

'All the World's a Stage....but not if you can't get on it'

DaDaFest International 2016

Congress on Disability, Culture and Human Rights

Venue: Museum of Liverpool, 1 & 2 December 2016

DaDaFest, are delighted to announce its second DaDaFest International Congress.

This is designed as a set of conversations to explore the contexts and impacts on how the arts are delivered with artists and practitioners from across the globe, and how and if the parameters within which we operate makes for exhilarating, diverse, disruptive and radical arts work.

Disability and Deaf arts are currently on a very exciting journey, one we have been on for the last 40 years, but exciting because we are at last being noticed beyond the disability/Deaf arts sector. There is now more open media exposure and responsiveness to the work created and a growing appreciation as to how we link, connect and challenge the making and creating of the arts in terms of form and practice.

Has Disability Arts as the 'Last Avant Garde' [Yinka Shonibare] now come of age?

For many years we have been silently changing the parameters of how we 'do' arts, demonstrating fresh, unusual and diverse ways of making and creating work based from the lived experience of disability. We have been confidently spearheading new ways of moving the arts discourse on into unchartered and uncomfortable arenas of practice and presence: but now it is being noticed but is this is the right ways?

This Congress provides an opportunity to showcase examples of these changes, brought about by creativity and artistic excellence from the very practitioners in the UK and from across the globe, to share experiences, explain our thinking, to describe the processes which we hope will challenge us all, to think of new ways in how we work together across the arts, with all people, which in turn will embed diversity, social change and expose more people to cultural opportunities.

This congress is an important forum to bring neglected topics into public discourse: and highlight the massive contribution disability art makes to the enrichment of society: after all, disability is a human issue and happens to everyone.

The Festival

DaDaFest has played a vital role in the history of disability and deaf arts. The festival was set up to create a platform for artists, their work and creativity and to ensure that disabled peoples voices are -being heard throughout the arts sector. Every edition has seen the festival grow, presenting an increasingly ambitious programme created by local, regional, national and international emerging and established artists and companies of outstanding artistic quality.

Congress

While the festival is one of the worlds' largest celebrations of disability arts, this year it will be complimented by the second congress on disability/Deaf arts, culture and human rights.

A must learning and engagement opportunity for anyone interested in disability arts, diversity and inclusive arts experiences from the mainstream and disability arts sectors. The festival is a leading global celebration of disability arts; our congress is set to become a leading global summit on the subject to discuss the key issues affecting disability, cultural and human rights today.

PS: 2016 marks the 400 anniversary of Shakespeare's Death, in tribute to the great bard, we are using and blatantly plagiarising some of his most well-known sayings.

Programme

DAY ONE - 1 December:

'Though this be Disability, there is Method in it'

SESSION ONE

Morning Plenary:

Registration

Chair – Kaite O'Reilly

Key Note One – Heidi Thomas

Key Note Two – John McGrath

Key Note Three – Jenny Sealey MBE

Q & A session & panel discussion

Performance Poet - Tammy Reynolds

SESSION TWO: No Legacy is So Rich as Honesty

Round Table Discussions to encourage and stimulate debate on some of the key issues affecting disability/Deaf arts today.

A. To Crip or Not To Crip!

Is it right to disclose or hide identity as a disabled /deaf artist. Does it help or hinder? Is the disability arts sector the only place we can really feel at home! Are we artists or Disability Artists?

B. Measured for Measured

The role of diverse representation: race, gender, age, sexuality and disability from Shakespeare to today - how it is presented in today's arts sector? Is it important that it is? Does the 'tick box' mean we don't develop true representation? Who benefits and who should benefit? What or who really needs to change?

C. Comedy of Dis-Errors

“With mirth and laughter let old wrinkles come.”

A discussion to explore how comedy can be used to empower or oppress. Why is it that so many comedians continue to use disability to get laughs? What can be done to challenge this or should we even challenge it? Where does the line between censorship and PC lie?

D. The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together!

Education is such a vital and imposed experience for us all. In terms of disability, there have been huge changes in the classrooms over the last 15 years and the notion of inclusive education has been in focus for different reasons. This discussion will focus on the progress and the faults and what still needs to be done and how the arts subjects specifically have a role to play.

E. Making the Beast with Two backs!

A discussion about sexualised performances, the sex industry, sexuality, sex, lies and videotape to explore the reality and myths perpetuated within art and performance from the perspectives of disabled people who work and live it.

F. The Wheel has Come Full Circle?

What does the future look like in terms of diversity and disability/deaf arts? What are the main issues that are being addressed in this congress about arts practice and how can we continue to build a future as a distinct, collaborative or inclusive arts sector or do you think we should?

Afternoon Plenary

SESSION THREE: To Do A Great Thing, Do a little Wrong

Artist/s Case Study – followed by Q & A

Review of the Day -

An interview with Tony Heaton OBE

Performance

Round up and instructions for tomorrow led by Chair

Ends

DAY TWO – 2 December:

'The smallest worm will turn, being trodden on'

Morning Plenary

SESSION FOUR

Chair's Welcome – Ruth Gould MBE

Opening Keynote Speech – Sir Bert Massie CBE

Key Note – Claire Cunningham

Ben Evans – British Council

The International Context

Reetu Jain, Claire Cunningham, Ben Evans, Padraig Naughton, Miro Griffiths, Kaite O'Reilly

SESSION FIVE: 'If Diversity be the food of Life, Play On'

A. **'Much Ado about Everything'**

Can arts practices and their embracing of diversity advance or change methodologies towards more inclusion, new ways of experiencing art and growing new audiences? The Arts Council's Creative Case work is focussed mainly on the programming, so how can we affect change and make choices as the people responsible?

B. Be not afraid of disability: some are born disabled, some achieve disability and some have disability thrust upon them".

What are the obstacles or fears that underpin working within disability /Deaf Arts contexts? Who is more afraid of whom, and how can we move towards more openness because we want to, not because it is on someone else's agenda?

c. We know what we are, but not what we may be!

The work with communities can be rewarding, but particularly here in the UK, we are dealing with increasing cuts and austerity measures that are impacting engagement. What responsibilities should we take and how, to ensure people have the chance to discover new ways of doing and connecting through the arts.

D. Such as we are made of, such we be.

Disability Arts is a powerful way of capturing social justice issues: indeed it could be argued that this as a movement has led to the disability equality changes in today's society. This discussion will focus on why and if it is still important to develop arts that captures these issues. Why is it important to work in this way and what do we want to really achieve?

E. Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind.

The issues about identity, diversity and representation continue to prevail. How can we truly create work that reflects us as fully human, as artists and black, white, disabled non-disabled? Picking up on some of the issues presented in the Arts D'Visions

discussion back in March, this discussion will focus on what is changing, what is stagnating and what is still going wrong?

G. To Thine Own Self be True.

A discussion based on gender politics, identity and intersectionality. How do the arts create dialogue, impact and progress about such issues? Do we actually know how to be true to ourselves? How does society try to keep us boxed in? What is the cost of not conforming to societies expectations? Are we moving towards a more open and tolerant culture or is there a sense of impending intolerance?

SESSION SIX: O had I but followed the arts!

The Big Debate

The big debate topic will be revealed at a later date. Attendees may vote on this at the event and on the DaDaFest website with the results being revealed after the festival has ended.

Final Keynote – Julie McNamara
“I Will Have My Pound of Flesh”

Vote Results and Closing Keynote Performance

CONGRESS CLOSES