

(Re)Defining Disability-Allyship

An investigation into how Disability-Allyship is lived and practiced in the Contemporary Viennese Dance-Scene through interviews and research-sessions with self-identifying Disabled Dance-Artists.

What has happened since June 2020?

- Researching literature, lectures and interviews on Disability Allyship, Disability Justice and Social Justice
- Working with Tanja Erhart as paid mentor on this project
- Creating a template for the interviews
- Searching for and connecting with paid interview-partners
- Holding interview sessions (some colleagues preferred live, other via mail)
- Transcribing live-interviews
- Formulating personal conclusion
- Integration of newly found knowledge into current and planned projects

For the Future:

- Not all of the colleagues I asked for interviews had the time and energy - in these difficult times - to meet in reality or virtually and to be part of the interview sessions. Some of my appreciated colleagues belong to the high-risk group, thus are even more affected by the Covid19-Virus and do not have the capacity of interviews like these at the moment. Because I understood it is important to see these interviews-series as an ongoing project and create a database of interviews, I would like to hold some more talks in 2021.
- As for the time being I just have a personal conclusion of how these interviews impacted me as person and artist, I would like to gather all these findings in a more professional setting. I am not yet clear about the frame, but artistic ideas are emerging already - a lecture performance with me and some interested disabled colleagues could be the best format to present the outcome of this research in a way, that it still centers voices and concerns of the community of self-identified disabled artists and communicates them to other (non-)disabled artists.

Questions and Topics discussed in the Interview-Sessions:

1. **Introduction:** Self-introduction, clarifying my interest and my intentions
2. **Terminology:** Asking for information which terminologies are the preferred ones
3. **Allyship:** Investigating and defining the terms *Allyship* and *Ally*, and their possible translations to German
4. **Association-Game:** Aiming to find multisensorial approaches to *Allyship*
5. **Artistic Collaborations:** Asking the artists about their experiences and wishes for collaborations with non-disabled artists.
6. **Disability Appropriation:** Discussing *Disability Appropriation* and strategies to counter it.
7. **Ableism:** Discussing *Ableism*, and how it plays out in the Dance- and Performance-Scene; and talking about Anti-Ableist-Strategies for the present and future

8. **Resources:** Asking for valuable resources and recommendations (books, documentaries, podcasts, movies,...) dealing with *(Anti-)Ableism* and *Allyship*

9. **Final Question:** What does it take you to make a collaboration a pleasurable experience?

Evaluation of Interview-Sessions:

Since this small report is not the right format to share all of the answers and input I received, I still want to share a short conclusion of the interview-sessions; since there were many intersecting answers and concerns mentioned by the interviewed artists.

What would you need/wish/want/expect... from a non-disabled Ally?

Understand Allyship as a Verb: Solidarity in words and actions

Research, Understand and Celebrate *Crip Time*

Fight for Access - on all levels!

Transparency and Clarity about the motivation of the non-disabled person behind the collaboration

Be actively anti-ableist!

Research and Self-Educate about *Disability* and *Ableism* from resources created by people with the lived experience of Disability (e.g.: *The Social Model of Disability*)

Center the lived experience of the oppressed disabled minority in language-use and in the collaboration, instead of centering and reinforcing the experience of non-disabled folks.

Active listening!

Question your role and identity as non-disabled person within society and this collaboration!

Understand that many self-identified disabled artist have had bad, exploitative and harmful experiences with non-disabled collaborators in the past and therefore feel more comfortable and safe not being the only disabled person involved in the collaboration. Also understand if they choose not at all to collaborate with a non-disabled artist.

Understand the importance of *Check-Ins*, *Check-Outs* and *Access & Care-Riders* (I got introduced to these riders by Tanja Erhart) as part of the collaboration.

Actively demand and support a shift of power-dynamics within (art-)institutions. More self-identified disabled are needed in key roles!

Understand that for some disabled folks asking about their medical history is an absolute No-Go.

Accountability is a process! Use and appreciate your chance of transformation after being called out for ableist actions. Take responsibility!

Recognize your privileges and challenge them!