

DANCE DIPLOMACY

U.S. State Department selects DanceAbility teachers to share their method abroad

“It was part of the contemporary dance scene at the point when everyone was pushing for equality, respect of all people and the idea that all people could dance,” says Alito Alessi, artistic director of DanceAbility International. “But no one was doing anything about it, including myself. So I said, ‘Well, what would it look like to do what we say we all believe in?’”

Alessi has been doing just that for nearly three decades. Whether it’s being praised for bridging the gap between the disabled and the able-bodied or fighting against social prejudices towards people with disabilities, DanceAbility International has been promoting equal opportunity dance for over 25 years. Alessi’s efforts have been recognized several times; he is a Guggenheim, Ashoka and Fulbright senior fellow. Now he can add “arts envoy” to the list. In early April, Alessi and his dancing partner, Karen Daly, a DanceAbility teacher, cancer survivor and wheelchair-user, were chosen as arts envoys for the U.S. State Department to spread mixed-ability dance to new territories.



ALITO ALESSI AND KAREN DALY
LEAVE FOR ASIA ON APRIL 18

MYRAY REAMES

The dance duo departs April 18 for a month-long trip to Indonesia, the Philippines and Mongolia to teach the DanceAbility methodology. The trip will reach people in both urban and rural regions. “We want to build self-sustaining programs of movement work in the whole country,” Alessi says.

“It’s about dance, but dance is the vehicle for something much larger and that is to confront the realities of mixed abilities and to experience the value rather than the fear

that happens when you bring people together,” Alessi says. “We want to create a model for that and I think that it’s a great concept to spread.”

DanceAbility has launched a Kickstarter “DanceAbility Documentary in Asia” campaign with the goal of raising \$5,000 by April 26 to fund a professional videographer to capture footage for a feature-length documentary about the trip. At press time, their Kickstarter had raised \$4,901. For more information, visit www.danceability.com ■

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