transition, I had to find my crutches, which were way on the other side of the studio. I had this moment where I thought, "How did they get over there?" It was then that I realized that I had reconnected to dance.

Q: Did you go to school for dance?

A: Yes. When I was 20, at the beginning of my career, I went to New York to study dance. I jumped into ballet classes. That's where you find solid technique, which is fundamental to any type of work that you're going to do. I consider it the best choice I made. Post-surgery, I had about six sessions of physical therapy. Then I started back to ballet class, which is all about learning how to support yourself on the vertical plane.

Q: What was the reaction of the dance community when you came back post-disability?

A: The response of the New York dance community was amazing. I had so many e-mails. Everyone was there with me. Judith Jameson, Artistic Director of the Alvin Ailey Dance Company,

came to the hospital. I introduced her to my mom. Everyone was with me at every stage of the way.

So when I came back into the dance studio, people were watching my efforts in class. Everyone was very warm, encouraging me to be there, and they gave me the space to work. They simply accepted me. The most important part was there was no patronizing. There was a real concern and sympathy, but they were very much for me as a dancer.

Dancers are an incredible breed. Dance is part of the lifeblood of our nation, and unfortunately our culture doesn't recognize that. This is a truly endangered culture that needs recognition and support from all of us. We dancers do work with our hearts, spirits and souls. It may seem to you that I'm doing something courageous and unique, but I'm not. I'm simply a representative of an incredible community.

Q: As a dancer, I've worked with people with disabilities. I was wondering about the crutch dance in the last piece. I loved that! Do you play with going back and forth between dancing with them and without them?

A: Now that I'm given the opportunity to explore dance on stage, I'm improvising and playing with balance and imbalance, letting myself go to that point of imbalance, being vulnerable. One learns about what exists beyond that point of fear. The crutches represented a dependency for support and by creatively approaching that edge, I was able to revel in the freedom of my unassisted instrument. I realized that as I take dance class, it is the one point of my day when I am totally free.

Q: When you were growing up, did your parents encourage you to be whatever you wanted to be? Did you have any fear at any time that you couldn't make it? Also, what do you think about poetry and song as therapy?

A: I have the privilege of having been born in this country as the first child of immigrant parents. My father is from Honduras, and my mother is from El Salvador. When I think about the amount of difficulty my mother experienced, I dare not stay home and whine about the difficulties of my life now. One thing I picked up from my mom: we all have gifts and talents, and we need to go on.

When I was in the hospital, I asked a friend, Sean Curran, to bring some music. He brought Sheila Chundra, a Middle Eastern musician, whose sound speaks to me. It's vibrations hovering around my head. Intonations of healing. The reason I dance is because I cannot play music. With a name like Homer, I should do poetry, but I don't. I let my movement speak for itself. Some of the most beautiful poetry speaks to us beyond the conscious plane and taps those unconscious healing roots. An intrinsic part of the human experience is the need to express ourselves. To dam that is to reduce our potential. To become vulnerable and make an attempt to express an aspect of our being that matters is to empower and connect us with our healing and restorative selves.

Q: What do you do for your strength and balance? How do you train?

A: I am quite a hybrid. In the past I was a competitive gymnast. I was on a very competitive team in the New Orleans YMCA, and we always ranked tops. After that I ran track, the two-mile, and pole vaulting. And at some point I picked up swimming, and I was a lifeguard. And then I got into dance. Dance is wonderful, because I can integrate a wide palette of movement information. It can be highly dynamic or subtle. It's interrelated neuromuscular patterning.

I cross-train a lot. Currently, I take ballet classes and yoga. I do movement contact. I do the Susan Klein technique, which is all about the proper integration of your spine and the deep structural support muscles and letting yourself put your bones right in the proper alignment, one on top of the other. You let the muscles support you sufficiently, without gripping or yanking you out of place. In dance, I try to work economically and efficiently. I don't force things. In training I address muscular, skeletal and cardio-vascular strength as well as flexibility.

I do work with strengthening the muscles, joints, ligaments and cartilage. I do have to work on stamina. If you use a chair, dance is useful: it addresses your discipline and the will in your life.

#### WHAT'S NEXT?

After his performance at the Kennedy Center, Homer traveled to Vermont to work with choreographer Dana Casperson from Ballet Frankfurt. They created a piece called "Solo For One Man," which was performed in Germany and Holland in winter, 2003. This spring, Homer flew to San Francisco to participate in a video about Alonzo King's dance called "PAS." In mid-June, Homer will perform Vic Mark's solo in Seattle with Victoria Marks. On June 25, Homer will appear at the Florida Dance Festival in Miami. He will share a program with an integrated dance company called Thin A-13. He will also teach a workshop for professional and integrated dancers.

Homer welcomes the opportunity to be in touch with artists who are pushing the boundaries of art. He can be reached at [Homeravila@aol.com](mailto:Homeravila@aol.com).

### **THERE'S ALWAYS ANOTHER DANCE by Zazel-Chavah O'Garra**

I'm a dancer, model, actress and brain tumor survivor. My story begins approximately five years ago when I began to experience varying degrees of fatigue, hot flashes and dizziness. Eventually the symptoms became severe and frequent enough for me to make time in my busy schedule to seek medical attention. A series of medical professionals and a battery of diagnostic tests yielded several theories – vitamin deficiencies, hormone imbalances, anemia, pre-menopause, Epstein Barr, sinus infections, overwork – and NO relief. On December 27, 2001, with the symptoms escalating, I visited my sister in New Jersey who took me to St. Barnabas Medical Center in Livingston where an MRI was performed, yielding a diagnosis of meningioma. A tumor approximately 3½ centimeters large was found on the left side of my skull.

I was rushed into intensive care, where I met with Dr. Otakar Haubsmann, a renowned neurosurgeon in the area. He recommended immediate surgery. He also told me to expect paralysis, cognitive problems and facial reconstruction.

I consider it a miracle to be telling you this story of the re-awakening my mind and body. My surgery lasted 10 ½ hours, and I remember waking up and feeling grateful to be alive. I wanted to hug my family and yell "I LOVE YOU!!!" But, I realized I couldn't, due to paralysis on my right side. I did, however, flash my show business smile to let my family know that this rebellious woman had the fighting spirit to make it!

I left the hospital and entered Kessler Institute For Rehabilitation in East Orange, New Jersey, for three weeks of intense physical and occupational therapy. I made my desire to dance again the focus of my rehab. I would often force myself to stretch and perform creative movement in my wheelchair. This brought me true joy!

The turning point in my recovery occurred when I awakened one morning and my thumb and index finger started to move. I knew then that my prayers were being answered.

Leaving Kessler and returning to the real world was frightening for me. I still suffered from fatigue, double vision and slight headaches, and I was unable to deal with large groups of people or have conversations on the phone. Depression set in, because I felt that I was a burden on my family. I wanted to be the same independent, energetic individual that I had been. I hated to rely on people.

I entered Rusk Institute for rehabilitation and found support and encouragement while going through physical and occupational therapy. Although I was still weak and tremendously tired, I summoned all of my creative and positive energy to make it through each day. Sometimes I would get aggravated and alarmed, knowing that it would take me months or years to move the way I used to. At those times I would close my eyes and imagine myself moving gracefully, my body parts free as a bird.

I returned to my parent's birth site, Montserrat, West Indies, to relax in the sunshine, soak in the salt water and meditate while listening to the ocean breeze. This was truly therapeutic, calming my soul and embracing my body.

Other factors contributing to my healing process are: the brain tumor list on the Internet, which connects you to people and treatments all over the world, and my new home, Westside Dance Physical Therapy, which has made my love and appreciation for dance grow even stronger under the care and commitment of my wonderful physical therapist, Rocky.

Today, although my foot is still immobile, I am active performing, teaching and speaking about brain injury. I am currently teaching jazz/modern dance at the Edge School of Theatrical Arts. I am choreographing a piece for a performance that will be held at Brooklyn College in June. It's going to be awesome!!!

I've also taught dance therapy and performed at various hospitals, most recently Memorial Sloane Kettering Cancer Hospital with jazz violinist Gwen Laster. The show consisted of music, dance and prose. The patients embraced me as I spoke about having strength and a positive attitude to make it through challenging situations. In addition, I'm a member of the Brain Tumor Foundation of New York City. I attend support groups and teach creative movement to other brain tumor survivors.

I've just begun a course in documentary filmmaking at ConnectTV. I found out about the program from **Opening Stages**. My first documentary will be on dancers with disabilities. Lastly, I've just begun to audition again for commercials! I was very self-conscious about my limp, but I put my smile on my face and did it with pride!

How have I adjusted to my new life? By thanking God for this amazing privilege. By dealing with both the emotional as well as physical change. By talking about it to family, friends and medical professionals. By realizing that things won't be easy but remaining determined to make it. And by resting secure in the knowledge that in life there is always another dance!

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## PERSPECTIVES

### LYSISTRATA ON WHEELS by Joy Mincey Powell

We emerged in blood-red fabric draped around our bodies in the manner of ancient Greece. Three draped bodies. Disabled women's bodies.

It started in New York just after New Year's Day 2003. "Theatre artists against war," two New York actors, Kathryn Blume and Sharron Bower, feeling powerless and angry at our country's impending attack on Iraq, had an idea, e-mailed their friends, and put up a web site. On March 3, 2003, the Lysistrata Project, the first-ever worldwide theatre event for peace, presented more

than 1,000 readings of Aristophanes' antiwar comedy in 59 countries and in all 50 U.S. states. The United States had 700, with over 20 in my little hamlet of LA.

But this article isn't about the politics of war. It's about theatre-making, community coalition, comradery, integration. In my company CripChic Productions, I cast two other disabled actors, Ann Stocking and Diana Elizabeth Jordan, and together we joined Lysistrata Project~LA, the largest of the LA readings. Our one reading involved 20 local theatre companies and dozens of independent artists. CripChic was the only company with physically disabled performers.

The experience of Lysistrata was exhilarating. We joined our non-disabled colleagues as equals in skill and theatrical vision. From the start, I felt welcome. For example, the first production meeting had been scheduled in a church basement with no elevator. I e-mailed the coordinator, who immediately went to work moving our gathering to an accessible room on the main floor, and then e-mailed the listserve. I find a situation like that to be an effective litmus test. With that first act, the project's producers had secured my trust; they didn't just talk the talk.

Lysistrata is a play about women uniting to end a war through the power of their sexuality. Each theatre company was responsible for a section. At that first meeting, I voiced CripChic's agenda: power and sex are rarely associated with disabled women, so that is precisely what we want from our section. I couldn't have been more pleased with the excerpt the project's director chose for us. In the tradition of Greek chorus, we three together played Lysistrata at the climax of the play, when she emerges from the acropolis to complete negotiations with the desperately desirous men. An Athenian Delegate proclaimed our entrance:

"All hail Lysistrata! The woman who has gotta  
lot of wisdom, power, and strength.  
Who's gone beyond the greatest length  
to prove our feeble warring ways  
are merely constructs of a haze  
which we're now lost in, blindly groping.  
So we've gathered here now hoping  
that she'll lead us from perdition  
to a loving new position."

Then we emerged. We were fleshy and regal, each with our own gate, enrobed in red, commanding the men's surrender. We commenced, our words intertwining with each other:

"Let us erect –  
Peace is mounting –  
The throbbing throngs – you finally meet!  
Unarmed, with laurels at your feet.  
Have you come –  
...to tear down fences?  
Do you now seek recompenses?  
Sparta, Athens, men of Greece – it is time for war to cease!"

Lysistrata was a multifaceted gift. For some time I had wanted to work with these women. I sensed potential artistic power among us on stage: the illusion of homogeneity, in age, gender, and especially all three being physically disabled. Then through story we could reveal the multiplicity of our identities: our histories, ethnicities, perspectives, and bodies. I see a diverse richness in landscape and substance in our bodies: I'm the only wheelchair user, while the other two were born with their disabilities. Diana's disability affects her speech.

Then Lysistrata came along. I wanted the networking and validation from participating with some of LA's renowned theatre companies. As disabled artists, we are still largely invisible. We're like

the Who's shouting to Horton, "We're here, we're here, we're here!" Well, we were there. Our bodies draped. Disabled women's bodies.

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## PROGRAMS

### COALITION FOR DISABLED MUSICIANS

The Coalition for Disabled Musicians (CDM) was founded in 1986 by Donald Jaeger. Jaeger, an amateur drummer, was working as a tugboat deck hand when he fell and sustained a severe spinal cord injury in 1981. Jaeger returned to the drums but had limited endurance because of chronic pain. CDM was born out of his desire to find people to play with him who understood his limitations.

CDM went on to form three bands, the first a rock band called "Range of Motion;" the second an orchestra of older persons, called the "CDM Orchestra," that performs old standards, jazz and swing; and the third group, a rock and hard rock band called "Rockin' Chair." The musicians range in age from their teens to their seventies. Their disabilities include muscular dystrophy, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, visual and hearing impairments, diabetes, stroke, and spinal cord injury.

In 1997 CDM established a National Referral Service with the purpose of bringing disabled musicians together on a local and national level. Membership is open to both individuals and organizations. Members can receive and contribute to the CDM newsletter, *B-Sharp News*, and receive assistance in collaborating, networking, and developing individual music projects. Other benefits of membership include:

- biographies and performance dates printed in the newsletter
- information on adaptive equipment
- store and studio discounts
- referrals for performances, teachers and students.

At its headquarters in Long Island CDM also offers:

- performances, public awareness and school programs
- accessible recording and rehearsal studio space for members
- "tag team" approaches to managing pain and endurance while performing
- stage and studio bands for beginners, amateurs and professionals
- informal jam sessions, music workshops and lessons.

To receive a National Referral Service information packet e-mail, call or write CDM at:

Coalition for Disabled Musicians, Inc.

P.O. Box 1002M

Bay Shore, New York 11706

631-586-0366

CDMNEWS@AOL.COM

### NEW TRADE ORGANIZATION LAUNCHED FOR DEAF MEDIA PROFESSIONALS

During the second annual Festival for Cinema of the Deaf, the Chicago Institute for the Moving Image (CIMI) launched a new trade organization targeted at uniting deaf and hard of hearing media professionals: the International Association of Deaf Media Professionals (IADMP).

Those eligible to join this international organization include media professionals who are deaf and hard of hearing and involved in broadcast/cable television, motion picture film, Internet-based video, home video, and other related media technologies. Hearing media professionals are encouraged to join as associate members.

The new chairman of IADMP, David H. Pierce, a broadcast/cable industry veteran, says that it is "time that this group of highly trained and visual professionals is recognized as a viable segment of our thriving media industry, which has often been confined to those who can hear. It is an industry that has a strong voice in the legislative area with groups such as the National Association of Broadcasters, the National Cable Television Association, the American Society of Cinematographers, and so on. IADMP shall join those ranks."

Joshua Flanders, the Executive Director of CIMI, says that IADMP will "encourage and develop employment opportunities for deaf and hard of hearing media professionals in the industry, encourage the showcasing and distribution of their media content to the general public, and provide a venue for networking with colleagues and other industry professionals."

The Association will release a quarterly newsletter featuring guest columnists from the national and international deaf media community. Annual membership is \$10. Associate memberships for hearing media professionals are \$10, and lifetime memberships for \$100 are also available.

For more information about joining IADMP contact:

Joshua Flanders, Executive Director, CIMI

847-332-CIMI (2464)/Voice/TTY

847-332-2463/Fax

joshuaflanders@cimi.ws

www.cinemaforthedeaf.org

Or contact:

David H. Pierce at Davideo@satx.rr.com

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## RESOURCES

### SUPPORT FOR PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL PERFORMING ARTS FESTIVALS

The Fund for U.S. Artists, a program of Arts International ([www.artsinternational.org/](http://www.artsinternational.org/)), provides support for U.S. performing artists and organizations that have been invited to participate in major international performing arts festivals outside the United States. The program is designed to introduce international audiences to the performing arts in the U.S. and to support the creative and professional development of U.S. artists. The next deadline for application is September 5, 2003.

To be eligible, performing artists must be working at a professional level and must be citizens or permanent residents of the United States. Eligible festivals must:

- take place outside the United States and be international in scope with representation from at least two countries other than the host country, or have a U.S. theme with representation from at least three U.S. performing artists or groups
- have a non-U.S. based organization as the primary sponsor or organizer
- be open to the general public and reach a wide public audience
- provide the applicant with a letter of invitation to perform at the festival
- and be single-discipline, one-time, or first-time festivals.

Applications will be judged on the basis of:

- artistic excellence and record of professional activity
- significance of the applicant's presence at the festival as it relates to the artist's professional development
- significance of the festival internationally and/or in its own context
- and evidence of reasonable financial support from the festival in relation to the local economic situation.

The Fund is particularly interested in supporting applicants invited to festivals in areas of the world where U.S. work is not frequently seen, such as Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

Support generally ranges from \$1,000 to \$15,000. Eligible costs supported through the Fund include travel, per diem, international communication costs, shipping, and artist's and agent's fees. See the Fund's Web site for complete program information and application guidelines and forms.

RFP Link: [www.artsinternational.org/programs/the\\_fund/index.htm](http://www.artsinternational.org/programs/the_fund/index.htm)

For additional RFPs in Arts and Culture, visit [www.fdncenter.org/pnd/rfp/cat\\_arts.ihtml](http://www.fdncenter.org/pnd/rfp/cat_arts.ihtml)

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## NEWS AND NOTES

### NTWH SEEKS STUDENTS FOR SUMMER WORKSHOPS

The National Theatre Workshop of the Handicapped (NTWH) has announced its schedule of workshops for 2003. NTWH is currently accepting applications for its sixth season of residential programs at the NTWH Crosby School in Belfast, Maine. It is looking for motivated students who are interested in exploring the arts, in expanding their current arts experience, or in enhancing their communication skills. The workshops run from June through September.

Residential workshops at NTWH Crosby, on the beautiful coast of Maine, are held at the fully renovated, totally handicapped accessible facility which has housing accommodations for 50, dining room, multi-use studios, dance studio, 450 seat Main Stage, 100 seat Little Theatre, dark room, kiln room, swimming pool and jacuzzi. Workshop curricula include baking, acting, singing, movement, and dance. The following dates are open to new students:

Introduction to Theatre Session I: June 28 - July 8

Introduction to Theatre Session II: July 12 - July 22

Baking Retreat/Workshops: August 7-8 and September 17 - 21

Financial assistance is available for qualified students. This includes academic scholarships and travel scholarships.

For more information please call 212-206-7789 or visit [www.ntwh.org](http://www.ntwh.org).

National Theatre Workshop of the  
Handicapped  
535 Greenwich Street  
New York, NY 10013  
212-206-7789  
212-206-0200 (fax)  
admissions@ntwh.org

NTWH Crosby  
96 Church Street  
Belfast, ME 04915  
207-338-6894  
207-338-6075 (fax)

## NEWS FROM VSA ARTS

A national juried exhibit sponsored by VSA arts and Volkswagen will be open to young artists with disabilities, ages 16-25. Submitted artwork must be original and on the theme of "**Road Trip: A Journey of Discovery.**" These cash awards will be granted: Grand Prize \$10,000, First Award \$5,000, Second Award \$3,000, and 12 awards of excellence \$1,000. Entries must be submitted by August 15, 2003. To get more information and entry forms go to: [www.vsarts.org/gallery/callsforart/vw/index.html](http://www.vsarts.org/gallery/callsforart/vw/index.html), call 800-933-8721 ext 3877, or e-mail [voa@vsarts.org](mailto:voa@vsarts.org).

Also, the **2004 International VSA arts Festival** is coming up soon. This exciting four-day celebration will be held June 9-12, 2004 in Washington, D.C. It will give participants an opportunity to meet, interact with, and view the works of artists with disabilities from around the world. Many locations in the nation's capital, including the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Union Station, and the Smithsonian Institution, will host performances, visual art exhibits, master artist workshops, and much more. VSA arts invites everyone to help celebrate its 30th Anniversary by participating in this unique experience. Visit [www.vsartsfestival.org](http://www.vsartsfestival.org) for more information.

**Job Opening: Artist Services Coordinator.** Responsible for logistical and administrative coordination to sustain the efforts of Artist Services, including the Artist Registry, exhibits, special events, awards programs, and other activities. A key function is to facilitate strategies to involve and inform artists with disabilities within the framework of VSA arts' overall objectives. This position reports to the Director of Artist Services. The salary is \$35,924. For more information go to [www.idealists.org/jobs/53314/98156](http://www.idealists.org/jobs/53314/98156).

## ASIA PACIFIC WATABOSHI MUSIC FESTIVAL COMES TO AUSTRALIA

Curtain Rising on Dream Asia Pacific Wataboshi Festival 2003 will take place November 16-23 in Australia at the Brisbane Powerhouse Centre for the Live Arts. The Festival is an international celebration of the dreams and artistic expressions of people with disabilities that will showcase music, performance and visual arts from 13 countries. Australian pianist David Helfgott is the International Ambassador of the Brisbane Wataboshi. Access Arts, Queensland's leading arts and disability organization, will host the Festival

The Brisbane Wataboshi joins Singapore (1991), Seoul (1993), Shanghai (1995), Bangkok (1997), Nara (1999), and Kaohsiung (2001) in the international biennial version of the event that began in the ancient Japanese city of Nara in 1976. Supported by the Tanpopo-No-Ye Foundation, this event has blossomed into an annual festival in Japan (with performances in over 50 cities) and a biennial international celebration.

Wataboshi (pronounced what-ah-boshi) is Japanese for the seeds of the dandelion flower, and like the seeds carried by the wind, the festival seeks to share and convey a message of peace and harmony throughout the world. Brisbane Wataboshi Festival Director, Ludmila Doneman describes the theme of the festival as "the expression through first hand experience of performers who have been displaced, labeled or disempowered and have discovered a commitment to the arts as a way of expressing personal and political messages to the general public."

Wataboshi 2003 is sponsored by the Queensland Government through funding from Arts Queensland, Disability Services Queensland, the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Brisbane City Council, Festivals Australia, and the Commonwealth Government through the Australia Council.

For more information contact: Ludmila Doneman, Festival Director  
Access Arts Inc.  
Tel: 07 3358 6200  
Fax 07 3358 6211  
E-mail: [info@accessarts.org.au](mailto:info@accessarts.org.au)  
Website: [www.accessarts.org.au/wataboshi.html](http://www.accessarts.org.au/wataboshi.html)

## DANCING WHEELS AUDITIONS AND SUMMER WORKSHOPS

*Dancing Wheels*, a professional classical/modern Dance Company comprised of stand-up and sit-down (wheelchair) dancers is seeking to hire one or two wheelchair dancers.

*Dancing Wheels*, which is based in Cleveland, will train eager, athletic men or women wheelchair users to work as apprentices with the company. Interested applicants must be willing to work 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Monday through Friday and travel when required. Most choreography is integrated among dancers with and without disabilities and with a mix of dance experience levels ranging from 3 to 18 years. Trainees are not required to have previous dance experience but will not receive remuneration for their training until they are able to move to the apprentice level.

Resumes and audition tapes should be sent to Mary Verdi-Fletcher, *Dancing Wheels* 3615 Euclid Avenue 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Cleveland, OH 44115. Personal auditions and interviews can be arranged at the *Dancing Wheels* studios in Cleveland by appointment only. Call (216) 432-0306 or e-mail [Profclair1@aol.com](mailto:Profclair1@aol.com). To learn more about the *Dancing Wheels* company go to [www.gggreg.com/dancingwheels.htm](http://www.gggreg.com/dancingwheels.htm).

The *Dancing Wheels* Summer Dance Workshop will be offered again the last week of June for Youth and the first week of July for Adults. This intensive week of training is another fun and exciting way to experience the *Dancing Wheels* technique and get to know the company.

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