

Dancing Wheels Company & School

ART IN MOTION



DARING TO BE DUMBO

WHO WE ARE:

Dancing Wheels, America's first physically integrated dance company, has pioneered the inclusion of people with and without disabilities through the arts. For over 32 years, we have been creating and presenting passionate integrated dance works from nationally esteemed choreographers and utilizing this new art form to educate, advocate and entertain audiences throughout the world. We are a unique vehicle that inspires, alters attitudes, and opens the doors of possibilities for thousands in a way that no other arts entity can. From school assembly programs to mainstage concerts, we have reached 4.5 people million worldwide with our art.

PROJECT SUMMARY:

With the cooperation of several partners, Dancing Wheels will be expanding on our world premiere performance of the multi-media ballet "Dumbo" to create an entertaining and educational tv documentary based on the issues of bullying and social injustice. Using the life stories of artists and community figures, we will explain how they rose above the ridicule to become successful. We will then develop an assembly program for schools and community groups throughout Cuyahoga County and the nation.

WHAT WE WILL DO:

Dancing Wheels constantly searches for projects that truly symbolize the essence of the organization, that is, capture the message of diversity and acceptance and that resonates with a troupe of dancers that, because of their mix of ethnicity, age and physical abilities, may be considered different from what a "typical" dancer may be. Because of its heartwarming moral lessons of embracing differences and conquering adversity, the story of "Dumbo" truly resonates and Dancing Wheels will be creating and mounting a multi-media production based on a modern-day version of this beloved Disney story. To expand its reach beyond the initial production, Dancing Wheels will be creating an accompanying documentary which will air on WKYC-TV 3. The filming of the documentary will take place during the creation of the production, with a preview at All Points Connect Tolerance Fair in March 2014. A nationwide announcement about the documentary and outreach will be made to schools and such organizations as Bully Free World and Trevor Project. This entertaining documentary will integrate the dance/theater work with real-life interviews by artists involved in the production, notable local celebrities, and community leaders who have suffered from incidences of social injustice but are now triumphant in their work and daily living. After the airing on WKYC-TV 3 in April 2014, the piece will be edited and mixed with dance excerpts from Dumbo to be used in our outreach and educational assembly programs in schools, libraries, hospitals, and community-based programs throughout Cuyahoga. The expansion of this project will reach hundreds of thousands of individuals from a cross-section of our community that couldn't or wouldn't otherwise have exposure to this important and topical subject matter.

WHO WILL BE INVOLVED:

David Rousseve, nationally-renowned dance theater director, filmmaker, and choreographer is choreographing "Dumbo". He and Dancing Wheels Artistic Director Mary Verdi-Fletcher will write and direct the documentary's production.

Paul Wehn will film the documentary during the creation of "Dumbo" to capture insights and dialog from the artists.

The Allpoints Tolerance Fair will show a preview of the documentary and lead an audience discussion.

WKYC-TV 3 will air the half-hour documentary twice as a special at high viewership times and set up a series of interviews and PSA's reaching a broad-based audience throughout our region.

Mark Tomasic will create an all-encompassing assembly program with excerpted choreography from "Dumbo" and from the edited documentary for schools, libraries, and community groups throughout Cuyahoga and beyond.

Diversity Center of NEO will be the conduit to schools and community groups throughout Cuyahoga County, organizing showings of the documentary and live performances to their audience base.

The Arts & Medicine Institute of Cleveland Clinic will reach its employees and patients with showings at area CCF hospitals and 18 Family Health Centers, by airing it on their dedicated patient channel in their 8 hospitals, and by offering it to such partners as Music School Settlement, Ursuline College, and Tri-C.

The Girl Scouts of NEO will bring the presentation to their 40,000 members in NEO at group meetings, conferences and assembly programs.

WHO WE WILL REACH:

Because this project is multifaceted, it has the potential to reach hundreds of thousands of individuals throughout Cuyahoga County and beyond. During the world premiere and subsequent performances, we estimate reaching 5,000 individuals. This will include students from area schools who will be bused in to attend our 10 student matinees and a wide range of families who will attend a series of 3 public performances. A preview of the documentary and dialog will be a part of Tolerance Fair reaching 5,000 people. The television documentary and media coverage is estimated to reach 421,750 viewers. The community assembly program will be taken to area schools, libraries, and community groups reaching an additional 25,000 people (figures are based on actual numbers reached in our previous outreach programs). The Girl Scouts will reach 40,000 members and Cleveland Clinic will reach 210,000 patients, families, medical staff and other employees, for an estimated total audience reach of 691,750!

WHERE IT WILL HAPPEN:

The premiere performance of "Dumbo" will take place at the Breen Center for the Performing Arts at Saint Ignatius, the Tolerance Fair will take place at the IX Center, and the documentary will be aired on WKYC-TV 3 to their entire Northeast Ohio audience. Additionally, the outreach programs will be offered to the Cuyahoga County schools and schools in the surrounding counties, the Cuyahoga County library system, the 8 regional hospitals within the Cleveland Clinic system, and at Girl Scout sites throughout Northeast Ohio in support of their equality programming. We are truly trying to reach a diverse and vast audience base by integrating many locations and channels of communication.

OUR ABILITY TO CARRY OUT THE PROJECT:

Dancing Wheels has survived and thrived for 32 years, and achieved the great milestone as Cleveland's longest-running dance company, by not sitting on our laurels; we approach longevity with innovative artistic and administrative strategies. Dancing Wheels, under the leadership of its founder Mary Verdi-Fletcher, is recognized as the pioneering force for physically integrated dance and a trail-blazing entity throughout the world by taking on incredible challenges and opportunities that have come our way for more than three decades. By doing so, we have forwarded positive perceptions and achievements of artists with disabilities globally and have made the arts available to all children and adults who want to participate— regardless of socio-economic challenges or physical limitations.

In 2005, we created and produced a similar made-for-television documentary on Integrated Dance in America, which also aired on WKYC-TV 3. We have created and premiered 5 story ballets and 40 new repertory pieces in our history, and we conduct and perform a minimum of 70 assembly programs and educational presentations each year throughout the nation. Just this year, we unveiled the world's first training manual and DVD on the Dancing Wheels method of integrated dance— a labor of love that took 2 years to write, publish, and bring to fruition. We have no doubt that we, along with our esteemed partners, will not only accomplish this project but will celebrate its high level of success as well.