



ICDF Networks

September 2018

Ability Not Disability

During the past few years we have become increasingly aware of work being done among communities that are not usually associated with dance. In ICDF, as you may know, we have had the Network for Deaf Signing for some time. We do however feel that there are so many other areas of dance now being offered in support of vulnerable people that, in the near future, we are hoping to launch a new Network with the title of 'Ability Not Disability'. In this Newsletter we are touching on dance for the deaf, the partially sighted and for those in wheelchairs.

If you are interested in joining this new venture please contact us at icdfworld@gmail.com



Photos on pages 1&2: Sign Language from the recent CDFSA Gauteng Conference led by Charlene Roberson

Signing - a beautiful expression for the deaf

I am delighted to introduce Charlene Roberson so she can share her story with you. Like mine, she has watched God lead her more and more in her involvement with Sign Language. Undoubtedly, she is being prepared to meet more and more members of the Deaf Community that God has prepared for her to meet.

I will never forget as I interpreted for a deaf friend in my church in England, how he fell back in the pew exclaiming through tears that he had just “heard music for the first time in his forty five years.” That was, because as dancers, we move more than our hands. We express with our whole being and facial expression, music and lyrics that make VISIBLE the “sound!”

YOU too dear sister or brother, could be being prepared in your heart by God with a passion to “bridge the gap” between the Deaf and Hearing Community with the endless love of Jesus!

Linda Wells - Coordinator for the ICDF Network for Deaf Signing

Signing is usually seen in the context of interpreting for the deaf, but added to that it can enhance our worship vocabulary as dance ministers as seen in the testimony below. Also read more about Charlene's ministry in Sign Language on the next page where we bring you 'Workshop Testimonies'.



Signing - a beautiful worship language

My name is Charlene Roberson. I've been married to Marc Roberson for 8 years and have a beautiful 7-year-old son named Yoni. I started learning sign language when a lady called Vivian came to do a sign language workshop at our church in 2003. I've always felt drawn to sign language from a young age even though I did not have any deaf people in my immediate family or friendship circles.

I studied sign language at Rhema Church from 2004 – 2006 and at WITS Language School from 2006 – 2008. I started teaching Interpretive Sign Language at our church's creative arts school in 2007 as well as several conferences.

Since I started learning sign language, I have felt an increase in relationship with my Heavenly Father. I have used it to evolve my worship into something more tangible, something more real than just words. Using Sign language has helped me to enlarge my worship vocabulary giving more meaning to my worship.

Charlene Roberson

The Christian Dance Fellowship of South Africa, Gauteng Region, recently held workshops led by Charlene Roberson in Sign Language at their Regional Conference. Two of the delegates shared their testimonies with us ...

Workshop Testimonies

“It was such an honour and a privilege to be a part of the Interpretive Sign Language class at this year's CDFSA Gauteng conference.

It was amazing to learn the importance of using sign language in the creative arts to interpret a song to deaf people. As deaf people cannot hear it becomes the responsibility of us who can hear to bring across the message of a song.

It doesn't help to just know the movements and the signs but to bring across the emotions through our faces and through our body language. That makes a huge difference in our interpretive movement and it's the substance that we carry in our spirits and the word of God we carry that will ultimately come across.

So I am blessed and encouraged to pursue sign language in the arts further! Thank you CDFSA for bringing us such a great teacher and for giving us the opportunity to learn!”

Chad Keet

“My experience at the conference was truly extraordinary. I felt so loved and welcomed by everyone there.

I walked out of this experience not only stronger as a dancer but stronger in faith. I learnt a lot and I am so grateful towards everyone who made this possible.

Sign Language was a class that intrigued me as I have never really participated in the language and to incorporate it into a dance was exciting. Dance is not simply moving your body to music but it's about expressing yourselves in a way words cannot. It's about letting go and allowing your feet follow your heart.

The Sign Language workshop made me more aware of the deaf community and this type of awareness taught me that dance is really all inclusive. God has given us all a soul which desires to dance in the presence of His grace and who are we to stop such magnificence.”

Bodene



Melissa Regas (Deaf Artist) ASL art

Silent Hands

Can you hear me?
Listen, not with your ears
But with your eyes.
To you they speak,
My silent hands.
Hear me tell my tale.
Hear me sing my song.
Learn my language,
My beautiful native language.
Hear my hands,
Hear my music and story.
Learn my language.
Speak to me with your hands.
Share my beautiful language.
Hear my silent hands.
We have a tale to tell,
A song to sing.
Open your eyes
And hear me speak.

Author: Sandra L. Brooks

<http://deafworldministries.com/deafpoetry.html>

Teaching Dance to the Visually Challenged

A question that remains always when it comes to the visually challenged is how for them to fully participate in the worship. Yes, they do Bible braille readings and singing in the choir. Yet their 'wholeness' is not involved – this is my personal feeling about them. After I involved myself in teaching dance to these students, I got the answer to fully involve them in the worship like any other children ... through dance. In addition, this dance helped them to understand the different positions and directions in which their body moves.

It was a challenge for me to teach dance to them. However, they do dance taught by their school teachers or by the nuns who take care of them. But it was not classical dance or any other trained dance form. When I got the chance to teach Bharatanatyam, in the beginning I didn't understand from where to start teaching or how to teach them this dance technique. Bharatanatyam consists of geometrical shapes. One of the important movements is using the eyes (eye expression).

It took me quite a long time to understand for myself how best to teach dance to visually challenged children. From the dance form of Bharatanatyam I picked out some of the technique and, with some changes, made this relevant for teaching to these special dance students.



Jesica Sinniah

Jesica will be teaching a workshop on this theme at the Dance and Culture Study Tour in India next year. You can read all about it on page 5

Wheelfever update

Many of our supporters will remember reading about Wheelfever being part of the Ghana conference in 2016 when we were privileged to partner with their Director, Paula Hocking, two dancers from the Project - one a very able wheelchair dancer - and their cameraman. We were blessed by their creative and innovative performances and their passion for their dance. We therefore decided that it was time to catch up with them to hear what has been happening with the company lately.

Since 2016, Wheelfever Projects has continued to go from strength to strength. Their recent End of Year Show, which included performances by all Wheelfever Dance Groups, their 'Dance Forward' Training Company and guests, was stunning and left audiences wanting more. Their Summer Project included an Ariel Workshop and the new year for them started with a visit by New Adventures, a British dance-theatre company, famous for telling stories with a unique theatrical twist ... a fun and accessible way for members of Wheelfever Dance Groups to get an insight into the work of a professional company which has delighted, inspired and nurtured people of all ages and backgrounds for over 30 years.



As ICDF looks to launch 'Ability not Disability' as a network, Paula writes: "I am really pleased that ICDF are continuing to support vulnerable people - that warms my heart."

Wheelfever Projects is an Inclusive Dance Company for disabled and non-disabled young people to enjoy creative, artistic and social experiences together. Weekly classes are offered to children from age 7 through to young adults of 25. These classes build up dance skills, confidence and improvisation leading to choreography for performance. Wheelfever Projects is a community dance project.

"ABILITY NOT DISABILITY" IN INDIA 2019

Experiencing The World Through Dance

At the Dance & Culture Study Tour in India, Jesica Sinniah will show the techniques that she uses to help her visually challenged students to perform Bharatanatyam and how through this dance form she teaches them to communicate Biblical themes with dance expression. She will use the music and lyrics of a 2 minute song to demonstrate the 'touch me and learn' technique of teaching dance moves. This will be an individual workshop entitled, 'Experiencing the world through dance'. It will be a practical workshop where Jesica will be joined by a group of students from the *Jyothi Seva School*.



Meet the Dance Group

"Our students come from different states of India, all are students of Jyothi Seva School and Home for the Blind in Bangalore. Jyothi Seva Society is dedicated to the education, rehabilitation and care of the visually challenged. The children are educated accordance with the SSLC syllabus, but have additional classes in various skills needed for the visually impaired. In extra curricular activities, music and dance play the most significant role.

Our children come from poor families, different religions and are aged between 11-20 years old. Dance joins them in one big joyful family. Every year our students perform various programs at local, district and state level. They take part in different dance

competitions receiving prizes and applause for their unique stage performance.

Our students get proper dance training under a renowned dance teacher who completed her dance training and education in a Catholic dance institution named Kalai Kaviri College of Fine Arts - Trichy. Our students get traditional Bharatanatyam dance training for more than five years. The dance teacher has been associated with us since 2004.

Under her guidance and practice, our students have given a number of performances, notably at the Catholic Bishops Conference of India and Christmas program performances in the Doorsarshan Television Indian National Channel for Karnataka state - this continuously for the last three years."

- Sr. Katarzyna, Jyothi Seva School and Home for the Blind

Seated Dance

This individual workshop will focus on different ways to make dance accessible to those with limited mobility - the elderly, those in wheelchairs or those who cannot move freely across the floor. Expect to be surprised by the possibilities as we explore different dance styles whilst remaining seated. The workshop will be presented by different teachers, all experts in their dance styles.

