

Making a Difference 2018–2024

Developing,
cultivating, and
strengthening
anti-ableist
practice in the
field of dance

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**Making a Difference
2018—2024**



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In my career as a dancer, I have seen so many crip artists and disabled performers doing their access needs very privately, very subtly, like hiding them. Hiding exhaustion. Or hiding pain. Because of this perception of success and what succeeding and hard work looks like. I think it is about leaning into these communities and collectivising our voices and being in spaces where we are autonomous in terms of time and in terms of energy. And about re-thinking what work and performing looks like.

«

Quote by Kate Marsh,
from the discussion event
Crippling the Keynote
at the conference
Owning Spaces, 2021



Greetings and foreword

Greeting from Jürgen Dusel

Federal Government Commissioner for Matters relating to Persons with Disabilities

By signing the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Germany has committed itself not only to providing people with disabilities with access to the arts and cultural sector as recipients but also to taking appropriate measures to create the conditions for artists with disabilities to develop their creative potential, true to the slogan “Nothing about us without us”.

But for artists with disabilities, access to and participation in the arts and cultural sector is still not a matter of course. Especially when it comes to who is working in the art industry, at all levels – from artistic directors and administrators to technicians, craftspeople, and artists.

Making a Difference focuses not only on the level of artistic practice but also on that of management and leadership in the arts. Because all management and expert positions in Making a Difference are held by disabled, d/Deaf, and chronically ill people, the work is shaped by the expertise of these artists and experts. In this way, Making a Difference makes all the difference in its mode of production, and this is what makes it stand out from many other projects.

Through the range of accessible education and training, production opportunities in the workshops, residencies, and co-productions it offered, Making a Difference provided opportunities for individual development and made it possible for a strong network of cultural workers with disabilities in the Berlin dance scene to grow.

Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the project coordinators and project managers, the eight network organisations and, above all, the artists and experts with disabilities involved in this project who have brought this vision to life. I hope that more productive artistic collaborations and projects will grow from this foundation in the future.

Yours,

Jürgen Dusel

Federal Government Commissioner
for Matters relating to Persons with
Disabilities

Greeting from Joe Chialo

Senator for Culture and Social Cohesion

Dear partners of the Making a Difference network,
dear artists,
dear supporters,

Over the past six years, together you have made a significant difference: you have created a space, established a network, organised conferences and workshops, hosted residencies, and produced works. Your commitment, in the form of teaching and learning, has demonstrated what inclusion means in the field of cultural work.

It is not only through its dedicated support of disabled, d/Deaf, and chronically ill artists that the Berlin-based network Making a Difference has opened new perspectives on contemporary dance. It has also set off processes of transformation within the organisational structures of the network partners towards greater inclusivity. I hope that these changes will continue to have an effect and will spread further.

I would like to thank Tanzfabrik Berlin, Uferstudios, LAFT Berlin, Hochschulübergreifendes Zentrum Tanz Berlin (HZT), TanzZeit e.V. / TANZKOMPLIZEN, Diversity Arts Culture, Zeitgenössischer Tanz e.V. / Tanzbüro Berlin, and especially Sophiensaele and the management team of Making a Difference for their admirable and groundbreaking work.

In particular, I want to thank the participating artists, whose work on the stage always raises the question: "For whom is art really made?" Thank you for exploring Aesthetics of Access. Inclusion concerns us all and is a necessity for cultural participation.

*Yours,
Joe Chialo*

Greeting from Michael Freundt

Managing Director Dachverband Tanz Deutschland e.V.
(Federal Association of Dance in Germany)

Dear initiators, dear artists, dear campaigners of Making a Difference,

Your starting point is difference, experiencing and engaging with differences. Since 2018, artists with and without disabilities have been working together, developing artistic projects and working methods that convey the broad diversity of physical and mental existence. In our world characterised by efficiency and functionality, these dance productions and performances create new worlds of experience for the audience and open up new discourses. In Making a Difference, the participating institutions collaborated on establishing the necessary structural foundations while also joining forces as activists to lobby for the rights of disabled, d/Deaf, and chronically ill people to decide for themselves when it comes to spaces, structures, and financial resources.

Three years ago, artists with and without disabilities wrote an open letter to the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media of Germany to shake up politics and funding bodies. As an umbrella organisation for dance and sponsor of the NEUSTART KULTUR

funding programmes, we too have been criticised for the lack of expertise in our juries and for our funding opportunities being less accessible for artists with disabilities. This was urgently needed criticism that has led to changes in our work. And it is only through critical positions that change can come about.

We are grateful that with the support of TANZPAKT Stadt-Land-Bund (in cooperation with Bureau Ritter), we have been able to lay a stable foundation for many years to come. But clearly further support for this work is indispensable. Further funding from the state of Berlin is urgently needed, also so that further federal funding can strengthen this work in the future.

Making a Difference is a motor for change in Berlin's cultural sector and in the entire country.

Michael Freundt
Managing Director
Dachverband Tanz Deutschland e.V.
(Federal Association of Dance in Germany)

Foreword by Anna Mülter

Initiator of Making a Difference and Artistic
Director of the Festival Theaterformen

When in 2017, as dance curator of the Sophiensaele in the TanzRaumBerlin network, I repeatedly insisted on the topic of dance and disability, the dance scene in Berlin and Germany still looked very different. Disabled, d/Deaf, and chronically ill dance practitioners were practically nowhere to be found in that scene because its ableist structures did not even allow them to be present in it. In the network, we brainstormed to locate the deficits in Berlin's dance scene, which was rich in many ways, to submit a joint application to the then brand-new TANZPAKT Stadt-Land-Bund funding programme. We discussed many different things. As always, things had to move fast; two expert juries had to be convinced. Eight partner institutions joined forces at that time and from the beginning the Sophiensaele played an important role, providing significant support for the project as its executive institution. It was an important part of a larger project that I had initiated there: Breaking down barriers for disabled, d/Deaf, and chronically ill dance practitioners and audiences at the levels of representation, reception, and education and artistic development. It was amazing to be able to celebrate the kickoff of Making a Difference on June

28th, 2018. The opening featured a talk by British artist and researcher Kate Marsh and two pieces by Dan Daw and Michael Turinsky, which we were able to show at the Sophiensaele as part of the project Access all Areas – a project I also initiated (and that was continued in the form of the project The Future is Accessible in 2020/21), which allowed the Sophiensaele to show international work by d/Deaf, disabled and chronically ill artists and produce local work.

The project's impact can be felt very clearly in the dance scene: Today, disabled, d/Deaf, and chronically ill choreographers in Berlin develop their own projects on their own terms and keep on breaking new ground in terms of aesthetics and themes. Rita Mazza composes visual sounds with sign language rhythms and Sophia Neises explores access intimacy and the illusion of independence, to name just two examples. Without Making a Difference's low-threshold residencies and production funding, many artists would not have found their way into a professional artistic career, or only with significant difficulties. Without further support in navigating barriers, such as applying to other funding programmes that are not accessible, they

would not have been able to continue on this path. Today, there are dance venues in the city that centre inclusivity when they organise workshops, putting in work to make access an everyday practice, entering into long-term collaborations with d/Deaf, disabled and chronically ill artists. Without the support of Making a Difference along the process, these developments would not have been possible. At the time, we set out to change a scene as well as the understanding of art that it represents and allows for. This concern was always also a decidedly political one: how consistently Making a Difference realises its goal of transforming the scene so that disabled, d/Deaf, and chronically ill people are in leadership positions in all areas of the project and how ableism and audism are understood in terms of structural discrimination is groundbreaking, beyond the field of dance.

I think it is scandalous that there is no prospect of adequate follow-up funding from the state of Berlin for this model project, which is unique in Germany. The programme paved the way for an entire generation of disabled, d/Deaf, and chronically ill choreographers and dancers and it initiated and accompanied a structural change in the Berlin scene. For the entire scene, it will represent a huge loss of theoretical and practical expertise – the numerous consultation requests speak for themselves – all the more because currently, no other organisation can fill the gap that will be left behind by

Making a Difference. The lack of follow-up funding threatens to break off an important development that just recently celebrated important successes with the German Dance Prize for Sophia Neises, the selection of Rita Mazza's *Matters of Rhythm* for Tanzplattform 2024, and Claire Cunningham's professorship at the HZT Berlin. Instead, what is needed is long-term commitment and dance-specific knowledge so that this positive transformation can continue in the long run. One cannot help but wonder whether the state of Berlin is truly committed to structural change or whether it would rather benefit from a flagship project for a few years only while the federal government is co-financing. There is still a long way to go before all funding programmes are accessible at all levels. So far, not even the application procedure for the funding programme IMPACT, which is specifically aimed at artists who experience discrimination, is accessible to blind people, d/Deaf people, or people with learning difficulties. Given this state of affairs, what are the prospects for the next generation?

I am very grateful to the former and current team members Sophia Neises, Johanna Withelm, Anne Rieger, Noa Winter, Gina Jeske, and Agnieszka Habraschka, who have made the Berlin dance scene a better place. And to the dance artists who were involved in the project in many ways and without whom I can no longer imagine this dance scene.

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If I'm making work, I really am choreographing the space, the arrival, the way in which the work meets the public. There's so much of this work, there's so much additional labour that I think a lot of disabled, d/Deaf, chronically ill, and neurodiverse artists are contributing. There's a choreography of all that work, that goes beyond those conventional ideas of choreography as just being concerned with dance and what dancing bodies are doing on the stage.

Quote by Claire
Cunningham, from the
discussion event *Making
a Difference meets...*
Claire Cunningham &
Sindri Runudde, 2020

«



Introduction

Making a Difference – Why and how we make a difference

by Anne Rieger und Noa Winter
(Co-Leads, Making a Difference)

From the beginning, the aim of Making a Difference has been to support and promote the self-determined work of disabled, d/Deaf, and chronically ill artists in the Berlin dance scene and their communities. In the last six years, we have offered countless workshops, further education, and advice; we have had many enriching – and sometimes challenging – conversations and discussions; we organised an international conference and, through a total of ten residencies and six co-productions, we have given dancers, choreographers, and performers time and space to research, conceive, and perform artistic works of their own. Our core guiding principle has always been to fill all leadership and expert positions with disabled, d/Deaf, and chronically ill people, as for them to take part in cultural life on an equal basis with others, which is their right as stated in Article 30 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, they must be in positions where they decide for themselves and create.

Artistic development

In the first two years of the project, it was barely possible to find local d/Deaf, disabled, or chronically ill artists who were already established in the scene based on many years of work experience and artistic research, due to the many structural barriers, for example, in education and training, in cultural funding, or in the leading organisations of the independent scene. This is why, with a few exceptions (such as the Deaf choreographer Cassandra Wedel from Munich), the workshops, labs, and teacher training programmes were initially led by respected international guests such as Mickel Smithen, Barak Adé Soleil, or Tanja Erhart. This exchange, as well as the local, national, and international networking of d/Deaf, disabled, and chronically ill artists, was very generative: As early as 2020, the majority of our events were led by Berlin artists. Many of them remained connected to the project over several years and were collaborators in various forms.

This proves that there has never been a lack of d/Deaf, disabled, and chronically ill talent in Berlin, rather, it was a lack of opportunities for them to become visible and to develop.

In Chapter 1, the six artists who realised their first self-directed artistic work as part of Making a Difference give insights into their artistic practices, their research approaches, and share their wishes and concerns for the future.

Network and project phases

From the beginning, Making a Difference was never the project of a single organisation alone – quite the contrary. Eight institutions of the Berlin dance scene are behind the project and have made it their common goal to bring about a fundamental change in the scene towards more inclusivity.

In the first years, we focused on supporting artists and establishing work structures for them as well as structures for advanced training. In the second project phase (2022–2024), in the area of artist support, we focused on working with Aesthetics of Access, the creative use of access tools (such as audio description, sign languages, surtitles, or Relaxed Performance).

In 2022, we added knowledge transfer as a new important pillar of our work, also encompassing the development of the project partners' competencies in cultural work focused on inclusivity in the long run. We placed great importance on passing on best practice knowledge gathered over the course of the project to all network partners in the form of individual consultations, workshops, and long-term process support.

Indeed, from the beginning, we wanted to ensure that the work of Making a Difference could continue in the long term by making sure that our network partners' programmes of training, further education, advice, artistic research, production, and performance are available to disabled, d/Deaf, and chronically ill artists as much as they are available to non-disabled and hearing artists.

In Chapter 1 of this publication, the network partners report on their individual experiences with the project and share their demands and wishes for the future.

Team and principles of cooperation

In the first one and a half years, the project benefited from the expertise of Sophia Neises, who was part of the project team. Together with Anna Mülter, who at the time was the dance dramaturge of the Sophiensaele, and Johanna Withelm from the Sophiensaele's production team, Sophia Neises began to build up the project and establish important contacts in the local communities. Even when, in late 2019, she decided to focus on her own dance and performance practice, she remained an important ally to the project as an advisor and workshop facilitator. So it could hardly be more apt that in September 2023, Sophia Neises premiered her first piece, *WITH OR WITHOUT YOU*, which she directed herself, in co-production with Making a Difference.

Anne, who joined our team as non-disabled producer shortly after the project began, enriched it with plenty of practical knowledge gained through many years of international experience in working with disabled artists. It turned out that for a project like ours, it is indispensable to have relevant previous experience, since working with disabled, d/Deaf, and chronically ill artists, in an inclusive work environment cannot be compared to the work of non-inclusive projects. In early 2020, Noa joined the team as a disabled curator, bringing, like Sophia Neises before them, the interplay of their professional experience and lived experience of

disability and barriers to the project. Together, we took over joint responsibility for the project's content and organisational management. As part of the second project phase (2022–2024), which we curated, we were able to create two additional permanent positions. In 2022, we were able to bring Agnieszka Habraschka on board as producer and Gina Jeske as communications expert, two important colleagues and collaborators, and thus step up our work at all levels. In doing so, we have remained true to our guiding principle dedicated to the advancement of disabled arts and culture workers: Both at the management and staff levels, people with lived experience of disability have always made up at least 50% of Making a Difference.

For a team of disabled and non-disabled people to successfully cooperate in an anti-ableist manner, the non-disabled colleagues must know how to recognise discrimination, be fully committed to fighting it, and to unconditionally supporting disabled, d/Deaf, and chronically ill artists and cultural workers in their self-determined work as colleagues and allies.

For example, in our project communicating about accessibility was always a team effort, not a personal matter, and it was not left for the disabled team members to deal with as an additional task. Chapter 2 presents further insights into how this attitude can be translated into concrete work practice.

Conclusion & Thanks

Since the project began, over 40 d/Deaf, disabled, and chronically ill artists based in Germany and abroad have created and directed events for Making a Difference. About a dozen Berlin artists have made headway into the local and national dance scene. Other organisations and artists value the knowledge we developed as a project and consider it relevant; the many requests for advice, recommendations, and collaborations show that Making a Difference's work has had an impact not only at the local level but throughout Germany.

Today, as we reflect on the project's work since 2018, we notice the many small and large changes brought about by Making a Difference and our allies in institutions, in cultural policy, and in the lives of cultural practitioners in Berlin and beyond. For example, more and more events are offering various measures to enhance access; d/Deaf, disabled, and chronically ill people are invited to represent themselves nationwide (rather than being spoken about), application procedures are changing and juries are becoming more diverse, and there is more and more awareness of barriers and discrimination.

So we can proudly say that our project has contributed significantly to improving work conditions for disabled, d/Deaf, and chronically ill artists and cultural workers not only in Berlin but throughout Germany, little by little. In other words: Making a Difference made a Difference.

After almost six years, we would like to express our gratitude:

First and foremost, to all the artists who have trusted our project and trusted us as people, who have enriched the dance scene with their aesthetics and whose feedback gave us opportunities to grow. The best practice knowledge we share in Chapter 2 of this publication is deeply rooted in our work with you.

We are grateful to our network partners, including the initiative *tanzfähig*, which was part of the network until 2022. We look back with gratitude to all the challenges we have overcome together and look ahead to all the transformations that have already begun in your organisations and will follow in the years to come.

Last but not least, we are grateful to our funders – namely TANZPAKT Stadt-Land-Bund, and the Senate Department for Culture and Social Cohesion – as well as all the allies who have supported our project over the years, be it financially, by giving advice, through a critical conversation, or by joining forces in cultural policy.

This project would not be where it is today without the countless valuable encounters that make up this work. We hope that each of you will carry a piece of Making a Difference with you into the future.



My work is about signing in relation to dance. Poetry is fantastic. You can tell an entire story with a single hand movement. Sign language can do that. There are many different ways to work with this in space, dance, and in relation to the body. It's another dimension of the same principle. You can play with the signs, the rhythm, the intensity, the speed. [...] And if you apply abstraction or repetition, it becomes dance. That's how we move into new areas.

Quote by Cassandra
Wedel, from the event *Sign
Language in Different Art
Forms* at the conference

« *Owning Spaces*, 2021



Chapter 1 · Insights into the project's working practice

Five questions for... – perspectives of the artists

Five questions for... is the title under which project leaders Anne Rieger and Noa Winter interviewed six disabled and Deaf artists in April and June 2023. As part of Making a Difference, all of them created a production under their own artistic directorship. On the following pages, Tamara Rettenmund, Carolin Hartmann, Rita Mazza, Jan Kress, Camilla Pölzer, and Sophia Neises talk about their artistic projects, their plans, and their wishes.

Videos of the interviews in German spoken language and German Sign Language, with subtitles and transcripts in German and English, can be found on the website and social media channels of Making a Difference.



Five questions for...

Tamara Rettenmund

Hi Tamara, could you please introduce yourself to our readers?

My name is Tamara Rettenmund. I was born in some cheese hole somewhere in Switzerland. I am a cis white woman and have been living with a disability for many years. I studied spatial strategies. I am a children's book author and a dancer. I dance on many stages all over the world. It is what I find fulfilling and what makes me happy.

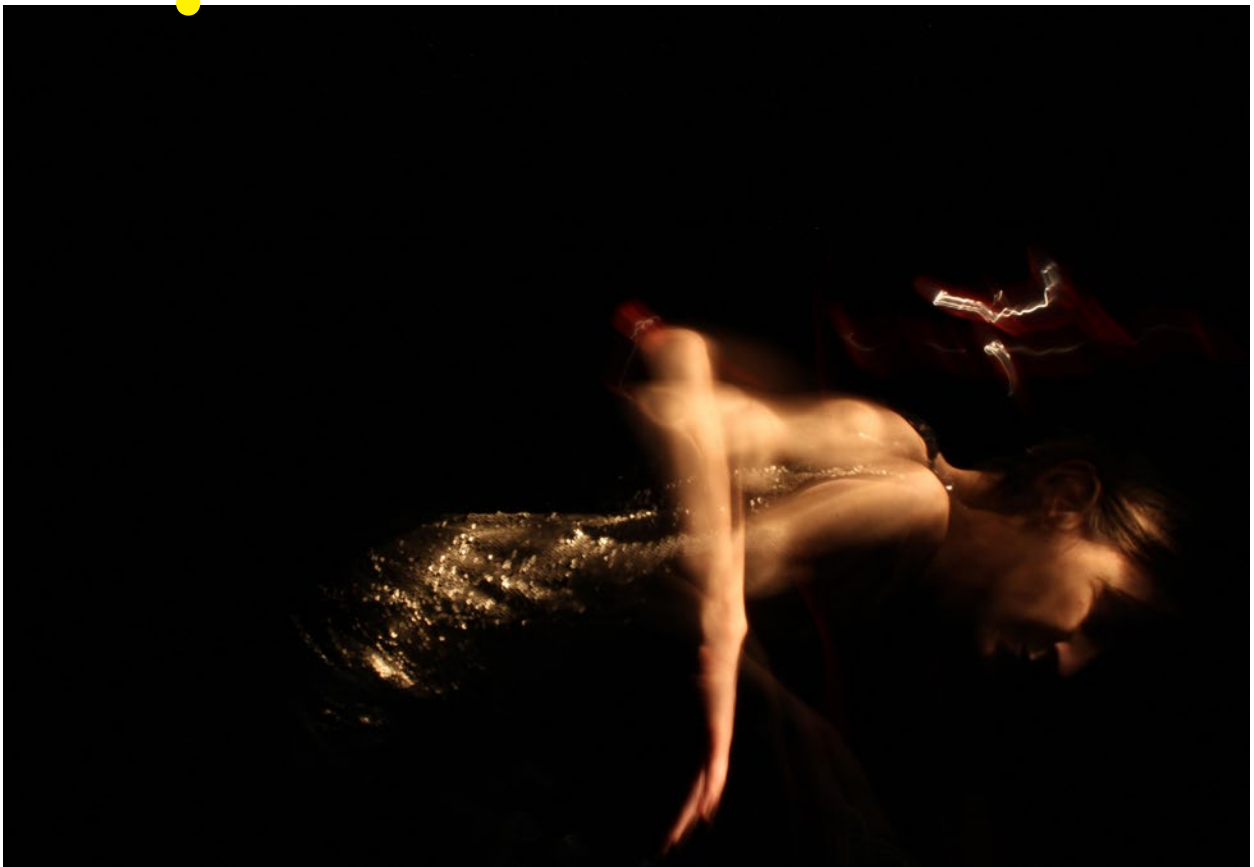
What is your connection to Making a Difference?

In 2015, I had a very serious road accident that put me in hospital for nine months. I had to relearn all the movements. But eventually, I was able to move my little finger again, then my entire hand, and then I was able to swallow again. I really had to relearn everything. After the accident, I painted and drew a lot. But at some point, I realised that's no good, that drawing alone wasn't doing it for me. I have to move. And then in 2018, I was given the huge opportunity to do a residency and co-produce a project as part of Making a Difference – a luxurious six months in which to develop something.

What did you work on during your residency and your co-produced project?

I developed a piece with my artist collective KornblumRettenmund (with Amelie Hensel) about my experiences after the accident. At the time, I was getting many doctors' reports and surgery reports, within which I discovered a lot of poetry. During surgery, every incision is protocolled in minute detail, second by second: where, how deep, how long, and with what instrument. I realised that this could be translated to the stage. The piece is called *Quest – Schuttgüter und Sternenstaub* [Quest – Debris and Stardust]. During the development phase, I worked with the dancer Sigal Zouk as a mentor, who gave me a lot of encouragement. She said that my dancing is beautiful and should be on stage. That was an incredibly important process for me. In

Tamara Rettenmund: *Quest* © Gerald Pirner



dance in particular you're always striving for the perfect body. But to be told by an established dancer that the way I move is interesting and beautiful was a total game changer. Since then I've been feeling very confident on stage because I feel that I have something to say. Even with a body that might be different from other bodies.

What are you working on currently, in April 2023, and what are you interested in in terms of art?

I'm currently working for two dance companies: with Unusual Symptoms at the Theater Bremen and with the Forward Dance Company in Leipzig. And I have another collective with Türe Zeybek called TILT. The name stands for, on the one hand, tipping over into a sudden, brief standstill of a system, which can refer to the human nervous system just as much as to slot machines, for example. On the other hand, it stands for the tipping moment in which the object, the body, tilts, breaks, or falls. Türe is a visual artist and works a lot with ceramics. In the project we are currently working on together, I am a performer in an armour-like costume that is soft and padded on the inside but made of porcelain on the outside. It breaks into pieces when I fall, get up, fall, get up, and fall again. It's about breaking and at the same time it's about restriction and disability.

As an artist living with disabilities, what are your wishes for change?

I wish for a less normative world and for all kinds of different abilities – physical and mental – to be embraced.







Five questions for...

Carolyn Hartmann

Hi Carolyn, could you please introduce yourself to our readers?

My name is Carolyn Hartmann. I am a yoga teacher, dancer, writer, and performer. I am a white woman and I use a wheelchair due to my chronic illness.

What is your connection to Making a Difference?

The first call for a residency for choreographers was in 2018. I had an idea of what I would like to do, but I was unsure whether to apply, as I thought that I'm not a choreographer. But a friend of mine strongly encouraged me to apply. I wasn't selected for the 2018 residency but I got a "voucher for dance" that allowed me to take dance classes free of charge and I also participated in a lot of workshops held by Making a Difference. In 2019, there was another open call for the residency. I applied again and this time I was selected. In 2020 I worked on the co-production that comes after the residency. My work during the residency and on the co-production gave me the opportunity and courage to identify as a dancer and choreographer.

What did you work on during your residency and your co-produced project?

During the residency, I worked with my then-dance partner on our piece *Birds*, which already existed. I wanted to add a solo to the piece – using my Bordering Method that I developed myself. It's about using conscious awareness to improve the communication between body and mind and to thus expand the boundaries. Then the co-production was more about the state of healing I explored in my project *Brain Operation*. There, too, I was interested in the interplay between mind and matter. How do I get the mind to fully pay attention to the body? What state should the mind be in to allow for the system to calm down, to learn? Again, my research was based on my Bordering Method. The result was a presentation of my research and a video documentary about the process.



● Carolin Hartman: *Brain Operation* © Yango Fabian Gonzalez.



● Carolin Hartman: *Brain Operation* © Jan Deppert

What are you working on currently, in April 2023, and what are you interested in in terms of art?

After the residency and co-production, I wanted to gather my thoughts and experiences on *Brain Operation* and find a way to share them. The follow-up of the project was supported by DIS-TANZ-SOLO. Then the IMPACT grant allowed me to develop a research diary on the best ways to mentally engage with a physical disability. I worked with means that conveyed both my physical movements and my inner process, for example, body cams, 360-degree cameras, animation, or voice-overs of my voice. My objective was to let the audience participate in my movements, both internally and externally. To this day, my research on the Bordering Method and the findings of my work on *Brain Operation* serve as starting points for all my artistic projects. I am always interested in the invisible part of a movement.

As an artist living with disabilities, what are your wishes for the future?

I would like to get to a point where everyone, when they see what I do, thinks about their body and their mind – and not about mine. Because of my disability, I quickly get labelled “brave”, “authentic”, and “inspiring”. But my work is about individual thinking, not about physical limitations.







Five questions for...

Rita Mazza

Hi Rita, could you please introduce yourself to our readers?

My name is Rita Mazza. My name sign is a hand with a pointed index finger moving diagonally downwards along the right side of the body and at the lowest point, the palm opens and this hand shape moves back up. I am a native signer and identify as Deaf. Sign language does not have gendered pronouns. When referring to me in spoken or written German, I prefer that no gendered third-person pronouns be used, or she/they. I am white and based on my physical appearance, I am read as a woman.

What is your connection to Making a Difference?

In 2020, I applied for a residency and was accepted. After the residency, I did a solo piece in co-production with Making a Difference. Since then we have been working together on different projects. For example, I make videos in German Sign Language for the Making a Difference programme. I also get a lot of support from the Making a Difference team when I apply for funding elsewhere for new projects of my own.

What did you work on during your residency and your co-produced project?

I was thinking about how to get into the field of dance because I wanted to combine my sign language art with dance. For that to grow, I needed time and space, which the residency gave me. It allowed me to research this topic, to get training, and to discuss my research topic with others. Making a Difference also allowed me to understand for the first time what a residency is. The collaboration was adapted to my wishes, ideas, and needs. The project staff took care of organising interpreters. This allowed me to fully focus on my art. That's my happy place. After the residency, Making a Difference encouraged me to develop and present a real performance: DANDELION II. It was my first solo performance. The piece is about sign language



and dance. I tried to leave certain elements of sign language and to present the ideas through dance only. Choreography, play, poetry, dance, to combine everything, to connect everything.

It's April 2023 right now – what are you working on currently? What are you interested in in terms of art?

At the moment I'm working on a new project, also a solo performance. Well, I'm not working on this alone: I'm working with a lighting designer. The piece is about bringing body, rhythm, and light into harmony. It's about representing a kind of music. Every movement has its own sound and rhythm. I'm still experimenting. At the moment I'm rehearsing at the Uferstudios. The piece will premiere in May. I'm a little excited already. At the moment, I aim to show less sign language and more movement, rhythm, and dimensions. Which will then be translated into dance. Dance helps me understand how to bring the piece to the stage. I'm focusing on a kind of SIGN choreography, i.e. without sign LANGUAGE.

As a Deaf artist, what are your wishes for the future?

I have lots of wishes for the future. I would like to talk about two of them here. First, I would like to be able to establish myself as an artist as a matter of course, without having to make sure that everything around me is accessible for me. Second, I would like for everyone to know a little bit of sign language or at least how to deal with a d/Deaf person. Those would be my two wishes, I'll skip the rest.







Five questions for...

Jan Kress

Hi Jan, could you please introduce yourself to our readers?

My name sign is the V sign in a twisted position above my forehead. My name is Jan Kress and I am Deaf, white, and queer. I am an actor, dancer, performer, choreographer, and dance educator.

What is your connection to Making a Difference?

In 2019, I was part of the project *Vier* at Sophiensaele. The piece featured four Deaf performers. It is through the Sophiensaele that I found out about the project Making a Difference. They were looking for d/Deaf artists for a “residency”. I found this very interesting and applied. And so I was selected for a four-week residency, to rehearse. The residency allows you to get to know yourself better, to be creative, and to try different things. That’s how you grow. After that, I went into the co-production phase of a new piece I developed called *swallow swallow*, in which I was a solo dancer. I learned different things in the course of this process, for example, networking, which is how I learned about other d/Deaf artists. That was a great experience for me.

What did you work on during your residency and your co-produced project?

In the first phase, the residency gave me a dance studio with my own key. I could decide for myself who to invite from the outside: experts and professionals, people giving workshops, e.g. in dance technique, bodywork, performance, playful creation, and facial expression training. I learned a lot this way. I was able to find a structure and incorporate ideas and different materials. Then came the co-production. My piece was called *swallow swallow*, in English. In German it can be translated as “Schwalbe” (the bird) or “Schlucken” (the action of swallowing). The piece is about my biography, in which I show my childhood experiences. I am constantly discriminated against by society. That’s why I really wanted to emancipate myself with the piece. There

Jan Kress: *swallow swallow* © Vanessa Nicette



is no sign language in the piece and no sign language interpreter. I represented things more visually rather than linguistically. My experience with speech therapy is a tough one for me. For example, I had to take sips from a glass of water so that I could use my voice properly to pronounce the “r,” by gargling the word “art”. On stage, for example, I showed the gargling using very strong body language, letting a lot of water run out of my mouth. This was my way of conveying emotion to the audience.

It’s June 2023 right now – what are you working on currently? What are you interested in in terms of art?

Currently, I am working on two projects: The first project is called *Otto Augenmerk*. It’s a solo performance, and I’m in the middle of rehearsals right now. In the piece, Otto, who is a kind of alien, lands on this planet. The way he experiences it, everything is completely different and full of contrasts. The premiere is in December 2023. In the second project, I’m working with two hearing performers. The premiere is in February 2024. The piece is about semiotics. It will be about many words and images.

As a Deaf artist, what are your wishes for the future?

I feel that I have made progress so far in my development. Nevertheless, I feel like I’m coming up against barriers. My wish for the future is more access, better possibilities of communication, better networks, and more visibility. We are still hidden. More presence – that would be my important topic in the future so that d/Deaf artists will be considered. It’s not just about me but about all d/Deaf artists. In Germany, I hope for a better structure because at the moment it’s not looking good. We hope that the structure in Germany will change so that we will have better access.







Five questions for...

Camilla Pölzer

Hi Camilla, could you please introduce yourself to our readers?

I am Camilla Pölzer. I am 28 years old. I am a white disabled woman. I am an actor and a dancer. And now, with the piece I made in co-production with Making a Difference, I am also a choreographer.

What is your connection to Making a Difference?

In January 2022, through multiple channels, I learned of Making a Difference's call for a residency followed by a co-produced project. I applied. I then did the residency in summer 2022 and developed a production in winter 2022 / spring 2023.

What did you work on during your residency and your co-produced project?

I was working with the theme of heroes, focusing on disabled heroines in particular. I researched whether there are any at all and how they are portrayed. Because it is mostly men who are shown as heroes, with many attributes with very masculine connotations, such as being strong and always ready to fight. Or also aspects like being a lone fighter. I wondered, what if I transfer these aspects to my body in an unfiltered way? How does that affect me? And what about the "typically feminine" aspects like emotionality, connection to other people, or embracing weakness? I engaged with these qualities in various improvisations. I found it very interesting to also examine the idea of performance, in the sense of achievement. Because every hero, every heroine has to achieve something to be considered a hero. I also wanted to examine this logic of performance that disabled people are constantly subjected to in our achievement-driven society. Based on this, *I NEED A HERO* was created, a piece for children from the age of nine, in co-production with Making a Difference and TANZKOMPLIZEN. There are two characters on stage: One of them, whom I play, desperately wants to be a superhero. She finds the hero school "Courage and



Camilla Pölzer: *I NEED A HERO* © Mayra Wallraff



Muscles". There the world's best superhero teacher trains her to become a superhero. But she finds herself exhausted again and again as she keeps pushing beyond her limits. Finally, she yells "Stop!". This prompts both characters to question their notion of superheroes; together, they search for new definitions.

What are you working on currently, in April 2023, and what are you interested in in terms of art?

I don't have a new piece of my own lined up at the moment but I definitely want to continue showing *I NEED A HERO*. I want to resume performances and apply for festivals. Artistically, because my background is in theatre, I'm interested in the commonalities between acting and dance. How are they different and how can both art forms be connected if working on themes?

As a disabled artist, what are your wishes for the future?

I hope that the networks that started expanding in recent years – like Making a Difference – will continue to grow and that networking activity will intensify, not only in the independent scene but hopefully also in the theatres at the municipal and national level. And I want diversity to be more visible, not only on the stage but also in leadership positions. Because this can inspire others by providing role models. When I was a child, there were hardly any actors or dancers with disabilities. But it's incredibly important for children and young people to have role models so that they can follow this path if they want to.







Five questions for...

Sophia Neises

Hi Sophia, could you please introduce yourself to our readers?

I'm Sophia Neises and my nickname is Fia, F I A, short for "Future is Accessible". My name sign is a vampire bite on my neck. I am a white woman. I am in my early 30s and work as a choreographer, dramaturg, activist, and performer here in Berlin.

What is your connection to Making a Difference?

I used to be part of the Making a Difference team, in 2018 and 2019. I was the production assistant. After that, I gave up my position to the amazing people who work there now. Since then I have been working regularly for Making a Difference as a freelancer, giving many workshops such as, for example, online classes, an audio description workshop for the cross-disability-community, an audio description workshop for all the Making a Difference network partners, and a dramaturgy lab for blind and visually impaired dramaturgs. Currently I'm happy to be the resident artist with Making a Difference, after which my co-production with them will follow.

What did you work on during your residency and your co-produced project?

During my residency I collaborated with three other people. Our research topic was intimacy in assistance, i.e. the special connection that exists between people in a situation of assistance. I have been researching this specifically with Tanja Erhart, my dramaturge. With Zwoisy Mears-Clarke, a choreographer with whom I have been working since 2016, I have been researching audience participation and audio description. And I worked in aerial silk with my duet partner Irene Giró, who is an aerial silk trainer. It was exciting to figure out how we could find a common teaching method that accommodates both my and Irene's access requirements. And in the piece that will also be a very transparent moment, in that we will bring this process onto the stage. Because that's exactly what we're

interested in: What is it that's exciting about dance and movement? Is it the form as perceived from the outside or is it the principle according to which we move? Could it be that it's already possible to transmit a lot through principles? Or should we stick to the same old movement of a leg stretched far into the sky?

Fia Neises: WITH OR WITHOUT YOU © Mayra Wallraff



It's June 2023 right now – what are you working on currently? What are you interested in in terms of art?

I'm working on a production with Ursina Tossi, whose work is always very physical. In fact I have learned everything I can do in dance so far working with Ursina Tossi. I often find myself excluded from regular dance classes. They are rarely accessible for me. So embarking onto this physical research, expanding my body, my movement vocabulary, is something I'm really looking forward to. Since I gave the audio description workshop at Making a Difference, which d/Deaf participants also took part in, I've been really interested in the interrelation between aesthetics for blind and visually impaired audiences and aesthetics for d/Deaf audiences. I have been awarded a flausen+scholarship for next year with the theatre company Leute wie die [People like them]: We will have four weeks to explore the aesthetics of our respective realities of access.

As a disabled artist, what are your wishes for the future?

On the one hand, I want to be able to continue making art myself and I want working with disabled artists to not be a mere trend. It's a significant fear of mine, one that I wish will not come true. And since we know that accessibility is not a checklist but a mental attitude, another wish of mine for the future is that disabled people can be met with a frame of mind in which people, institutions, and politicians are brave enough to be self-critical. By that I mean: I wish for them to have the courage to question their habitual ways of seeing, ways of hearing, as well as ways of perceiving time on stage. And to ask themselves again and again: Why do I find something "good" right now? Where does this assumption come from? Might this assumption be ableist?





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I like to create new words. For me, visual interpretation has been something that has been super important. There are quite a few people that are used to interpreting for someone else or talk about what's going on and describe that for someone else. So, I've just been thinking more and more how dance for me is so much about words, about how to imagine something and to create the words in my head. Dance has become a lot of words and vocabulary for me.

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Quote by Sindri Runudde,
from the discussion event
*Making a Difference
meets... Claire Cunningham
& Sindri Runudde, 2020*

Perspectives of the partners in the Making a Difference network



As an alliance of eight organisations, Making a Difference has moved the Berlin dance scene on many different levels and in many different ways. On the following pages, our network partners reflect on how the project influenced the individual organisations, the changes it brought about, and, looking forward, on what will drive change in the individual organisations and in the Berlin cultural scene as a whole.

Sophiensaale

The Sophiensaale are the executive institution of the Making a Difference network. In the following, four of our departments briefly describe how working with disabled and d/Deaf artists and focusing on accessibility concretely changed their everyday operations.

Dramaturgy

Thanks to Making a Difference and other projects, we were able to regularly present disabled and d/Deaf artists as part of our programme. This allowed for new artistic aesthetics to emerge, for the artists and their work to be present and gain visibility.

Since then, the question of accessibility has figured in our project planning and development from an earlier stage. When we plan guest performances or premieres with artists who have access requirements or who want to include access into their work, it is our central responsibility to find out whether we can accommodate this, and how. While it is very important to us to dismantle barriers in the communication with artists and to realise individual projects in crip time (i.e. a more flexible approach to time), we always have to keep an eye on feasibility, as unfortunately our endeavours have not yet been supported with ongoing funding or dedicated positions but are based on our team's shared commitment.

We want to welcome a variety of perspectives and experiences not only in terms of our programme but also in the audience. Therefore, questions of accessibility also shape how the performance experience is designed, for example Relaxed Performances, audio descriptions, or early entry.

Production

More than anything, creating more accessibility in the area of production is a process of learning by doing.

This learning process is characterised by gathering comprehensive knowledge about the many forms that barriers can take and about the responsibility that comes along with working on dismantling them.

It is important that all costs necessary to do so are included in the budget as concretely as possible when submitting the funding application. Throughout the project any changes to these costs need to be closely monitored. Another important aspect is securing the participation of experts early enough in advance. In practice, realising productions that offer access or whose members have access requirements often requires sensitivity and attentive, careful efforts to find a middle ground between the artists' requirements and wishes on the one hand and everyone's financial resources and time on the other. Many aspects still call for changes at the institutional level. Contracts, for example, are prepared and must be signed in printed form on paper: This constitutes a major barrier for blind or visually impaired people. They have to rely on assistance for dealing with contracts, which infringes on their privacy. We hope that these and other barriers will soon be removed.

Public Relations

We want to make it possible for our audience to visit the theatre in a self-determined way. To this end, we strive to dismantle barriers in communication, for example with the following measures:

- detailed information on accessibility (e.g. about sensory triggers, seating and audience situation, potentially triggering content)
- sans serif typeface (corporate design) and larger fonts as well as stronger contrast (graphic design of print products)
- image descriptions (for the website and social media channels)
- accessible PDFs of the programme
- communication in formats suited to our intended audience (e.g. audio flyers for audio descriptions, announcement videos in German Sign Language and announcement texts and videos for Relaxed Performances)

To ensure the quality of our public relations work and public outreach and to further develop them, we work closely with experts and engage with their feedback.

Tech

Recognising the artists' needs in time and organising technical measures to accommodate them remains a great challenge. Access riders that list relevant information regarding tech and for the tech team are a great help in this respect. Removing structural barriers

in the building is a challenge due to its age, its status as a listed building, and a lack of financial resources. Some construction projects have just been completed, such as converting the bar to an accessible mobile counter and installing grab bars in the showers.

Focusing on making our spaces and programme more accessible has given us some important new tasks. At first, due to a lack of experience and technology, it was a challenge to develop seating plans with alternative seating options that are not taken into account by current health and safety regulations, and to figure out new technology for audio descriptions. When working with sign language interpretation, we needed to learn where to position the interpreters on stage, how to film their interpretation, and how to transmit it (live) into digital formats. But now this has become commonplace at the Sophiensaele. It also has proven difficult to continuously train our staff, which consists of freelance workers for the most part, on accessibility.

Hochschulübergreifendes Zentrum Tanz Berlin (HZT)

Since the beginning, a key motivation to be a partner in the project Making a Difference was our desire to establish an environment for students at the HZT Berlin that is accessible, inclusive, and encourages disabled, d/Deaf, and chronically ill artists to apply for admission here and, in the long run, also for jobs. Our involvement in the project and our experiences working with a few disabled students and applicants made us aware of what it takes to make this happen, and that it is a long, complex journey of transformation that requires a willingness to learn and to think things through differently, together. Faculty and staff need to be sensitised to this process and adequately prepared for it. Students develop a deeper awareness of the variations in how bodies experience the world around them and in how senses can perceive an environment.

The project's principle, namely that disabled, d/Deaf, and chronically ill people should occupy all leadership and expert positions, inspired us to discuss that the team of teachers and researchers at the HZT should also include someone who sees their disability as the basis and starting point of their artistic and choreographic work, who would bring many years of expertise with them, and who would also be a role model for future generations of dance professionals.

In recent years, accessibility and inclusion have also come to the fore as important and pressing issues at both of the centre's two supporting universities, the Berlin University of the Arts (UdK Berlin) and the

Ernst Busch Academy of Dramatic Arts (HfS Ernst Busch). Hence, in 2021, the UdK and the HZT decided to apply for an Einstein Strategic Professorship for the Scottish choreographer, performer, and activist Claire Cunningham. Cunningham self-identifies as a disabled artist. For many years, the lived experience of disability has been central to her work not only as a choreographer, but also in examining societal notions of knowledge, value, connection, and interdependence.

The application was successful! Beginning in the winter semester of 2023/24, Claire Cunningham will develop the teaching and research area of “Choreography, Dance and Disability Arts” at the HZT for an initial five years as Einstein Strategic Professor. With the Strategic Professorships, the Einstein Foundation Berlin supports the appointment of top researchers from abroad who are of outstanding strategic importance for Berlin as a centre of science and research. Cunningham’s appointment marks the first time that the Foundation is awarding the Einstein Strategic Professorship to an arts university. Hence, Claire Cunningham is the first artist to receive such a professorship.

Claire Cunningham’s work is often rooted in the study and use/misuse of her crutches and explores the potential of her own physicality, rejecting traditional dance techniques (developed for non-disabled bodies). Her thematic focus, “Choreography of Care”, is an artistic response to questions arising from her critical reflection on normativity. As she begins her professorship, Cunningham describes this as working on “practices of attention and observation, informed by the lived experience of disability and by crip, queer, and feminist thinking.”

At the HZT, Claire Cunningham will share with students the work, techniques, and practices of d/Deaf and disabled dance artists and choreographers. Because it

is important to her to allow students to partake in her artistic processes, she plans to offer HZT students the possibility of shadowing her, to observe her process from the research and rehearsal phases through to the finished production. Of equal importance is her vision to support education and further education of d/Deaf and disabled dancers and choreographers, which she will continue to dedicate herself to at the HZT and in collaboration with the Berlin dance scene.

Our partnership with Making a Difference provided the impetus for Claire Cunningham's professorship. Since Cunningham always sees her art as an exploration of social issues and activism, we will work with her to continue to further Making a Difference's mission to promote the self-determined work of disabled, d/Deaf, and chronically ill artists in dance. We will also work with Claire Cunningham and her team to make sure that Making a Difference's work can be continued.

Uferstudios

Uferstudios is a founding member of the network project Making a Difference. In recent years we have supported ten residencies, hosted workshops and discussion events, and received support from experts and the project team in dismantling barriers to disability inclusion and in deepening awareness and knowledge about working with disabled and d/Deaf choreographers.

We see ourselves as a place for research, work, and production for contemporary dance and thus also as a hub for different formats and various members of the dance community. We care a lot about maintaining not only the finished work but also the various stages of artistic processes – including the upstream and intermediate ones, as open but also protected spaces – and about strengthening networking between artists. Therefore, our focus within Making a Difference was on offering residencies and exchange formats. The residencies offered artists an open space for research, giving them the freedom to work in a way that suited their needs and capacities. This was a free space for them to explore individual approaches to Aesthetics of Access and artistic articulation.

A multitude of fundamental questions relating to choreography emerged over the years from the perspective of d/Deaf and disabled dancers and choreographers, for example about how bodies and dance potentials are perceived.

In this way, the artists explored completely new forms of movement and engagement with and within their disability, without being limited to it as a theme.

For other, non-disabled artists working in the Uferstudios, the exchange formats not only allowed them to develop and/or deepen their awareness of accessibility, but especially opened up a dialogue about questions of bodily practices, biopolitical issues, and aesthetics from a d/Deaf and disabled perspective. This led to a sharpening and broadening of contemporary dance discourse. Hence, the residencies and showings had a much broader effect than simply giving visibility to d/Deaf and disabled artists, rather, they allowed for a transformation of thinking and practices in contemporary dance.

For the Uferstudios (both for the structure and for the staff), the years over which the project ran proved to be a significant learning experience. During that time, some of the theoretical knowledge that was acquired could be put into practice immediately.

The focus was always on the interplay between self-determination and autonomy as well as the necessary support for the artists: What material and structural resources are needed to give space to explorative work and to react more spontaneously to the unexpected?

Structural modifications to the premises, ranging from smaller to more significant ones, were carried out after in-depth consultation sessions. Other changes, such as adding a wayfinding system for blind and visually impaired people, are still in planning. We were sensitised to alternative forms of communication with d/Deaf people and encouraged to critically examine how we (might) practice discrimination ourselves. We realised that our open-door principle, i.e. that all staff members of Uferstudios can be approached pretty much

whenever, can be a barrier, as sometimes working with d/Deaf and disabled artists requires a different kind of preparation.

Up to a certain point, every organisation is characterised by routines – routines that cannot be known to others, but that must be communicated to others for reasons of transparency. Many of the questions raised by the artists in residence and some of their expectations very clearly revealed the weak points in our communication. Becoming aware of this – both in the theoretical sense (through information, consultation, and conversations) and in the practical sense (by changing procedures that had been challenged by the artists in the course of the artistic collaboration) – led to a process of transformation and to deepening this awareness. For few things may be more discriminatory than daily routines that the same people engage in repeatedly without being aware of how this reproduces mechanisms of exclusion. But if an organisation is to serve art and artistic creation, then artistic activity – not just the final work but the process, the workflow, and the production structures and means of production – should constantly be engaging with, challenging, and questioning the routines of such an organisation.

Tanzfabrik Berlin

Tanzfabrik Berlin is a space for dance, choreography, and performance that supports various forms of these practices and art forms. Questions of accessibility have been actively addressed here since 2012, especially in the workshops and outreach department under the direction of Gabriele Reuter and Christa Flaig-Isaacs. Among other things, this commitment led to co-founding the Making a Difference network. Since then, questions around access have become ever more present and have expanded to other areas, such as stage and production. The second funding period of the network project brought about significant changes in our stance as an institution.

Learning to understand access as a fundamental principle rather than a mere secondary aspect of individual projects was an important step in our internal development.

For us, this meant going beyond the question of whether and how our events can be accessible, rather, it meant anchoring the fundamental right to accessibility as one of our general principles. Hence, questioning, restructuring, and redesigning our work practice became central concerns. Furthermore, the various awareness-raising and training programmes as well as the consulting services provided by Making a Difference that accompanied the process made it possible to actively involve all members of the team in the transfer of knowledge and the various learning processes. This then offered a solid foundation to initiate a coherent process of transformation of our entire structure.

The project, especially Noa Winter and Anne Rieger, also provided support in planning and realising specific programmes, for the coordinators of the Creative Europe network project *apap – FEMINIST FUTURES*, for disabled artists participating in the 2022 General Meeting in Belgrade, and for the curatorial team of the Feminist School in Berlin the following autumn. The aim of the Feminist School was to centre equality and to engage in anti-ableist, anti-racist, and anti-discriminatory practices, grounded in an updated and intersectional notion of feminism. As part of the collective process, we started publishing access information for each event on our website, began routinely asking artists for their access requirements, drafted awareness guidelines, and put together a team that can intervene if someone experiences discriminatory behaviour. These practices were carried forward in other areas and events as much as possible. The stage team is also working on access measures such as audio description and Relaxed Performances. Moreover, among the Tanzfabrik team, a dedicated working group came together to continue working on questions around access.

In 2023, Tanzfabrik was able to secure more financial support and work with consultants for the event series *SommerTanz* [SummerDance]. This allowed us to move through the various stages and aspects of development and realisation, from conception to budgeting, communication, outreach, and interpretation, all the way to the final production, with the necessary support, pertinent feedback, and expertise always by our side.

However, in the course of these processes, visible and invisible barriers for other marginalised groups and intersections became apparent.

For example, we searched in vain for a Black/ Indigenous/person of colour to be in charge of audio description for the event Emerging Change Prologue in May 2023, to critically highlight discriminatory and biased perspectives in the descriptions. This raised important intersectional issues and highlighted the need for a more diverse pool of experts in audio description, simultaneous interpretation for German Sign Language, and other access measures.

Limited resources were one of the biggest challenges we faced in the course of the project, besides the above-mentioned issue of intersectionality. None of the programmes could be implemented without additional funding; personnel resources were quickly exhausted due to the additional work and increased complexity. Therefore, we are currently working on finding additional financial resources and carving out more time. Our goal is to continue the decisive process of awareness-raising and accessibility that Making a Difference initiated at Tanzfabrik Berlin, to keep up the learning process as well as the transfer of knowledge within the team, and to continue to deepen the relationships with disabled and d/Deaf artists that were initiated in the course of this project.

TanzZeit e.V. / TANZKOMPLIZEN

TanzZeit e.V. initiates dance projects in schools, produces pieces for young audiences under the name TANZKOMPLIZEN, trains dance facilitators and teachers, and advocates for participation and equal opportunities. We have been part of the Making a Difference network since 2018. At that time, we had already been doing projects with children and young people in schools focusing on what they call “special educational needs” for many years – but exclusively with non-disabled dance mediators. So when we started working with Making a Difference, we formed two teams of disabled and non-disabled dance artists and completed a total of three intensive project weeks at the Marianne Cohn School over the course of four years.

The projects consisted not only of the collaborative artistic work and presentations of the groups (that were working in parallel) to one another but also of visits to performances or disabled dance artists coming to visit the school – in keeping with TanzZeit’s basic principle of combining audience reception and the young people’s own dance experience. The various ways to engage allowed for a stimulating and generative exchange between the pupils, dance mediators, and artists.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the fourth week of the project had to be put on hold and was later transformed into a six-month research and exchange phase. Ultimately, this change worked out really well for the teams. Not only was this intensive exchange about artistic and pedagogical approaches as well as about working in “mixed teams” ultimately described as essential for this constellation and this target group, but it also allowed for the last project week to be very well prepared and completed.

Going forward, we as a team will continue to engage with the knowledge we have gained and actively work towards adding disabled dance facilitators to this team. This also requires checking our work in this specific field for accessibility, such as the training we offer, our communication channels, and planning spaces, and it also requires checking the schools where the projects take place for accessibility.

Since 2022, Making a Difference has been focussing more and more on advanced training for the project partners. Hence, the core team of TanzZeit / TANZKOMPLIZEN has also been engaged in an active process of knowledge transfer on ableism and accessibility. At the same time, internally, we passed the baton to our stage department: the cooperation project's finale was to be a dance production by a disabled dance artist for young audiences. This was something new to us – and it would not have been possible for us to realise it in this form without close support and advice from the Making a Difference team regarding all things accessibility, production, and public relations.

Making a Difference published a call and the young artist Camilla Pölzer's proposal was selected to realise her piece I NEED A HERO, aimed at an audience aged nine and older, in cooperation with TANZKOMPLIZEN and with her team. It was her first time working as a choreographer and she was also on stage as a performer.

From the outset, the production was conceived as a Relaxed Performance. Moreover, to actively break down barriers to access and perception, the text was projected as surtitles, audio description and a tactile stage tour were available, and stim rings were given to all audience members. And it worked: the young

audience, which included a group from the Marianne Cohn School, felt relaxed and welcome. The piece was very well received especially by children who attend inclusive schools.

Going through this production process was a significant learning process for all involved. We successfully applied for funds to pick up where we left off and conduct research on working artistically with accessibility for young audiences.

Here, through research and with a participatory approach, we are venturing into a field that has to date been practically nonexistent in Germany: How can we further develop a needs-based accessible programme – focussing on audio description and Relaxed Performance – for disabled children and young people?

Without the visionary project Making a Difference, we would not be where we are today. It was and remains extremely valuable and necessary to work together as part of a network, to exchange knowledge, thoughts, and ideas. It must also be noted that realising high-quality accessible dance projects with disabled, chronically ill, and d/Deaf dance artists and for disabled, chronically ill, and d/Deaf children and young people takes time, money, human resources, and a lot of knowledge.

Diversity Arts Culture

Diversity Arts Culture has been a partner of Making a Difference since 2018, when the project started. Our role has been to support Making a Difference in its public relations work, to stimulate the discourse around disability arts and Aesthetics of Access in the cultural sector, and to support the project in matters of cultural policy.

Diversity Arts Culture's "Disability in Art and Culture" department had been growing since 2018, around the same time as Making a Difference was launched. In its initial phase, this department was primarily dedicated to community building and empowerment of disabled, chronically ill, and d/Deaf artists and cultural workers. This overlap allowed for synergies to become generative and for alliances to emerge. Diversity Arts Culture's expertise in consultancy work now had a counterpart in this project that allowed the artists to experiment with and develop their art practice in a (more or less) accessible environment.

Making a Difference filled a glaring gap in the previous landscape of arts funding and scholarship programmes, which generally are not very accessible, leaving disabled and d/Deaf artists with few opportunities to embark on the important first stages of a professional artistic career.

The project established a small but well-received hub at the Sophiensaele, gathering artistic know-how around the art forms of disability arts and d/Deaf arts. In Berlin, it became the go-to place for young disabled and d/Deaf artists to train and get connected in the field of dance/choreography.

Over the course of six years, Making a Difference has become a flagship project, not only for the Berlin area but also beyond, as a creative framework that centres inclusion and Aesthetics of Access in its art practice. The expertise that was acquired there radiated out into the wider cultural sector, providing guidance to cultural partners when it came to establishing standards for an inclusive, anti-ableist, anti-audist cultural practice and accessible programming. Many cultural institutions reacted by more clearly assessing their need for advice and articulating their questions about how to become accessible. Disabled and d/Deaf artists also articulated their needs more strongly. In this way, the insights that were gained in the context of Making a Difference often doubled as points of contact for the work of Diversity Arts Culture to pick up on. Hence, we gathered demands for an accessible funding system for disabled and d/Deaf artists from the Making a Difference network.

On this basis, we formulated an action plan that the Berlin Senate Department for Culture has been using as a guideline to realise the goals it set itself in the Berlin policy plan 2023–2025.

The project Making a Difference has enriched Berlin's cultural scene in many ways. It has set in motion a process of knowledge transfer that is not only reaching institutions and cultural workers but also setting new standards for cultural policy. It has tested what it means to develop and realise an artist residency and production programme that is accessible, anti-ableist, and anti-audist.

And above all, it has created visibility for outstanding artists whose Aesthetics of Access offer an exciting and distinctive art form that is still not well-known enough in the German-speaking world.

We hope that through all of the above, Making a Difference has set the course for artistic funding and residency programmes of all disciplines to become accessible in the medium term and to focus on support for underrepresented perspectives. In order for Making a Difference's groundbreaking work to continue, funds must be made available in the future, so that existing expertise can be gathered and knowledge in the field of disability and d/Deaf culture can be transferred into the arts and culture sector.

Zeitgenössischer Tanz Berlin e.V. / Tanzbüro Berlin

With Making a Difference, the future of disabled, d/Deaf, and chronically ill dance practitioners in Berlin has only just begun. The network project was founded in 2018 and funded by TANZPAKT Stadt-Land-Bund; it aimed to attain structural changes and mobilise knowledge transfer to improve the conditions of production as well as access to the dance scene's networking, training, and consultation services so that they could benefit all dance artists. What has since been set in motion by the project team is a unique opportunity for the Berlin dance scene: disabled, d/Deaf, and chronically ill choreographers and dancers in leading artistic positions developing their own productions and aesthetics, expanding artistic discourses through their important perspectives.

In the long run, and building on many years of proactive work by many parties active in the field of cultural policy, we wish for the TANZPAKT projects to be consolidated at the state level to continuously improve support and work structures in dance.

A closer look at the dance scene reveals that disabled, d/Deaf, and chronically ill dance professionals face a multitude of barriers. For all of the Making a Difference network partners, the process of knowledge transfer brought about a change in perspective, while several workshops in different formats allowed them to gain deep insights into the realities and barriers that need to be dismantled in the future. The Berlin dance scene is predominantly made up of the independent scene; most of the people and groups active in the Berlin

dance scene work in the context of temporary projects that are insufficiently funded or even not at all. The fact that disabled and d/Deaf dance makers have hardly been visible in the Berlin dance scene shows the basic issue: How can these artists be supported in the long run and in a way that meets their needs? And how can barrier-free access to the scene's limited resources be guaranteed? Some examples from the UK are of interest here: Programmes such as Unlimited or the British Arts Council's Disability Arts International, which were both launched in 2013 and have since been working for the needs and visibility of disabled and d/Deaf artists, made it possible for many arts professionals and groups to work in a self-determined way and to establish themselves and leave their mark on the international dance scene.

Moreover, by managing to leave behind the long-established customs of conventional dance performance, Making a Difference has shifted the focus to barriers faced by the audience. Alternative seating options are becoming more common, as are Relaxed Performances for neurodivergent audience members. Surtitles and audio descriptions for visually impaired and blind people are just two more examples of measures through which more people can participate in cultural life and that we hope will become commonplace in the scene. The project not only initiated changes in the processes of dance performance but also raised questions about how bodies are perceived on Berlin's stages:

The artists selected by the network partners to participate in the residencies and to co-produce pieces represent a diverse, multi-faceted spectrum and add important perspectives to the Berlin scene.

These artists are also present on the national scene, as illustrated by, for example, Sophia Neises – who produced her first piece as a Making a Difference artist-in-resident – being awarded the German Dance Prize for Outstanding Development in October 2023 for her artistic successes.

At the end of the project, we look with hope towards a still uncertain future. How can we rethink dance funding at the federal and state level to create access for disabled, d/Deaf, and chronically ill dance practitioners as a matter of course? And what short-term, medium-term, and long-term changes in perspective must occur for accessible cultural production to be able to continue to develop well into the future? What is clear is that this shift in thinking requires political concessions and budgets that can be used for access measures, in addition to existing funding. This necessity is an opportunity for both cultural policy and the dance scene – one that must be embarked on together.



My crutches are part of my lived experience of disability. I use them to look at how they move me. Meaning, not how I can move them in space and the nice straight lines they draw, but asking: What character do the crutches have? How can I play with their weight and how does it make me move?

Quote by Tanja Erhart,
from the event *Making
a Difference meets...*
Tanja Erhart & Sophia

« *Neises, 2021*



**Chapter 2 ·
What it takes
to act –
a knowledge
transfer**

Introduction: Perspectives on disability – and what they mean for our work

by Anne Rieger und Noa Winter

While there is no universally agreed-upon understanding of disability in our society, our behaviour towards disabled and d/Deaf people is fundamentally shaped by how we as individuals and/or cultural organisations understand disability. Hence, it is important to be aware of how we – as non-disabled/hearing and disabled/d/Deaf people – think about disability. Only then can we understand how this shapes our work practice in very tangible ways. When we talk about our project with others, we often encounter different, sometimes contradictory ideas about our work with disabled, chronically ill, and d/Deaf artists. Therefore, in this chapter, we would like to give an insight first into our perspective on disability and then into the practical consequences that we draw from this for our work.

The notion of disability as formulated in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is an important foundation of our work. It defines disability as an interaction between two components: People with impairments on the one hand and attitudinal and environmental barriers on the other. Environmental barriers are stairs without ramps or without stair lifts, for example; attitudinal barriers are for instance prejudices.

Disability, therefore, is not a consequence of impairments – rather, disability arises when people face barriers.

In line with the above, disability activism and culture and disability studies make a fundamental distinction between two perspectives: the medical and the social model of disability. The medical model describes disability as an individual problem that is met with pity or admiration, as a deviation from the norm that constitutes a deficit and is therefore always aimed at adaptation (e.g. through lifelong therapies). In the medical model of disability, it is non-disabled people, such as medical professionals or educators, who have the power to determine how disability is constituted. To this day, this remains the dominant social attitude towards disability, one that manifests in myriad kinds of discrimination against and exclusion of disabled and d/Deaf people. In the cultural sector, this means, for example, that non-disabled and hearing cultural workers – such as directors of dance and theatre projects working with disabled and d/Deaf artists – are held up by the majority of non-disabled and hearing professionals as experts in inclusive art or even disabled and d/Deaf culture, based on which, again and again, they get (well-paid) jobs.

As early as the 1980s, various disability movements at national and international level have been demanding a general shift in perspective towards the social model of disability, which always stresses societal barriers in relation to disability and recognises disabled and d/Deaf people as experts on disability and d/Deafness based on their lived experience.

The perspective has been shifting away from an externally ascribed “being disabled” to “being made disabled” by societal barriers and a social reality with a profoundly political dimension. This also means reflecting on the fact that not all disabilities are visible by other people (such as organisers in the cultural sector). Especially neurodivergent people or people with chronic illnesses often struggle for society to recognise the barriers they are facing.

At Making a Difference therefore, we understand that:

- “disabled” and “d/Deaf” are political and cultural categories and self-designations.
- disability is a spectrum of diverse realities of life and work.
- the cultural participation of disabled and d/Deaf people is a human right.
- as a state-funded network project, it is our responsibility to dismantle barriers.
- disability justice is the central guiding principle of our work.

In concrete terms this means that:

- we respect and use the self-designations of the arts and culture workers we work with.
- all management and expert positions are filled with disabled and d/Deaf people, in line with the slogan of the international disability movement “Nothing about us without us”.
- we regularly take part in anti-ableism, anti-audism, accessibility, and intersectionality training and get advice from disabled and d/Deaf consultants (whose work is paid).
- we never ask people about their diagnoses or to provide proof (such as certificates or disability cards), rather, we ask about their access requirements.
- we calculate artistic costs (such as co-production subsidies or fees) and access costs independently from one another.

A structural and systematic understanding of (non-) disability is fundamental to our work.

This perspective, which is also known as the cultural model of disability, asks how non-disability as a norm influences our culture and produces exclusion and stigma.

In keeping with the social and cultural models of disability and the intersectional principles of disability justice, we do not see ourselves as a “mixed-abled” project, unlike other projects, even though disabled and non-disabled people work together in most of our activities. Because framing this as “mixed ability” reproduces the assumption of non-disability and hearing as norms of dance and other cultural abilities and thus reduces disabled and d/Deaf artists to their perceived otherness. We always strive to centre anti-ableist and anti-audist practices, structures, and aesthetics in our work. In the next sub-chapters, we will dive further into how this can become a common practice.

» For me it was important to start taking that word “choreographer” more confidently. I also very clearly state that I self-identify as disabled. The word “disabled” is something that I want to make visible and claim. And there’s something about claiming “disabled choreographer” and making those words visible together alongside each other. «

Quote by Claire
Cunningham, from the
discussion event *Making
a Difference meets...*
Claire Cunningham &
Sindri Runudde, 2020

Ableism in the cultural sector

by Agnieszka Habraschka und Noa Winter

The term “ableism” is based on the English word “able”: “to be able” or “to be capable”. In German, the term “Behindertenfeindlichkeit” is also used [literally: antagonism against disabled people]. But ableism is similar to other -isms in that it is more than direct discrimination and hostility towards individual disabled people. Ableism is the structural oppression and exclusion of disabled people. “Structural” refers to how a society is structured, how this affects the way people think and live, and how it devalues certain people and hinders their full participation in society. The structural level essentially covers two areas:

1. Values, ideas, and attitudes
2. Institutions, laws, education, opportunities/privileges

Ideas of disability are often very stereotypical, historically grown and closely linked to capitalist values.

On the one hand, disabled people are often devalued because they cannot work as much as what is considered the norm. Capitalism values resilience, flexibility, and speed, for example. This system is buttressed by branding disabled bodies and behaviours as “different”, considering them as not belonging and excluding them. Moreover, Western capitalist values are very much about individuality and absolute autonomy, meaning that an adult is not meant to be dependent on the help of others. Since disabled people often depend on assistance, society often considers them to be worth less than non-disabled people. This is illustrated, for example, by the fact that in Germany, disabled people who have legal guardians only gained the right to vote in 2019.

In films, books, or on stage, disabled people are often portrayed in two different ways: either as if their life is a tragedy because they have to live with their disability, or as heroes for overcoming this tragedy. The latter is often used as motivational content for non-disabled people (a.k.a. “inspiration exploitation”). Often the focus lies on the overcoming of a limitation or diagnosis, completely eclipsing the disabled person as a complex individual with individual traits, preferences, and dreams.

These negative images and ideas about disabled people also manifest at the level of institutions, which often do not take disabled people into account as a target group for their programmes, which therefore are often not sufficiently accessible. Many universities or cultural institutions, for example, are located in old building complexes with many stairs and no lifts. The seminars or workshops are usually held in spoken language only. The texts and images are often not suitable for screen

readers. The schedules are packed, leaving little time for breaks. All of this constitutes barriers for many disabled, chronically ill, and/or d/Deaf people, keeping them from access to studying or taking part in workshops or dance training to further their artistic education. But to work in theatre and dance, it is imperative to have a degree or comparable artistic training – and therefore, it is rare that disabled and d/Deaf people work in leadership positions in the arts sector.

It is important to understand that stereotypical images, prejudice against disabled and d/Deaf people, and insufficient accessibility are co-constitutive. All of these are ableist and even if they are not directly aimed at an individual, they produce exclusion and discrimination.

Therefore, we all have the responsibility to actively change these views and to think about access in our work.

»

The last few years, I've been working on a method that I call "centred adventures". It's five layers of touch that are integrated in every movement or manipulation of an object. When I can't see, I need to touch something, and my question was: how can I touch something that is not there? I invented a lot of tricks and strategies. In that sense, it's like perceptual skill making. I think it's interesting how we all can do this, and that the "norm" would say that perception is something we have rather than something we make into a skill.

«

Quote by Sindri Runudde,
from the discussion event
*Making a Difference
meets... Claire Cunningham
& Sindri Runudde, 2020*

Non-disabled and hearing privileges

by Gina Jeske und Anne Rieger

What are privileges?

In the interplay of social inequality, privileges determine one's social positioning and perspective on the world. They are tied to different categories such as gender, race, class, nationality, sexual orientation, and/or disability or non-disability. Privileges are characterised by the fact that they have not been fought for, but arise structurally, based on, for example, the family context one is born into or on physical characteristics one is born with. Privileges often seem to be individual, self-evident, and natural, but in fact they stem from social power relations. They facilitate access to education, work, art, and culture, to name but a few.

Non-disabled and hearing privileges in the cultural sector

As hearing and non-disabled people in the Making a Difference team, it's important for us to be aware of the privileges we benefit from. In the cultural sector, for example, non-disabled and hearing privileges facilitate access to:

- education and vocational training (not having to face any spatial or communicative barriers, stereotypes, and prejudices)
- application and funding processes (with application processes almost always being in German written language, information being available in writing and in a way that can be easily found and understood, and hence not requiring assistance or translation)
- cultural events, professional events, and networking in general (events are usually aimed at a hearing, non-disabled (professional) audience)

Using non-disabled and hearing privileges

Our personal and professional experience shows that awareness of one's privileges on the one hand and of the discrimination that others face on the other can lead to feelings of guilt and shame.

But privileges can be used like superpowers – when used mindfully and in a way that highlights power asymmetries.

As non-disabled and hearing people, we can contribute to creating a less discriminatory society by acknowledging our privileges and taking on the responsibility that comes with them.

We use our non-disabled and hearing privileges by:

- becoming aware of our own privileges and position in society and examining how these influence our behaviour.
- communicating our social positioning transparently, so that it's clear which perspective we are speaking and acting from. Because our view of the world is always shaped by our social status and life experiences, therefore also influencing what we prioritise in everyday work.
- using our resources such as time, money, access to infrastructures and information to educate ourselves about d/Deaf and disability culture and accessibility.
- checking our work and communication processes for ableism and audism and transforming them to be less ableist and audist.
- raising the issue of ableism, audism, and pointing out lack of accessibility. For non-disabled and hearing people, this is often less stressful as for disabled and d/Deaf people, as we are not discriminated against by ableism, audism, and lack of accessibility and our concerns are often perceived as more "neutral" and thus "justified" by colleagues who are also privileged.
- communicating about barriers and requirements in consultation with d/Deaf and disabled people. These conversations are also often less exhausting for non-disabled and hearing people than for

d/Deaf and disabled people who have to have these conversations in almost all everyday situations.

- taking on difficult conversations and conflicts with non-disabled and hearing people, with the consent of and while staying in contact with d/Deaf and disabled people.
- using our professional position to fill leadership positions with d/Deaf and disabled people.
- using our (leadership) positions to provide employment opportunities for d/Deaf and disabled people.
- using our professional position to make demands on funding institutions and cultural policy, for example for barriers in cultural funding to be dismantled.
- making space and passing on requests for jobs, panels, or other public events to d/Deaf and disabled people.



In fact, I am working with three different bodies in dance: my body and my two crutches, my body and my wheelchair, and my body without any mobility aids. And I play with what I am.

« Quote by Tanja Erhart,
from the event *Making
a Difference meets...*
*Tanja Erhart & Sophia
Neises, 2021*

Audism and hearing privilege

by Dana Cērmāne

What is audism?

Audism and hearing privilege are closely intertwined and inextricably linked. In essence, the term “audism” describes discrimination against d/Deaf people by the culturally dominant hearing majority. The high value placed on hearing and speaking in society creates a distance to d/Deaf people, who are therefore considered having a “defect”. This deficit perspective on d/Deaf people often goes hand in hand with the assessment that d/Deaf people’s lives are worth less and are less precious.

The term “d/Deaf” used here, however, is not based on hearing status but positively describes the cultural identity and diverse realities of d/Deaf people’s lives.

Audism comes in many different forms

Most events or institutions do not offer interpretation into sign language. Hence, they are not accessible for d/Deaf people and enact exclusion. Many d/Deaf people experience school and education as traumatic: Often, d/Deaf pupils are forced to speak and undergo speech training again and again.

Moreover, the reality of most d/Deaf people's lives is that they have to constantly adapt to the needs and requirements of the culturally dominant hearing majority. Conversely, hearing people rarely adapt to the needs of d/Deaf people.

Let us imagine a scenario in which two hearing people are talking to each other in spoken language despite both knowing sign language (or at least being able to sign something), even though a d/Deaf person is present. Thus the hearing persons are actively excluding the d/Deaf person from their conversation. All of this is audism!

There are also many examples of everyday audism in the media and in science and scholarship: In a survey on Instagram, parents were asked to weigh in on whether the decision regarding cochlear implantation for d/Deaf children should also be made against the parents' wishes and whether the ultimate decision-making power in these cases should lie with doctors. Another survey asked how d/Deaf people could be made able to hear again. These examples illustrate the power imbalance that still prevails and the discriminatory perspective of hearing people on

d/Deaf people and their community. Decisions are made without d/Deaf experts being involved, while the authority to frame these decisions as right or wrong lies with the culturally dominant hearing majority, from a position of “We know what’s best for you”.

What is hearing privilege?

Hearing people can hear and speak. Both are automatically taken as a given and considered the norm. In our society, which is based on hearing and speaking, hearing people can move with confidence and their hearing is not cause for discrimination in everyday life. Hence, hearing people have direct access to education, for example, and can be certain that content is conveyed in their language in a way they can understand. They do not have to worry about applying for sign language interpreters and about whether their hearing status means that access will be made difficult or denied altogether. When looking for a job, applying for various things, making a quick phone call, and in everyday communication, they do not encounter obstacles because of their hearing status. Hearing people can easily spontaneously attend events, theatres, and other leisure activities. They do not have to find out whether their needs have been taken into account at all in the planning of these events and activities. Deaf people are often reduced to their d/Deafness: They are no longer perceived as individuals and full human beings and are seen as an object of pity. Hearing people, on the other hand, can go about their daily lives without ever having to be confronted with their hearing status. Their hearing simply is not an issue in their everyday lives; it is taken as a given. This is their hearing privilege.

How can I, a hearing person, be an ally?

First of all, be proactive! Inform yourself independently and do your research on d/Deaf history, oralism, audism, the trauma of language deprivation, and sign language. For example, when was German Sign Language recognised as an official language in Germany? The internet is full of free education, videos, and resources. Learn sign language (from d/Deaf teachers), even if it's just basics at first. Reflect on your hearing privilege and on audism. Take part in workshops, go to lectures. If you encounter the term "deafm*te" somewhere, say something and ask for it to be corrected. Ask d/Deaf people if and how you can support them, for example in cases where they are asked the same questions again and again.

Being an ally is a process that involves work and constant self-reflection. These are all prerequisites for true allyship. Do the work!

»

I think we are currently exploring something that we need space for. In the past, people said, “Sign language is so beautiful, aesthetically!” But that was the perspective of hearing people. They wanted us to represent their ideas. But I have my own ideas. I want to show them myself and look for an art form. To explore my own language and develop new art forms. I want to follow my own curiosity.

«

Quote by Kassandra
Wedel, from the event *Sign
Language in Different Art
Forms* at the conference
Owning Spaces, 2021

How to...?

– Questions about anti-ableist working practice

In recent years, our team has received several requests for advice per week from all over Germany. Most of them were questions about how to plan accessible events, awareness-raising workshops, or financial questions. The following texts are our attempt to bundle the most frequently asked questions and provide initial recommendations. Because all of these issues are complex and hinge on many factors, we cannot – and do not want to – provide fully comprehensive checklists or conclusive answers here. However, we hope that we can provide initial questions and impulses that spark inclusivity-centred thinking, organisational planning, and financial planning so that in the long term accessibility becomes commonplace and working with awareness about discrimination becomes a matter of course in the cultural sector in Germany.

How to centre accessibility and anti-discrimination in planning cooperations and events?

Network meetings, festivals, workshops, and many other formats are part and parcel of the arts and cultural sector. But any event planning risks reproducing dynamics and structures that exclude disabled, chronically ill, and d/Deaf cultural workers if they are not taken into account and part of the planning from the beginning. Throughout its course, Making a Difference was also a long learning process. Along with the progress and many successes came setbacks and mistakes. Therefore, we would like to share a (non-exhaustive) list of questions to offer some initial guidance on what should be considered in any project planning at the levels of programme, audience, and staff.

Programme

- Who is in charge of curating and planning the event? Are disabled, chronically ill, and d/Deaf individuals part of the curating and planning process?
- Which perspectives are represented among the artists and which are not? Is there diversity in representation? (For example: Is there a diversity of perspectives, or are all participating disabled artists white cisgender individuals with visible physical disabilities?)

- Have all the different parts of the programme also been carefully thought through as a whole, considering how they interrelate? (For example: Can disabled, chronically ill, and d/Deaf cultural workers only attend the aspects of the programme that they are directly involved in or is the rest of the programme also accessible to them?)
- How are disability, illness, d/Deafness featured? Are there instances of discriminatory practices such as “cripping up”, “deaf-faking” i.e. faking d/Deafness (non-disabled or hearing actors playing disabled or d/Deaf characters), or cultural appropriation (appropriating disabled and d/Deaf cultural practices such as the use of sign languages, assistive devices, or specific movement materials)?
- Have access costs been budgeted for realistically?

Audience

- Who has been considered as part of the audience from the outset, who hasn't, or only as an afterthought?
- Has the active participation of disabled, chronically ill, and d/Deaf cultural workers been considered in the planning of professional and networking events?
- When planning the spatial setup and scheduling, have different access requirements been taken into account (and prioritised over normative work routines)?
- Has information on accessibility been shared transparently and has a contact person who can answer questions on accessibility been designated?

Staff

- Does the team include disabled, chronically ill, and/or d/Deaf people as part of the regular team? (Have adequate conditions been established for them to be included as part of the regular team?)
- Are there disabled, chronically ill, and/or d/Deaf people among the invited experts or consultants – not only on issues of accessibility but on all artistic and social topics?
- Does the team include experts in anti-ableism and anti-audism and are they involved in planning decisions?
- Have all staff members been sensitised to the access requirements of disabled and d/Deaf people?

How to include access and centre anti-discrimination in financial planning?

Many people in charge of budgets are taken aback when they learn about the reality of access costs. For example, simultaneous interpretation between German spoken language and German Sign Language can cost well over a thousand euros for an all-day event. This is often immediately followed by the question: “How many d/Deaf people will come?”, in effect asking whether this expense is justified. In a capitalist society and working with a funding system that encourages frugal and economical work, this concern is understandable. What is forgotten, however, is that this is funding for human rights. Article 30 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities states:

“States Parties recognise the right of persons with disabilities to take part on an equal basis with others in cultural life, and shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities [...] Enjoy access to [...] theatre and other cultural activities, in accessible formats;”

What budget managers as well as funding institutions often perceive as additional costs, the legitimacy of which must first be proven, are, in fact, overhead costs that have so far hardly been taken into account socially and politically. However, this capitalist logic of

legitimation should not be applied to human rights. Therefore, the established ways of thinking and working should also be critically questioned in the financial planning of access measures, and those should be included in all budgets as the overheads that they are. The following aspects are important:

1. Real costs should be included in the budget from the start

Funds for access measures are often insufficiently budgeted for because they are often underestimated. Therefore, it is important to conduct a detailed cost analysis. It is important to consult with service providers and experts, as costs can vary depending on the type of event.

2. Being aware of the structural problems of the funding landscape

Currently, there are barely any funding programmes explicitly designed to cover access costs. Moreover, the few that do exist are usually in the social rather than the cultural sector and only non-profit organisations are eligible for funding. This is why, in many cultural funding programmes, access costs must be calculated as part of the budget for artistic projects. This can be a problem if the maximum funding amount is fixed. Often this means that compared with projects that do not plan for access, projects that do consider access in their planning are left with less money to spend on artistic projects. This puts not only disabled, d/Deaf, and chronically ill artists at a particular disadvantage but also all those who want to work with them or plan their work for different audiences so it is accessible. Moreover, jury members are often not sufficiently aware of the real

costs of access. Therefore, it can be helpful to emphasise the need for accessibility in the application and to list the corresponding costs in the budget. A breakdown of costs can also be helpful, for example as follows:

The total budget amounts to XXX.XXX€. Of this, XX.XXX€ (XX%) are for access costs, as these cannot be applied for separately. The budget solely for realising the project objectives amounts to XXX.XXX€.

3. Using (non-disabled) privileges

The failure of funding structures to consider access costs means that many projects reduce the scope of access measures or omit them altogether. Disabled, d/Deaf, and chronically ill artists are at a particular disadvantage here, as they cannot compromise on their access requirements.

This is why it is crucial for arts and culture workers to take advantage of their position in the sector to actively address funding institutions and politicians and demand separate budgets for access, as well as insist that juries should include multiple perspectives and that jury members should learn more about the issue of access.

How to plan and realise processes of change?

Developing anti-ableist ways of working and realising accessibility often requires complex processes of change. However, if these are initiated impulsively and lack a clear vision, it can often lead to the task feeling overwhelming, to the inability to act, to conflicts and frustration within the organisation – which in turn leads to additional challenges for the disabled, d/Deaf, and chronically ill persons in these work environments to bear.

Therefore, it is important to recognise that introducing ways of working that aim at dismantling discrimination is an organisational development process that should be prepared and carried out holistically, taking into account the entirety of the organisation with all its processes and individuals.

This includes a thorough analysis of the current situation, training and workshops, transparent communication, and developing new internal processes.

Analysis and vision

When designing the process of sensitising people and organisations to anti-discriminatory working practices, it is indispensable to first identify and understand where and how barriers and discrimination come to be in one's organisation. This requires checking all processes within the organisation and all of its spaces for barriers and exclusion mechanisms, such as its personnel recruitment

processes, accessibility of the site for staff and guests, scheduling, financial planning, density of the programme, internal and external communication. A detailed analysis of these aspects provides a basis for developing a vision for the future and identifying what is needed for it to be realised. For a comprehensive and sustainable realisation to be possible and to have the necessary financial and human resources, it is important for the leadership to really want to see this vision realised, to co-develop it, and to rise to its responsibility to drive it forward in the process.

Training and workshops

First of all, it is important to raise awareness of barriers and discrimination and to establish a shared attitude and language within the organisation in this regard. For this, knowing the legal situation, clarifying terms, language use, and an understanding of ableist and audistic structures and one's privileges are important foundations. This can be followed by training focusing on specific issues, e.g. on digital accessibility, accessible public relations, audism, anti-ableist event planning, or changes in the built environment.

Training should be led by d/Deaf, chronically ill, or disabled experts in order to learn from people with lived experience and to avoid marginalised knowledge being appropriated.

Developing new internal processes

Developing new internal processes is the active implementation of the vision. This can mean changes in how events are planned, how budgets are prepared,

in internal and external communication, or making sure that work environments are accessible. For an organisation, undergoing systematic change means that accessibility and anti-ableist ways of working are encoded into organisational structures in the long run. It is important to review the process regularly and make adjustments as needed.

Conclusion

Processes of change are complex. However, often there isn't enough expertise within the organisations that want to change. Therefore, it makes sense to be accompanied by disabled, d/Deaf, and chronically ill people who are experts in accessibility and anti-ableist organisational development. It is also important to know your organisation's capacities and to work out a realistic scope and timeline for the desired transformations. It's understandable to want to make everything accessible and inclusive all at once and as fast as possible. But you should prioritise quality over quantity.

Changes take time, must be well prepared, and, last but not least, require sufficient resources.

How to work with access riders?

by Noa Winter

Whether we as disabled, d/Deaf, and chronically ill people can work in the cultural sector on an equal footing is always a matter of whether our work environment is accessible for us. Hence, an important tool has developed in recent years in disability culture to communicate one's access requirements to organisers and colleagues: access riders, i.e. written documents that provide information about someone's work-related access requirements.

Their purpose is to make communication about one's needs in work contexts more productive, which often is time-consuming and emotionally exhausting.

Access riders can include:

- Self-positioning and/or information about one's disability/illness/impairment
- Communication-related access requirements
- Assistance requirements
- Requirements regarding the spatial accessibility of venues, rehearsal rooms, etc.
- Requirements regarding travel planning and accommodation

- Agreements on the timing of cooperation (e.g. the temporal structure of rehearsals and breaks, but also regarding information and submission deadlines)
- Dealing with health risks (e.g. allergies, hygiene and safety protocols, ...)
- Contingency plans, arrangements in case of poorer health
- Information on how the contents of the access rider are to be handled (e.g. agreements on further procedure, confidentiality, ...)

Advice for people with access requirements

- Do not disclose information (e.g. diagnoses) that you are not comfortable sharing. No one is entitled to know private information about you just because you have access requirements.
- Communicate with other disabled, d/Deaf, and chronically ill colleagues about your requirements and how you deal with them in your daily work lives.
- Whenever possible, try to clearly state what you expect from clients. This applies not only to your concrete requirements but also to how you want to engage with the issue of accessibility in the work process and how you want to further communicate about it.
- Be sure to regularly update your access rider to include things you have learned about your access requirements in other work contexts.

Advice for organisers and colleagues

- Address accessibility right at the beginning of a collaborative work process and ask about requirements. This way you can signal that you have thought about this issue and are open to communicating about it.
- Find out about and proactively share information about the accessibility of workspaces and event venues. Research questions that may arise during conversations about the specific access requirements of artists and colleagues.
- If there are any uncertainties on your part, it is better to address them directly rather than to make assumptions. However, do not ask about private information (e.g. about diagnoses or symptoms).
- Take the requirements that have been communicated to you seriously. Meeting these should be prioritised over other work processes. Meet your responsibility for creating an accessible work environment.

»

Now that I am thinking about what would I dream for disability arts... I would love to see even more experimentation around how we take our differences to create new forms and new ideas. And that's the work that's been exciting me the most. And I'd like to see less of a distinction between service providers and artists. I want to see cooperatives of sign language interpreters and audio describers as part of the art making process. I have this idea that there could be more artistic collaborations between the different communities.

«

Quote by Carrie Sandahl,
from the discussion event
Crippling the Keynote
at the conference
Owning Spaces, 2021



Appendix – Recommended links

To conclude this publication, we would like to share a small selection of links that have been important for our work and that we have often recommended in workshops and consultations over the past years:

Resources on accessible arts and cultural work:
weareunlimited.org.uk/resources

Online magazine on disability arts and culture:
disabilityarts.online

Online directory of international disabled and d/Deaf artists and resources:
disabilityartsinternational.org

Podcast on disability culture (in English spoken language with transcript):
disabilityarts.online/projects/the-disability-and-podcast

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities:
www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities

German shadow translation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities:
nw3.de/attachments/article/130/BRK-Schattenuibersetzung-3-Auflage-2018.pdf

Thoroughly tested bean bag as an option for alternative ways of sitting and lying down:
lumaland-sitzsack.de/collections/sitzsack-outdoor/products/xxl-sitzsack

Recommendations on language use around disability (in German):
leidmedien.de/begriffe

Dictionary with explanations of terms such as “Aesthetics of Access” or “audism” (in German):
[diversity-arts-culture.berlin/diversity-arts-culture/
woerterbuch](https://diversity-arts-culture.berlin/diversity-arts-culture/woerterbuch)

Online magazine on d/Deaf culture, including an events calendar (in German):
taubenschlag.de

Project on common clichés about d/Deaf people and sign language (in German):
nicht-stumm.de

Blog on everyday ableism (in German):
be-hindernisse.org

Magazine and podcast on diversity, equality, and disability mainstreaming (in German):
dieneuenorm.de

Handbook on inclusive and accessible cultural work (in German):
inklusion-kultur.de/infoportal/handbuch-2

Orientation paper on Relaxed Performances (in German):
[diversity-arts-culture.berlin/magazin/relaxed-
performances](https://diversity-arts-culture.berlin/magazin/relaxed-performances)

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