



# ASSESSING THE FUTURE OF THE FIELD:

An International Convening of Thought Leaders in  
Theater, Dance, Disability, Education, and Inclusion



HOSTED BY THE  
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COVER PHOTO - PERFORMANCE: "QUACK!" BY FTH:K

The plan was nothing short of audacious. It had never even been attempted before. But the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts Department of VSA and Accessibility, managed to pull it off, and in so doing accomplished something quite extraordinary, the implementation of a truly seminal event for a field so complex, so diverse and multifaceted, so fraught with passions, sensibilities, and ideas that no common ground has yet been met on even what to call it. For the purposes of this report, we'll use the term 'disability arts' (for, according to a recent article by the Kennedy Center's Kim Peter Kovac in the ASSITEJ Magazine, that is the tag with the widest global recognition).\*

What the Kennedy Center and VSA fashioned was the very first international convening of leaders in this field, brought together from around the world with the express purpose of "initiating the beginning of a larger global conversation about performing arts, education, and disability." As Betty Siegel, the Kennedy Center's Director of VSA and Accessibility, recognized, "Gathering thought leaders and setting an agenda focused on the future for inclusive performing arts will be a crucial first step in advancing the field at all levels of practice."

Participants attended from across the spectrum of Disability Arts and across the globe, 54 individuals from 17 different countries, representing every continent except Antarctica. "This is probably the most diverse group of people that I have ever had the honor to pull together," noted Betty to the assembled group, "[but] the common thread is that we all have some connection to the arts and to the disability experience."

[SEE *Appendix A* for a complete list of participants.]

The three-day gathering was entitled "Assessing the Future of the Field: An International Convening of Thought-Leaders in Theater, Dance, Disability, Education, and Inclusion," a thoroughly acronym-proof designation, but clearly a nod to the thorny polemics surrounding the field's nomenclature. Right from the get-go, Betty wisely took the topic of terminology off the table, lest it consume the whole of the convening. People were not to fuss about what to call the field or each other, but simply to use language respectfully, and to look at the intent behind the spoken word, political correctness be damned.

Conversation was to be open and honest, but never judgmental, and everyone given a chance to speak and be heard, with an understanding that there are multiple languages and modalities for conveying information. To that end, the convening was fully accessible. Accommodations included sign language interpretation, Computer-Assisted Real-Time Translation (CART), assistive listening devices, audio-description, as well as Polish and Japanese language translation.

\*An exact definition of the field is also elusive, but Kim gives it a shot, offering that "maybe it's as simple as theater and dance by, for, with, and/or about persons with disabilities."



PERFORMANCE: "VESSEL"  
BY AXIS DANCE COMPANY

Also set aside was any talk of money, of financial support. "We all want it. We all need it. None of us have it," joked Betty, while allowing that both language and lucre are real and important concerns. "I acknowledge that these issues exist, but there is no way we can address them in the three days we are together." These topics would be saved for another occasion.

As for this occasion? Well, Betty at one point defined it as a "Search Conference – a participatory community that works together to reach common ground, the participants creating plans for the future based on shared ideas." That it was. But even more fitting might be the label "Thought Laboratory." All of these participants were invited for one express purpose - "to think. Think and talk. And to do so without constraints," advised Betty.

"Allow the conversation over the next few days to challenge presumptions and assumptions. ...Our charge is to discuss what as a community of arts and disability workers we can do to reach our preferred futures. We are framing the conversation for the future. This is a gathering to ask questions. It's not about finding answers.... We are not here to solve problems; we are not here to fix things. We are here to think, to question, to wrestle with, to envision. ...We want to identify a few things that individually or as a group we can take responsibility for, and that we can accomplish rather readily, an agenda for what happens next. But most importantly, our charge is to luxuriate in the opportunity to think, to explore ideas of where as a field we should be moving in order to get to our tomorrow."

And that exploration would take three forms – Discussions, Pecha Kucha presentations, and Workshops.



PARTICIPANTS IN WORKSHOP

## THE ITINERARY: *“Framing The Conversation”*

### DISCUSSIONS

Most of the convening’s hours were spent in small group open-space **DISCUSSIONS**, allowing for a rich and productive interchange of ideas. The first day of these was devoted to asking questions that would inform our thinking about the future, the second to envisioning that future, and the last to identifying a few first steps that will help us reach that future.

Facilitators encouraged participants to be open to new thoughts, to whatever captivated the interest of the group even if the practical value of the conversation was hard to articulate. They were reminded that good discussions do not necessarily end in agreement or conclusion, but rather in clarity of differences and an agreement to disagree (although not everyone may agree with this).

Beyond these prescribed constructs, mealtimes and a complimentary hotel Happy Hour provided

opportunities for the kinds of informal networking that would prove invaluable in building relationships and inspiring collaborations.

Along the way, the group also heard from one of the self-described “suits” of the Kennedy Center, Darrell M. Ayers, Vice President of Education who welcomed everyone on behalf of Chairman David M. Rubenstein and President Michael M. Kaiser. He thanked us for coming, and expressed his hope and expectation that this convening will help to advance the field worldwide. While acknowledging the challenges for support that exist in the current global economic climate, he also spoke of the opportunities that such circumstances create, a notion profoundly resonant in the arts field where the challenges wrought by disability only serve to drive the work in new and innovative directions.

## PECHA KUCHA

**Transliteration of an onomatopoetic Japanese term meaning “chit-chat” - a sort of arts-infused amalgamation of speed-dating and show-and-tell developed by a couple of architects in Tokyo. This presentation technique, in which a maximum of 20 slides are shown for 20 seconds each (for a 6 minute and 40 second total) with accompanying narration, keeps things concise and very directed.**

Participants were invited, on a first-come-first-served basis, to share a current or recent program of their own using this fast-paced format developed in Japan. This provided an opportunity for everyone to learn about the extraordinary depth and breadth of work in the field.

The presentations were eye-opening for their power and diversity, everything from a South

African company of “kooky misfits” devising purely visual theatre to the stark contrast of a UK theatre creating multi-sensory immersive performances with cutting-edge technologies that make it possible to reflect the experience of the visually impaired by “relocating the dramatic action within bodily experience.”

There were presentations about actors with intellectual disabilities training in the Meisner Technique in Ireland, being employed full-time and holding memberships in the Actors’ Guild of Sweden, and even running restaurants attached to theaters in where else but France; bon appetit!

We also learned of a Mexican company of deaf and hearing actors who tour widely in a country where not long ago the use of sign language was forbidden even in the privacy of the home, and of another program in Thailand where performers with disabilities are helped to become professional recording artists.



There is wonderful work being done in places as diverse as Poland and Jamaica with young people with cognitive disabilities, including those living with Down syndrome and all along the autism spectrum.

We also saw work being done with and about people who have been institutionalized, and those who have lived through combat, particularly in Serbia where even talk of the past conflict there remains taboo and veterans, many disabled, are still regarded as war criminals.

The Pecha Kucha presentations introduced programs and projects that covered the gamut in the scope of their reach. There was the grand sweep of disability arts organizations that serve entire countries, from Ireland to Japan, to whole continents (if you count Australia) and companies creating intercultural work that crosses borders far and wide. And there was the intimacy of a program like “Quippings” started by an activist group of “queer cripples,” and presentations on the most personal of levels, such as a beautiful short video (not the standard Pecha Kucha format, but fitting within the requisite 6 minute time frame), written and directed by a participant who was left paralyzed by surgery to remove a spinal cord tumor.

[SEE *Appendix B* for brief descriptions of all 27 Pecha Kucha presentations, with links to representative samples.]

## WORKSHOPS

The convening also included a half-dozen **WORKSHOPS** or **LECTURE/DEMONSTRATIONS**, interactive in-depth explorations of various aspects of participants’ work.

These sessions offered a chance for participants to get out of their chairs or, for those not ambulatory, to get their chairs rolling, so that they could engage in some hands-on learning - quite literally “hands-on” in the several workshops that explored sign language and gesture.

One of these, conducted by **Josette Bushell-Mingo**, Artistic Director of the Tyst Theater Center for Deaf Dramatic Arts, explored what happens when actors encounter sign - how they are changed physically,



“The impossible makes everything possible.”

– Ana Rita Barata

how the experience changes the way they look at words, with the work generating a veritable “transformation of language - the word no longer a word, but a three-dimensional energy.” Utilizing the various national sign languages of the convening’s participant, Josette also provided a vivid example of the ways creative access can become a catalyst for innovation.

The work of Axis Dance brought Disability Arts forthright into the mainstream popular culture when viewed by some 30 million people on *So You Think You Can Dance* ([Link](#)). The company’s Artistic Director **Judith Smith** helped those of us who think we can’t dance by leading a non-threatening improvisational movement experience, designed to “get us out of our heads and into our bodies,” moving together and connecting with each other non-verbally.



JUDITH SMITH, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF AXIS DANCE COMPANY AND THE WORKSHOP LEADER (RIGHT), WITH CLAUDIA ALICK, PARTICIPANT (LEFT).

**Tim Wheeler**, Artistic Director of Mind The Gap Theatre Company offered insight into two productions, *Irresistible: Call Of The Sirens* and *Immovable*.

Another Artistic Director, and another Tim, Oily Cart's **Tim Webb** presented a look at his company's multi-sensory and highly interactive theatre for young people who have profound and multiple disabilities. This featured some dvd excerpts of several works, including *Something In The Air* created in partnership with Ockham's Razor, in which audience members experienced the performance hoisted in "nests" high into the air right alongside the aerialist performers ([Link](#)).

**Ana Rita Barata**, Artistic Director of CiM – Integrated Multidisciplinary Company, led a "full-body" movement experience, and deaf actor **Monique Holt**, Founder of Mo2 Productions, offered a different sort of physical presentation, one of pure visual theatre, with expression through body, face and gesture.

After opening remarks and introductions, the convening officially began with an **INTERVIEW**. Facilitator **Lawrence Carter-Long** of the National Council on Disability in dialogue with **Jenny Sealey**, Artistic Director of Graeae Theatre, the United Kingdom's flagship disability arts company, and **Daryl Beeton**, Artistic Director of the children's theatre Kazzum, noted for its adventurous, often outdoor, work celebrating difference and diversity.

Both of these leaders with disabilities had just come from creating the opening ceremony of 2012 Paralympics in London. Jenny was its co-director. Daryl danced for the Queen on top of a 5-meter high sway pole, and alongside 40 other performers with disabilities, he flew high over the arena audience.

Jenny talked about her struggles trying to find a thematic center for the ceremony, until she went to work on a production of *The Tempest* with an actress named Charlotte, who is autistic, playing the role of Miranda. Just as Miranda looks at her "brave new world" without judging, so did Charlotte look at her own. And that really struck Jenny. Moved by this actress' portrayal, it became the place "where everything else fell away."

Jenny had found her show, one that would ultimately feature hundreds of performers, including Stephen Hawking, Sir Ian McKellen as Prospero, and a Miranda in an airborne wheelchair. Putting the enormous spectacle together was hell, remarked Jenny, but "the most gorgeous sense of hell" for the event became "the biggest showcase of disability arts the world has ever witnessed," watched by 62,000 people in the arena itself, and over a billion worldwide.

Asked why they had agreed to attend the convening after their literally "Olympian" labors, Daryl got a laugh exclaiming that he was simply "excited to be called a thought-leader." What really drew him in? The "rare opportunity to meet with a group of people with a global perspective, and the idea of not having to come away



PARTICIPANTS IN WORKSHOP

with an actual plan or anything like that, but just to think and talk.” Jenny was excited by the convening’s “unlimited” possibilities. “This is not an end,” she suggested, “It’s the beginning. We are all part of this whole new beginning. We have this huge, massive responsibility to bring up the next generation of thinkers...I am here out of a sense of responsibility. But also to learn from everybody else.”

#### **A few further snippets:**

**LAWRENCE:** Does an inclusive performing arts field exist? (Note: “Inclusive” is the preferred British term for what we’re calling “disability arts.”) What does it mean to you?

**DARYL:** For me, it’s about ensuring that everyone, whether an artist or audience member or participant has no barriers to being involved. It’s also about not pretending it doesn’t exist.

**JENNY:** Putting disabled people into a nondisabled narrative. Disabled actors need to be able to work in other [non-disabled] companies. ...We’re not

there yet, [but] there is a shift happening. You were seeing that in the publicity around the Paralympics, the transforming perceptions. Attitudinal barriers all but disappear if the work is good.

**DARYL:** I agree. I don’t think money is the answer at all actually. It’s a visibility thing. One of the reasons we [Kazuum] decided to move our work outdoors is because of the wider ranging audience that then see that work. One of the barriers is not being seen.

**LAWRENCE:** One final question - What is the one missing thing needed to move forward?

**DARYL:** Risk-taking. I think we self-censor and we shouldn’t.

**JENNY:** Dismantling fear, fear in and around differences. The best creative way is not to be so fierce and confrontational. That only puts up more barriers. We have to find clever, direct, but palatable ways to dismantle fear.

## ASKING THE QUESTIONS: “O Brave New Q’s”

Following Lawrence’s lead, it was then everyone’s turn to ask questions, questions about the field they felt needed to be asked, and that would spur further discussion. The small group conversations were animated and intense, the questions broad-ranging. Here’s just a small sample:

*How can we derive a new aesthetic from the world view we are coming from? How can we think of beauty differently?*

*Why isn’t our work part of the mainstream? Do we want it to be?*

*Is there a way to integrate more and better arts into the school curriculum for children with disabilities - and without? How can we help create opportunities for the study of disability arts at the university level?*

*Why do so many people with disabilities feel powerless even in their own chosen fields? Should we question the role of non-disabled leaders in disability arts organizations? How do we open up opportunities for more people with disabilities to get involved in arts leadership roles?*

*How do we build pathways to the future, access or entry points into high quality training programs in the arts, not only in arts management, but in performance, direction or design?*

*And how do we ensure that such training celebrates differences rather than attempts to “normalize” the emerging artists or administrators?*

*Sometimes in the name of inclusion what you end up with is exclusion. How do we inhabit that paradox? How do we get comfortable with it when we need to be comfortable with it and how do we get uncomfortable with it when we need to be uncomfortable with it?*

*Just who exactly are “we”? And who’s not here? What do we ultimately want?*

Commenting on the provocative quality of these and the many other questions raised, Lawrence Carter-Long remarked how thrilled he was “that we were brave enough to ask them.”





PERFORMANCE: "CROSS ALL BORDERS" BY ARTS WITH THE DISABLED ASSOCIATION HONG KONG

## ENVISIONING OUR TOMORROW *“A Mirror of Humanity.”*

Identifying common themes that emerged from these questions was the next task of the convening. Many were suggested and discussed, and, in a nod to an election year, a vote determined our top six themes for further exploration. They were: **THE FIELD (Who’s The “We”?), EDUCATION, LEADERSHIP, COMMUNICATION, “CREATIVE REVOLUTION,”** and **QUALITY**. These themes became the areas of focus that would frame our continued conversation. Returning to new self-selecting small groups, one for each of the six topics, participants were asked to envision a preferred future as it pertained to their group’s theme. Here are brief summaries of those conversations. Perhaps not surprisingly, in a field that shares an ethos, if not a vocabulary, there is considerable overlap between them, commonalities, and points of intersection.

**THE FIELD (Who’s The “We”?).** This group envisioned a future in which we will be able to define ourselves explicitly and happily; celebrate a diversity of philosophies; offer lots of training opportunities on all levels for people of all ages; tell all of our stories – big and small – and in many different ways; deeply infuse the worlds of performing arts and education; and continue to gather face to face.

Kath Duncan further imagined it as “a collaborative and global network of creative movements where we strive for excellence, innovation, skills-sharing and progressive ongoing development of our practices and ourselves, personally and artistically.”

**EDUCATION.** This imagined future is one in which the arts are at the very heart of the school curriculum, “built in, not bolted on,” in Danny Braverman’s words. Adopting models of differentiated instruction and universal design for learning, schools enhance inclusivity so that all students - with and without disabilities - thrive. But this is also a future in which disability arts is deeply embedded in our education institutions from the pre-school to the university, and in which academics join convenings like this one, and root the field’s artistic practices in research.

In this future, exposure, participation, and inclusion in the arts starts at an early age and continues through elementary and secondary schooling, with pre-professional to advanced-level training becoming the norm for individuals with disabilities who are considering arts-based careers. As a consequence, this will be a future in which highly skilled arts administrators, educators, and artists with disabilities

are not limited to building work around the disability experience, but given opportunities to utilize their talents and ideas to make significant contributions to mainstream arts programming.

And finally, it is a future in which all barriers have been removed, and in which disability arts is appreciated as simply Art, and recognized as a wellspring of new and rich aesthetic sensibilities.

**LEADERSHIP.** In this future, the disability arts field is an interconnected global community with leaders who themselves have disabilities. Under their direction, resources, ideas, experiences, and training tools can be found in a centralized forum that is shared internationally and, through their activism and advocacy, disability has a higher profile in the political discourse. Consequently, national and international institutions are established to support the work.

**COMMUNICATION.** This group had a little difficulty getting around the fact that this is a field that has not yet fully defined itself (See The FIELD above). How can we begin to communicate a message when we don't know what the message is, when we're not even sure who we are? How do we talk about our work without having first identified its core values? Facilitator Kirsty Hoyle suggested that, yes, while we do need to acknowledge these elephants in the room, we also need "to think past them and beyond them and about a time when we can make the elephants extinct - which is a bad thing to say in any other context." (Boris Caksiran then drew such a lovely elephant on a flip board that one felt compelled to immediately open the convening up to visual, as well as performing, artists.)

Moving forward, the group decided that in the future, the disability arts field would take control of its own narrative. It would also endeavor to increase its visibility; reach out and build audiences; share information, experiences, best practices, and even failures; and give young people the language to understand and appreciate what they are experiencing. It would be good art, well-marketed, because both assets are essential for it to carry on.

**"CREATIVE REVOLUTION"** This was a term coined by Ana Rita Barata to suggest how the power

of the fire inside us (our "passion and rage") can ignite a greater conflagration, one capable of consuming the entire world of the performing arts, and so necessitate a rebuilding of its future. That future is one that recognizes that accommodation is not the able-bodied man's burden, but rather a gateway to innovation; that in diversity is strength; and that there are many modalities of power, as there are many forms of language.

It is a future that upends notions of perfection, in which, as Vicky Ireland of TYA/UK would have it, we "embrace the wiggly carrot." Wiggly carrot? Vicky explained: "Markets today only sell vegetables of a certain size and shape, assuming that people wouldn't buy them if they looked 'different.' But if wiggly carrots were widely available we would get on and not think about it. They taste just as good. We need to present theatre of different shapes and sizes," but all of it of the same quality, resources, status, and regard, a future in which there is no longer a place for what Danny Braverman has called the "stairs and stares" that prevent equal participation.

**QUALITY.** Recognizing that quality is difficult to measure, this group suggested that in an ideal future, the disability arts field would know and claim its own context, instead of having it be externally applied. That said, the future envisioned here is one in which the craft and creativity displayed by performers with disabilities will vanquish any persistent prejudices of this field being more therapy than art, the perception that the work is "like gluing macaroni on a plate, and not much more," as Lawrence Carter-Long put it. Disability arts practitioners will no longer be perceived as doing "God's work, but rather of doing good work," and it will indeed be work that challenges and exceeds audience expectations. Moreover, it will be work that is acknowledged, in Cecile Tuerlay's eloquent words, as "a great source of wealth for creation, as an asset, a mirror of our diversified humanity."

*So here was a vision of the future. Now how to see it realized?*

## TAKING THE FIRST STEPS *And “leaving prints.”*

The process had already begun, of course, in the very act of assembling this convening. Here again is Kath Duncan:

*“My whole life I have been told that everything I am is ugly and worthless. I struggled with that until I embraced that ugliness and found freedom from the constraints of traditional expectations about me and my body...In the course of my PhD research I looked into the history of people with disabilities... We don’t want that history...Kids like me were bashed against walls when they were born. Those people did not leave prints. **Right now in this room we are making history. We are making social change. We are leaving prints.**”*

Even before the convening was over, participants were planning their own immediate next steps, the ways they would continue to leave their prints on the global arts and disability field at all levels of practice.

### A few examples:

**Josette Bushell-Mingo & Lorena Martinez Mier** are planning a 3-year project to create a co-production between their Swedish and Mexican companies. Josette is also starting a project with the Cullberg Ballet and will discuss including dancers with disabilities.

**Dianne Nutting**, who is chairing the 2013 AATE conference in Washington, DC will “infiltrate” the event by inviting **Brian Heap** to present, while **Danny Braverman** will begin to use Brian’s Pecha Kucha (a compelling case for process drama) as an advocacy tool.

**Petal Pilley** made many great connections at the convening. The first one that is already bearing fruit is with **Tim Wheeler** of Mind The Gap. He is now her unofficial mentor and they’ll soon be in discussion about future plans. Tim will also be meeting with **Janet Tam** in Hong Kong to discuss future plans, and he and **Jonathan Meth** are proposing a multinational theatre collaboration (England, France, Ireland, Sweden, and Serbia). They will explore with Danny Braverman how such a project might link to his academic research and teaching.

**Kirsty Hoyle** will further research and develop “relaxed performances” (also called “autism-friendly” performances), helping venues to offer these by providing training, marketing, and assessment to gauge the cultural and social benefits. The result will be an evaluation report, an international logo and a toolkit for offering such performances.

**Julie McNamara** is going to ensure that two annual trainee placements with Vital Xposure are widely advertised to attract individuals with disabilities.

PERFORMANCE:  
ACTORS FROM SENA Y VERBO





PERFORMANCE:  
"PATTERNS BEYOND TRACES" BY DIN A 13  
TANZCOMPANY & DANCE FACTORY ACCRA

**Tim McCarty** will conduct a tour of Mexico in collaboration with **Lorena's** Sena y Verbo Company; return to Hong Kong for professional development with **Janet Tam** at ADAHK; begin planning to bring **Gustavo Fijlakow's** DIN A 13 and possibly **Josette's** Tyst company to Quest Fest in 2014; and with **Tanya Surtees'** FTH:K company, build a Quest Fest component at the South African National Arts Festival. He will also serve on the AATE planning committee to help bring a more inclusive approach to this coming summer's conference.

**Shizuka Morishita** will begin building a database of creative and high quality activities and exchanges of information.

**Betty Siegel & Mimi Smith** are going to join **Barry Kornhauser** at Millersville University in Pennsylvania to lead a one-day conference to begin an exploration of disability arts studies on its campus, an initiative supported by a generous grant from The Association of Performing Arts Presenters and MetLife Foundation.

**Justyna Sobczyk** will seek wider access to educational programs for children with disabilities at the Theatrical Institute in Warsaw where she works.

**Elizabeth Labbe-Webb** is going to reach out each Friday by e-mail or phone to another practitioner in the field.

**Per Tornqvist** created the start of a strong future network at the convening's last lunch, a "letter of intent" network noting: "The end of this conference is the start of something bigger."

[SEE *Appendix C* for more planned next steps.]

Beyond these individual steps, there are broader actions that can be taken by the disability arts community at large to advance the field and help reach our envisioned futures.

# A FEW BROAD-BASED RECOMMENDATIONS: *Forging A Future*

*“I think **CONNECTIVITY** with one another will be the single most important aspect to advancing the movement. All themes will then naturally be nourished, informed and developed in an organic and empowered way. Cross-pollination will occur and information/resources will be shared and elaborated on.” - Petal Pilley*

Petal’s notion was one that was shared pretty universally by her colleagues at the convening. If there was a single overriding goal of the group it was that there be another gathering, one with continued examples of best practices, more workshops, further specificity in discussions, and perhaps even featured performances, along with an expanded list of participants representing a wider swath of geography - “colleagues from other regions of the world to help us understand other realities and therefore different ways of perceiving and contextualizing disabilities,” noted Gustavo Fijalkow, and including such associates and allies as academicians, policymakers, funders, bioethicists, architects, artists with intellectual disabilities and those wounded by warfare, to name but a few that were suggested.

Topics could include “The Arts & Special Education” (pertaining to Children Pre-K – Grade 12 or, for that matter, to individuals from birth – age 21) and “Arts & The Disability Experience” (Children and Adults).

However, even in a field committed to removing barriers, there was the clear understanding that issues of time and money create considerable obstacles to such an intention, especially today, in a period of fiscal uncertainty across much of the world. That said, this is still a worthy goal that should be given every consideration, and perhaps a consortium of international disability and arts organizations could jointly finance such a venture.

For the time being, there are some viable alternatives to maintaining and broadening connectivity in the field, which can be couched within the context of the derived themes.

## **THE FIELD**

### **An “Us” Fuss Fix**

“We need to answer ‘Who’s the We?’ or concede that the field is just too diverse to pin it down, then move on. No matter what, there is a need for a cohesive community and a ‘tellable’ story, or stories, that anyone in the field can adapt and use as needed. This underpins Leadership, Communication, Education,” so asserted participant Elizabeth Labbe-Webb.

That said, a small task force should be assembled to establish a common terminology and to once and for all define this inclusive field in terms not so broad as to be meaningless, yet not so specific as to inadvertently exclude. The task force should be comprised of representatives from around the globe and of the various constituencies of the field – artists, administrators, educators, perhaps even arts therapists, and people of all differing abilities. The group could meet via the internet and solicit input from the broader field, perhaps answering not only the question of who we are, but also who we might become.

## **EDUCATION**

### **Bring A Brick**

Maybe we can’t singlehandedly build the universal design model school of the future, but we can each provide a brick or two, by helping to educate educators about our work. One course of action is to “infiltrate” university theatre conferences (such as that of ATHE here in the U.S.) with workshops and panels, and campuses themselves with symposia and mini-conferences. [For more on “infiltration” see CREATIVE REVOLUTION below.]

During the convening there was much talk of “getting ‘em young,” bringing disability arts awareness and experiences to children. Some ways to help accomplish this would be to unify and intensify advocacy efforts directed towards making the Arts a core curricular subject in all of our schools, to include disability arts as part of teacher training programs, and to develop and disseminate professional development opportunities in universal design for learning to working teachers. All of this would serve to make disability arts a



PERFORMANCE: "DOGS"  
BY ERGSTATUS DANCE THEATER

part of every student's K-12 experience. Outside of the schools, there are theater and dance companies among us that already serve youth audiences. Another recommendation would be for other companies to follow suit, to connect young people to performers with disabilities (as well as performers to young audiences with disabilities).

Scholars in education or psychology should be welcomed into the creative process to share their expertise on child development and behavior. A research component that provides a statistical analysis of the work's impact could serve as an academic endorsement of the field (which, in turn can be used to educate funders, schools, and social service agencies about the import of disability arts).

## LEADERSHIP

### Grand Larsen-y or The "Kiss Me Kate... Goodbye" Stratagem

Kate Larsen, out-going CEO of Arts Access Australia came to the convening with in-coming CEO Emma Bennison, who happens to be blind. Kate felt that it was important for her organization to be led by a person with a disability and so planned her own succession with that purpose in mind. (Read about it [here](#)) It is recommended that the current leaders of the field follow Kate's example – not by planning themselves out of a job – but by beginning to actively seek and nurture a next generation

of leaders from within the disability community, through pro-active recruitment, mentoring, apprenticeships, and peer-to-peer support.

## COMMUNICATION

### "Virtue-al" Realities

We need to expand and further circulate the resource that is The Kennedy Center Database of International Theater, Dance, and Disability Organizations. Setting up some sort of internet hub or website would offer opportunities to do so, while also providing a forum for bringing others into the conversation, sharing information and contacts, offering tips on access and inclusion, posting new developments, and hosting a virtual library of papers, resources, reviews, Pecha Kucha presentations, and short videos of best practices. This would give both experienced and emerging practitioners, as well as other partners, \* a broader sense of what is going on in the field, while at the same time boosting its visibility.

A Facebook page could serve as a starter home for this kind of virtual community. And whereas, the internet does not reach everyone or serve all equally well, it is a step, and its provisions for access are constantly improving. (As Lawrence Carter-Long pointed out, captioning can now be done easily on

\*Identifying such partners is another goal. Funders, the media, government agencies, social service organizations, schools, performing arts centers, etc. can be contacted to ask how we might form partnerships with them.

YouTube, and his National Council on Disability offers a web class to teach how. And of course there's also Google Translate and other such initiatives that enhance accessibility.)

Although virtual meetings can never take the place of personal face-to-face connections such as those experienced at this convening, the internet can be an effective tool for communicating the field. Skype conferencing, webinars, blogging, simulcasts of workshops and performances are all well within reach. The third and last of our Tims, Tim McCarty, even proposed forming a dues-paying alliance of those committed to inclusive work. The alliance could “have a website, publish a newsletter, support research, conduct gatherings, whatever. Connecting people is the critical piece.”

## “CREATIVE REVOLUTION”

### Infiltration

Although there's a certain subversive connotation to the word, what is meant here by “infiltration” is largely just another form of access. Rather than incurring the cost and complications of hosting a gathering of its own, the disability arts field can tap into existing networks, bringing a presence to festivals, conferences, university symposia, and other such gathering places - as “satellite” programming.

As Kim Peter Kovac noted, this is exactly what was done at the most recent ASSITEJ World Congress in Molmo, Sweden, with the TYA-UK Center of the association presenting a “Whose Theatre Is It Anyway Day” which had a substantive impact. As a consequence of the presentation, disability arts has now become a major thrust of this international association, and the “infiltration” will be continued and expanded at the 2014 Congress in Poland. As noted elsewhere in this report, Diane Nutting is already planning some similar infiltrations at the AATE conference this coming summer. Other such opportunities, beyond the ever groundbreaking TYA genre, should be sought.

### QUALITY

**“R-e-s-p-e-c-t. Find out what it means to me.”**

“Quality is not only a goal, but also a philosophy, a commitment and an expression of the respect of the artistic work.” – Cecile Teurlay. Among other

expressed concerns in this arena is the need to establish further serious training programs and rigorous creative processes with space to experiment, risk, and fail. As regards the serious training of performers with disabilities, arts administrators, arts educators, directors, designers, and all other arts/culture-based professionals, one ready goal might be for companies that excel in this area to share their best practices with the rest of the field by offering webinars, writing articles, or inviting colleagues to observe their practices. Planning a collaboration can also enhance artistic excellence, particularly when the collaborator is an individual, company, or genre new to you, thus inviting fresh perspectives and dynamics.

As to the creative process itself, let us follow Samuel Beckett's dictum: “No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better.” Strive to fail at least once in the coming year. (Failing that, if nothing else, you will have failed to fail!) And, as we are forging our tomorrow, it would serve well to also remember these words of participant Jonathan Meth: “Disabled people are fantastic at thinking differently. Given the opportunity to make creative work they will not only flourish but innovate our entire industry, for diversity is the crucible of future culture.”





PERFORMANCE: "COMPAGNIE OF STRANGERS" BY MOOMSTEATERN

## FINAL THOUGHTS: *"Not an end, but a beginning."*

During one of the many discussions over the three days of the convening, Tim Webb noted that if young children have "100 languages" (a Reggio Emilia Approach perspective), then the disability community must have 500! He later continued:

*"I believe we are beginning to evolve a new artistic sensibility which harnesses the myriad ways - those 500 languages - that the minority, frequently alienated groups in society perceive and reflect on the world. This will involve more than 'accepting' or finding a separate space in which the voices of...people with physical or intellectual disabilities can be heard. It must be a celebration and synthesis of the many, many ways by which human beings interpret reality ... There are a lot of different ways of being alive on the earth, and this can be celebrated in the arts."*

Everyone seemed to agree – or at least to hope - that such a celebration was at hand, that we might at last have reached a kind of tipping point where this work will be moving into a new realm of acceptability and influence, taking its deserved place as part of the greater conversation in the arts. Coming on the heels of the game-changing Paralympics, this first-time ever assembling of many of the field's global leaders was perhaps a true watershed moment, the start of a worldwide movement. "The opportunity to meet and speak with international colleagues is incredibly valuable," exclaimed Kate Larsen, "and I believe will produce ripples for years and years to come."

That it can, but only if we and our colleagues around the globe continue the work that was set in motion at this convening. In three short days, The Kennedy Center's Education Department, Office of VSA and Accessibility, took us from a "gorgeous sense of hell" to an enticing glimpse of heaven. It gave us precious moments of introspection and affirmation, challenges and revelations. There were the Pecha Kuchas and workshops to remind us that our community, though all too often marginalized, is creating some of the most exhilarating and innovative work in the performing arts world today. And most importantly, there were the discussions that offered us that unprecedented opportunity to think. To think and talk. To think and talk - together.

And now we need to strive to continue the dialog – in 500 different languages, welcoming colleagues and collaborators into the conversation. For in a field that confronts barriers every day, the biggest one may be insularity. This convening knocked a huge hole in that wall, connecting, for the first time ever, those who work in arts and disability from every corner of the earth. It was, as Jenny Sealey suggested early on, "*not an end, [but] a beginning,*" setting us off – together – to build a brave new world.

- Barry Kornhauser

# APPENDIX A: *The Participants*

## **Claudia Alick**

Associate Producer  
Oregon Shakespeare Festival  
USA

## **Ana Rita Barata**

Artistic Director  
CIM-Integrated Multidisciplinary  
Company  
Portugal

## **Daryl Beeton**

Artistic Director  
Kazzum  
UK

## **Emma Bennison**

Incoming CEO  
Arts Access Australia  
Australia

## **Anita Boles**

Executive Director  
Society for the Arts in Healthcare  
(Soon to be Global Alliance for  
Arts and Health)  
USA

## **Danny Braverman**

Freelance Theater Artist  
UK

## **Laurie Brooks**

Freelance Playwright  
USA

## **Josette Bushell-Mingo**

Artistic Director  
Tyst Theater Center for Deaf  
Dramatic Arts  
Sweden

## **Boris Caksiran**

Artistic Director  
ERGstatus Dance Theater,  
Member ASSITEJ-Serbia and  
“Let’s...”  
Serbia

## **Morwenna Collett**

Program Manager  
Australia Council for the Arts  
Australia

## **Sonya de Peter**

Executive Director  
Artes Muy Especiales  
Guatemala

## **Kath Duncan**

Curator  
Heist eGallery, Arts Access Victoria  
Australia

## **Mike Ervin**

Access Project Coordinator  
Victory Gardens Theater  
USA

## **Gustavo Fijlakow**

Production Director  
DIN A 13 tanzcompany  
Germany

## **Bozena Gawerska-Panfil**

Dance Movement Therapist  
Theatre 21  
Poland

## **Brian Heap**

Executive Director  
VSA Arts of Jamaica  
Jamaica

## **Monique Holt**

Founder  
Mo2 Productions  
USA

## **Kirsty Hoyle**

Access Manager  
Society of London Theatre  
and Theatrical Management  
Association/Unicorn Theatre  
UK

## **Celia Hughes**

Executive Artistic Director  
VSA Texas  
USA

## **Vicky Ireland**

Freelance TYA director/writer,  
Board Member TYA-ASSITEJ UK  
UK

## **John Killacky**

Executive Director  
Flynn Center for the Performing  
Arts

## **Barry Kornhauser**

Family Arts Collaborative Manager  
Millersville University  
USA

## **Kim Peter Kovac**

Director of Theatre for Young  
Audiences  
The John F. Kennedy Center for the  
Performing Arts  
USA

## **David Kurs**

Artistic Director  
Deaf West  
USA

## **Elizabeth Labbe-Webb**

CEO/Executive Director  
VSA Georgia  
USA

## **Kate Larsen**

Outgoing CEO  
Arts Access Australia  
Australia

## **Catherine Long**

Freelance Theater Artist  
USA

**Lawrence Carter-Long**

Public Affairs Specialist  
National Council on Disability  
USA

**Cheryl Lundquist**

Assistant Professor of Theatre Arts  
Gallaudet University  
USA

**Lorena Martinez Mier**

Cultural Manager  
Sena y Verbo  
Mexico

**Tim McCarty**

Founder/Artistic Director  
Quest Visual Theatre  
USA

**Julie McNamara**

Artistic Director  
Vital Xposure  
UK

**Gaelle Mellis**

Designer, Co-Director  
Vital Statistix  
Australia

**Jonathan Meth**

Freelance theatre artist  
UK

**Shizuka Morishita**

Secretary General  
TANPOPO No-Ye Foundation  
Japan

**Padraig Naughton**

Executive Director  
Arts & Disability Ireland  
Ireland

**Diane Nutting**

Director of Access and Inclusion  
Imagination State  
USA

**Maria Oshodi**

Artistic Director  
Extant  
UK

**Petal Pilley**

Director  
Blue Teapot Theatre  
Ireland

**Rebecca Podsednik**

TYA Program Coordinator  
The John F. Kennedy Center for the  
Performing Arts  
USA

**Jenny Sealey**

Artistic Director  
Graeae Theatre  
UK

**Jenny Seham**

Founder  
Seham Consulting  
USA

**Betty Siegel**

Director of VSA and Accessibility  
The John F. Kennedy Center for the  
Performing Art  
USA

**Mimi Kennedy Smith**

Director  
VSA Pennsylvania,  
Producing Artistic Director  
Amaryllis Theater Company  
USA

**Judith Smith**

Artistic Director  
AXIS Dance Company  
USA

**Justyna Sobczyk**

Art Director  
Theatre 21,  
Theater Pedagogy Expert  
Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre  
Institute  
Poland

**Sawang Srisom**

Chairman  
Network of Music and Arts by  
People with Disabilities  
Thailand

**Tanya Surtees**

Company Director  
FTH:K  
South Africa

**Janet Tam**

Executive Director  
Arts with the Disabled Association  
Hong Kong

**Cecile Teurlay**

Director of Development  
Compagnie de l'Oiseau Mouche  
France

**Per Tornqvist**

Artistic Director  
Moomstheatern  
Sweden

**Tim Webb**

Artistic Director  
Oily Cart  
UK

**Tim Wheeler**

Artistic Director  
Mind The Gap Theatre Company  
UK

**Patricia Woolsey**

Executive Director  
ArtStream  
USA

## APPENDIX B: *Pecha Kucha Presentations*

**Claudia Alick**, Associate Producer of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, introduced the company's "360 degrees of inclusion" practices - access in plays, education events, and community projects.

**Ana Rita Barata**, Artistic Director of Compagnia Integrada Multidisciplinaria (CIM) Company, Portugal shared some biographical info and her company's interest in conducting workshops. Right now she is planning a festival and working on a project bringing together professional dancers with those who are blind.

Freelancer **Danny Braverman**'s presentation explored the experience of confinement in a mental asylum, centering on a family story first told by Larry's father as cartoons drawn on his pay slips. Danny is adapting this as a one-man play. ([Link](#))

Artistic Director **Josette Bushell-Mingo** of Tyst Teater Center for Deaf Dramatic Arts spoke "as a hearing person within the deaf world." Tyst's goal is to create exciting, challenging, inspiring sign language theater. It is now a leading center for such work.

**Boris Caksiran**, Artistic Director of ERGstatus Dance Theater and a member of ASSITEJ Serbia, shared his workshops and mixed-ability performances with actors and dancers who are blind, deaf, and/or wheelchair users. Early work with children who were suffering from wartime trauma has led to work with Serbian veterans, many of whom are disabled, and all of whom are "treated with prejudice as war criminals." He does this despite the strong taboos that still exist in his country associated with the war in which they fought. ([Link](#))

Executive Director **Sonya de Peter** of Artes MUY Especiales, Guatemala, described her work with individuals who are deaf or blind engaging in all sorts of arts, and her residencies in countries as diverse as South Africa, Poland, and Egypt.

**Kath Duncan**, curator of Heist eGallery and Arts Access Victoria, Australia, used her Pecha Kucha to convey her pride at being a "freak," a word she loves. Her art is "deliberately provocative. To offend is the point." Kath shared the work she does as the "Mama Bear" of Quippings, a "random cabaret spoken word event" that developed out of an activist group of "queer cripples" but has now become a "nurturing and expansive family" that also includes straight performers with disabilities. ([Link](#))

**Gustavo Fijlakow**, Production Director of DIN A 13 Tanzcompany, a mixed-ability dance troupe that creates pieces in "inter-physical" and intercultural contexts. Gustavo is currently working on a project called Upheaval in three areas of the world with a history of facing major social change - Sri Lanka, Venezuela, and the Middle East.

**Brian Heap**, Executive Director of VSA Jamaica, offered an enlightening glimpse of his process theatre work, theater applied in an educational context. The external audience is absent, but the internal audience is essential, and this drama work touches upon many of the ideas of the universal design for learning. ([Link](#))

**Monique Holt**, Founder of Mo2 Productions, shared her training for Directing Artistic Sign Language (DSAL), showing examples from projects done with VSA Massachusetts, Sign Performing Artists in DC, and at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Particularly fascinating was the technique used to sign instrumental music. Three signers might cover a single piece, the first signing the quality of the music - light, heavy, etc. ; the second creating a visual metaphor for the sound, i.e. water; and third capturing the music's rhythm with body rhythm.

**John Killacky**, Executive Director of the Flynn Center for the Performing Arts, breaking away from the standard slide format (perhaps in solidarity with Disability Arts' embrace of difference),

provided a peek at his own artistry through a beautiful short film he wrote and directed, *Dreaming Awake*, featuring some of Judy's Axis dancers and which he describes as "a prayer of reconciliation." ([Link](#))

**Kate Larsen** and **Emma Bennison**, outgoing and incoming CEO of Arts Access Australia respectively, described the work of their country's only national funding organization for disability arts. ([Link](#))

**Lorena Martinez-Mier** is Cultural Manager of Sena y Verbo, Mexico, a company of actors – some deaf, some hearing – who make bilingual plays (Spanish and Mexican Sign Language) with deaf and hearing actors in a country where only 20 years ago sign language was forbidden, even inside homes. ([Link](#))

**Tim McCarty**, Artistic Director of Quest Visual Theater, wanted his presentation to be purely visual to reflect Quest's mission, making work that cuts across language and cultural bearings. ([Link](#))

Self-described "psych survivor" **Julie McNamara** is Artistic Director of Vital Xposure, a disability-led touring theatre and multi-media company. Her presentation featured work with excluded voices from the periphery of communities, such as the characters of *The Knitting Circle*, a piece put together from stories of survivors of long-stay institutions, people like herself, "put away because they behaved slightly oddly." ([Link](#))

Japan's **Shizuka Morishita**, Secretary General of the TANPOPO No-Ye Foundation, showed some of the ways her foundation helps improve the artistic skills of people with disabilities and their image in society, offering a wide range of activities, i.e. stage productions, community arts projects, seminars, etc.

**Padraig Naughton**, Executive Director of Arts & Disability, Ireland talked about ADI bringing artists with disabilities to festivals throughout Ireland so that people can access the work in their

own communities. Pad also creates inclusive experiences in partnership with the arts sector.

The Artistic Director of Extant, **Maria Oshodi**, offered a look at *Sheer*, an immersive piece taking audiences on a multi-sensory experience. She partnered with university academics to create a handheld navigation device, the Arctic Lotus, to guide audiences through a dark installation. "We were attempting to shift our dramatic points of action away from the visual spectacle of theater on a traditional stage. Instead, this reflects the experience of visually impaired people by relocating the dramatic action within bodily experience."

Director **Petal Pilley** explained that Blue Teapot is both a theatre company and a fully-accredited performing arts school. She described the Meisner Technique utilized as a "great way to work with people with intellectual disabilities. It's spontaneous and fun, and you get to express all different things in your life."

**Jenny Seham**, Founder of Seham Consulting, explained how she brings visually-impaired, blind, and seeing kids together. She also featured a partnership between her young performers and a Youth Pride Chorus.

**Judith Smith**, Artistic Director of Axis Dance, described her new focus on professional training for dancers with disabilities. Their work involves identity, telling their own stories.

As Art Director of Theatre 21 and theater pedagogy expert at the Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute in Poland, **Justyne Sobczyk** reported on her efforts working with actors with Down syndrome and autism. ([Link](#))

**Sawang Srisom**, Chairman of the Network of Music and Arts by People with Disabilities, Thailand, helps people with all kinds of disabilities to become professionals in the music industry, and appropriately provided a music video in illustration. ([Link](#))

Company Director **Tanya Surtees** introduced FTH:K, a purely visual theatre that uses neither spoken word or sign language to tell its stories. This company's mission is to "Communicate, Educate, Fascinate," and it's the only one in South Africa to integrate deaf and hearing actors. FTH:K offers a multi-leveled training program that can lead to employment in the full-time company. Its ensemble members self-identify as "kooky misfits," and they are celebrated for it. ([Link](#))

**Janet Tam**, Executive Director of Arts With the Disabled Association Hong Kong, described the equal opportunities her organization provides for individuals to participate as both audience and artist.

**Cecile Teurlay**, Director of Development, Compagnie de l'Oiseau Mouche, France employs 23 actors with disabilities, all regarded as professionals and who perform internationally. The company also runs two restaurants at its research center, staffed by cooks and waiters with intellectual disabilities.

**Per Tornqvist**, Artistic Director of Moomsteatern, Sweden, presented his international professionally integrated theater company featuring actors with intellectual disabilities. All are employed full-time and are members of the Swedish Actors' Guild. ([Link](#))

PERFORMANCE: "A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM"  
BY BLUE TEAPOT THEATRE



## APPENDIX C: *More Proposed Next Steps*

**Daryl Beeton** will lead a Master Class called “Creative Interaction – An Inclusive Approach” at TYA/USA’s One Theatre World festival in Cleveland, Ohio in May 2013, unpacking his company (Kazzum’s) approach to the ‘shared creative experience’ of interactive theatre and exploring how the combination of artists with disabilities and young audiences can allow children and youth to understand disability and difference in new ways.

**Emma Bennison** of Arts Access Australia is developing an international arts leadership network for people with disabilities.

**Laurie Brooks’** immediate plans are to discover disability arts performances in her area and make a point of attending every one to continue to learn more about and support the field.

**Kath Duncan** would like to start a conversation within a global network about the role of allies; what makes a good ally, what doesn’t. She feels there is a huge unspoken gulf here in understanding. She talked to her non-disabled boss about this matter who immediately set in place a series of workshops that Kath will facilitate.

**Mike Ervin** is putting together a 10-day festival in Chicago called “Bodies of Work” and will use the information learned at the convening to inform and enrich the event.

**Vicky Ireland** is more determined than ever to change the mindset of ASSITEJ to embrace disability and inclusivity.

**Kim Peter Kovac** will add disabled playwrights to the Write Local/Play Global Network. He’ll work with **Monique Holt** and Gallaudet University to seek out sign language theatre pieces for Take A Child To Theatre Day in March.

**David Kurs** will look for a way to establish ongoing connections with the other participants, generating an “eco-system of artists.”

**Kate Larsen** is going to make a short video about her experience of succession.

**Catherine Long** has begun discussions with **Boris Caksiran** about getting involved with his work in Serbia.

**Padraig Naughton** has begun talks with **Jenny Sealey** to bring Graeae Theatre to Ireland, and with **Emma Bennison** to support her interest in researching and experimenting with accessible online meeting techniques.

**Maria Oshodi** intends to share more widely among disabled people the Summer Fellowship for International Arts Managers run by the Kennedy Center so that this kind of training can lead to more representation by professionals with disabilities.

**Jenny Seham** will discuss the formation of a new dance class at the Lighthouse International for adults with visual impairments.

**Sawang Srisom**, noting that he learned “one thing very tangible,” will spend time “thinking toward the future,” making his dreams bigger.

**Cecile Tuerlay**, realizing that an active network is vitally important in the undertaking of what we have called “Creative Revolution” will work on concrete networking actions, “sharing our practices with other companies by arranging visits and maybe collaborating through common artistic practices.”

**Tim Webb** has been inspired to begin a careful survey of the training activities of the the Oily Cart, and will find better ways of explaining what the company does and why.

## THINKING ALOUD: *Quips and Quotes from the Convening*

*Disability Art is just art. I hope that it will not be important who is who, but what one has to say and how.*

– **Boris Caksiran**

*Great art is great art, no matter who makes it or who it's for.*

– **Vicky Ireland**

*That people have different bodies enables us to create poetic images that we wouldn't be able to create otherwise.*

– **Gustavo Fijlakow**

*Not all artists want to use their arts practice to reflect on their experience of disability.*

– **Padraig Naughton**

*A couple of people were having a confab about “seeing the person, not the disability.” Well, I want to say that I would be a much lesser person without this crazy series of disabilities that I have got. It's something we talk about in Australia. That statement doesn't make sense for us really because we think being different is like a value-add, a value-add creatively, communicatively. Anybody wants to debate that, bring it!*

– **Kath Duncan**

*VSA was founded back in 1974 as a sister organization to the Special Olympics. It was “Very Special Arts,” ... In 2000 it voted to remove the “Special” from the name, but for a number of reasons we had to keep the VSA. So now... everybody always asks what it means. We say “Vision/Strength/Access or Action – or Anger,” depending on how I feel that day.*

– **Elizabeth Labbe-Webb**

*I'm surprised how angry I still am about stuff, [but] surprised and pleased to find that so many of us are able to connect at different levels.*

– **Josette Bushell-Mingo**

*The convening was incredible. I felt exhausted when I arrived and was carrying the weight of all things Blue Teapot, but as the hours passed in that strange ‘hotel world’ I began to feel revitalized – even though the pace was relentless!*

– **Petal Pilley**

*In my work we don't have much time. We are always working and I always say, my God, I'm working and I'm not thinking. So thank you, because here I can stop working and just think and share things, which is great.*

– **Cecile Tuerlay**

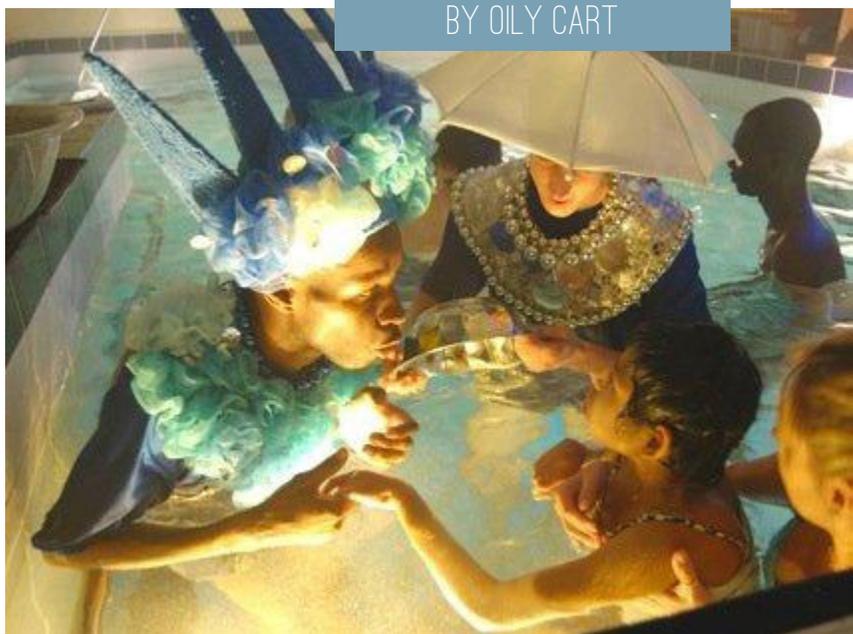
*I would like to thank you that I participated at Convening. That “creative landscape” that I saw gave me more energy to continue my job.*

– **Justyna Sobczyk**

*After 18 years with VSA Arts [of Guatemala], this is the first time we have had this communication and learning, that I felt we have a very important place among all countries. A wonderful, first-quality convening.*

– **Sonya de Peter**

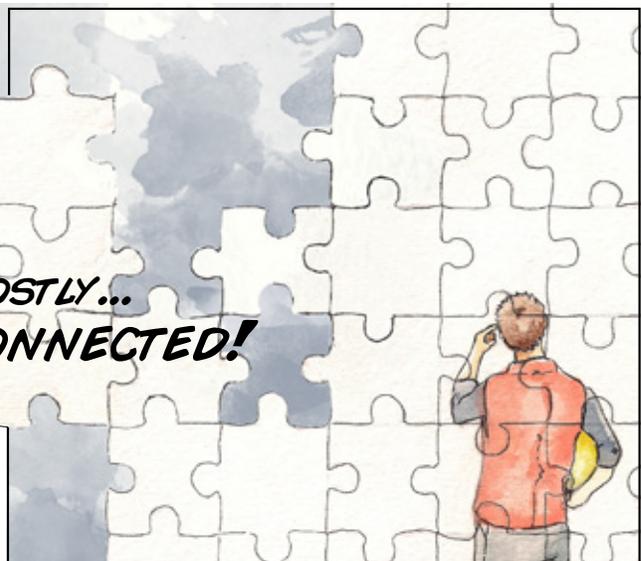
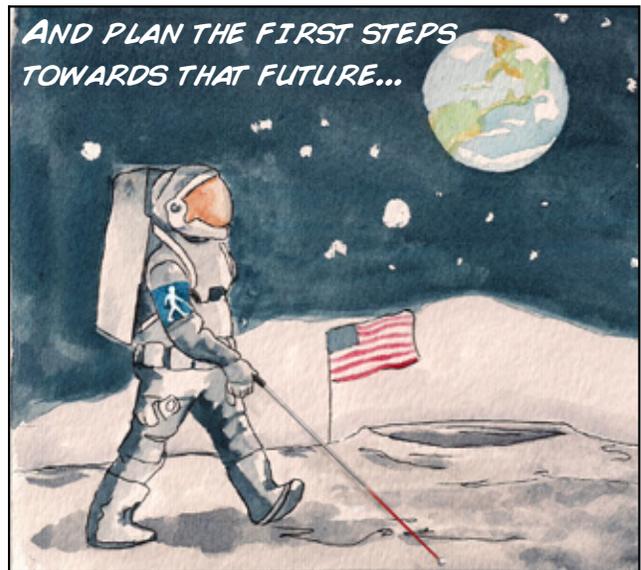
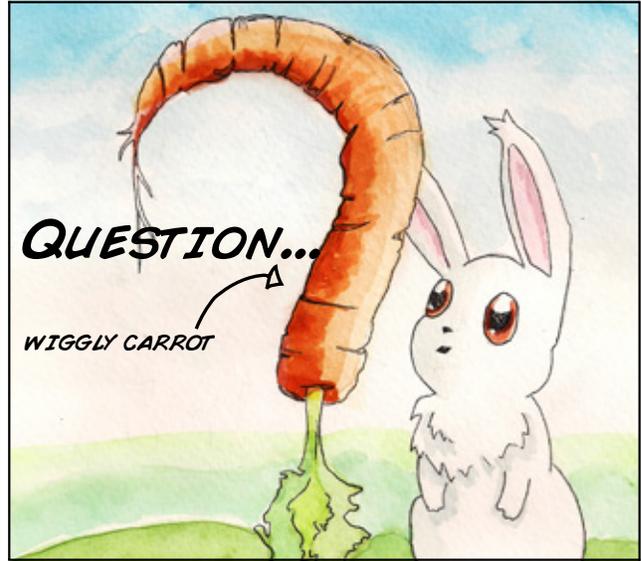
PERFORMANCE: POOL PIECE  
BY OILY CART



A look at the Convening “Pecha Kucha Comic Style - in just SIX panels!

Art by Jordan Kramer

# THE CONVENING ADVENTURE



# RESOURCES

The **Kennedy Center** has a number of resources in this area available on the internet at:  
<http://www.kennedy-center.org/education/vsa/resources/>.

There is also the **Kennedy Center Office of VSA and Accessibility: Survey of Theater, Dance and Disability Organizations Executive Summary**, “an informal survey of theater and dance organizations doing work by, for, and about populations with disabilities [to] begin to formulate a picture of U.S. and international organizations with programming and a deep commitment to inclusive performing arts. This includes a database of international theater, dance, and disability organizations.

**For more info, please email:** [VSAinfo@kennedy-center.org](mailto:VSAinfo@kennedy-center.org) and [access@kennedy-center.org](mailto:access@kennedy-center.org)

**The new International Arts Leadership Network for people with disabilities can be found at:**  
<http://www.artsaccessaustralia.org/news/457-international-online-leadership-network>

## **Recent Articles and Reports:**

“Inclusive Theatre for Young Audiences” by Danny Braverman, published on the web by TYA UK Centre of ASSITEJ.

“Voices from the Field of Disability Arts”, by Kim Peter Kovac, published in ASSITEJ Magazine, 2012 July edition.

“The Paradoxes of Disability and Inclusion” by Talleri McRae, published in AATE’s Incite/Insight (Dec. 2010)

## **Film:**

“Whose Theatre is it Anyway” 2011 film at: <http://vimeo.com/user10971930>

“The Push Me Collection” : <http://thespace.org/items/s0000cxn>

The Push Me Collection is a series of short films about artists who are pushing themselves to reach previously unattainable goals.

# CREDITS



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