

Workshop: DanceAbility Project has 2 main goals

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Now, the program has grown to include workshops, orientations and training seminars in countries all over the world, including Brazil, Germany and Italy.

Alessi says two main goals run through all the project's teaching: to challenge every participant and to place everyone on an equal playing field. The idea is pure inclusion, he says.

"The only prerequisite is that everyone must be able to communicate," he adds.

Classes and performances are ongoing, including at the local level. An introductory meeting and workshop, co-sponsored by the University Department of Dance, are scheduled for this weekend and open to the public.

The introduction will include presentations meant to outline the program for potential participants. The workshop, on the other hand, is where the project really comes alive, Alessi says.

All willing participants will be grouped together in an open area, and a "common ground" will be determined by Alessi, who will coordinate the workshop himself. Only movements that can be performed by everybody will be included, he says.

"People come and the community is defined," he says. "A world of movement theater begins."

All the movements by the participants are individual reactions to instructions given by the teacher, Alessi says. They vary widely he says, but that's the point.

"Everybody is asked to reflect on their own desires," Alessi says. "Each person has their own pathway of work."

The dance progresses from individual warm-ups to pairs, small groups and then finally

as one group, all following the same instructions in their own way.

Sylvie Rubinstein, who teaches classes every week, says the progression is important.

"The warm-ups make them aware of their own body, and they're able to measure their abilities," she says. "Then later they come into contact with somebody else and are more aware."

That point of contact and sense of community between

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Alito Alessi
Program director

the dancers is important for a variety of reasons, Rubinstein says.

"That sense of touch gives you an impulse to

move," she says.

Alessi says the cooperation between both disabled and able-bodied dancers leaves a strong impact on the group, for one.

"It's definitely educational," he says. "By the end, the definition of who's disabled and who's not is a joke."

McKinney, on the other hand, can attest to the individual impact of the project.

"I learned so many new ways to move my body that I didn't realize I'd be able to move," he says.

"We all have creativity, but we're not always given a chance to experience it, so when it comes out, it just bursts out all over the place."

The introductory meeting, including performances and talks, is tonight from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. at WOW Hall (271 West 8th Ave.). The workshop is on Feb. 28 and Mar. 1 from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. at Agate Hall (1787 Agate St.). The cost of the workshop is on a sliding scale from \$25 to \$100.

Both events are open to the public. For more information, call 342-3273.



COURTESY PHOTO

The idea of the workshops, which group individuals such as the ones above together, is pure inclusion, says program director Alito Alessi.



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A disabled and able-bodied participant join in a point of contact.

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