The *Atypique* Approach:
Disability Aesthetics and Theatre-Making in Montréal, Québec and Vancouver, British Columbia

Ashley McAskill

A Thesis
In the Department
of
Communication Studies

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy (Communication) at
Concordia University
Montréal, Québec, Canada

July 2019

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

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By: Ashley McAskill

Entitled: The *Atypique* Approach: Disability Aesthetics and Theatre-Making in Montréal, Québec and Vancouver, British Columbia

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor Of Philosophy (Communication)

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Signed by the final examining committee:

____Chair
Dr. Masha Salazkina

____External Examiner
Dr. Jonathan Sterne

____External to Program
Dr. Ursula Neuerburg-Denzer

____Examiner
Dr. Kim Sawchuk

____Examiner
Dr. Warren Linds

____Thesis Supervisor
Dr. Lorna Roth

Approved by ____
Dr. Jeremy Stolow, Graduate Program Director

August 28, 2019 ____
Dr. André Roy, Dean, Faculty of Arts and Science

ABSTRACT

The *Atypique* Approach: Disability Aesthetics and Theatre-Making in Montréal, Québec and Vancouver, British Columbia

Ashley McAskill, Ph.D.
Concordia University, 2019

Although there is literature on disability and theatre across central and western Canada, very little scholarly work has been done on Québec. This dissertation explores how theatre companies and programs working with disabled artists in Vancouver and Montréal are changing perspectives of disability and theatre making. Whereas other scholarly work within Canadian contexts has focused on the histories and professional survival of said companies and programs, I will theorize on how they are changing new aesthetic standards and practices for the performing arts. My research uses intensive fieldwork with three case studies- Theatre Terrific (Vancouver, British Columbia), the performance training program Les Muses (Montréal, Québec), and Les Production des pieds des mains (Montréal, Québec). Through my participant observation and ethnographic research of their classes, workshops, and rehearsals, followed with interviews with participating artists and artistic directors, I theorize on how disability is approached and creatively used as a generative tool by my participants. My research explores the personal and ethical complexity of this kind of community fieldwork, and the centrality of the personal relationships I built with my participants. I theorize on the aesthetic politics and practices that emerge from my participants within Anglophone and Francophone cultural contexts. For my Montréal participants, I situate their work within what I call an *atypique* approach whereby disabled artists and non-normative bodies are artistically privileged and meaningfully socially integrated. I also explore how *slowness* is used as a way to pedagogically move away from valuing one temporal pace of learning and artistically creating. I then bring slowness and the *atypique* approach into dialogue with my concept of *tenderness*- a term I use to articulate how performance and human encounters deformalize static ways of understanding the world. My participants break through the molds of ableism whereby their creative work is still often perceived through medical lenses of being art therapy or overcoming their challenges. Using critical disability studies and community performance studies to frame my arguments, my research extends how disability is a complex lens of how to move in the world that opposes normative standards of time and space. This dissertation lends new language, aesthetic theorization, and pedagogical understanding to disability theatre in Canada.

Acknowledgements

To my supervisor, **Dr. Lorna Roth:** Thank you for your ongoing reframing of the world. Your storytelling has always been the best pedagogical tool any supervisee could ask for. Your ethical wisdom has made me a better community-engaged researcher.

To my mentor, **Dr. Kim Sawchuk:** Working with you over these past few years has been nothing more than a dream. Your critical way of thinking of research has allowed me to better understand my project, and my role as an ally.

To my mentor, **Dr. Warren Linds**: Thank you for being with me on this journey. Your knowledge of applied theatre technique opened my project up to integral theatre scholarship. I like the way you see the world, Warren, and I am appreciative of it.

To externals, **Dr. Ursula Neuerburg-Denzer**: Thank you for meeting me on a whim one day in your office after just one phone call and introducing to me the Concordia Theatre Department, a place I will always feel at home. To **Dr. Jonathan Sterne**: Thank you for your generosity and honour of being on my examination committee. Your perspective is important to have on this committee and I am forever grateful.

To Dr. Charles Acland: Thank you for all the opportunities over the years and good energy. I loved working with you and learning more about cultural practice and archival research.

To my dear friend, **Dr. Dirk Gindt:** You have been my rock throughout my graduate career. Thank you so much for taking me under your wing and bestowing so much wisdom on pedagogy, wellness, and most importantly, how to lead an academic career with collegiality and passion.

To my McMaster University MA supervisor, **Dr. Christina Baade**: I will always remember your words, "Thinking is writing." Your support throughout my PhD application process and attentiveness on thoughtful advice has always stayed with me. Thank you for caring so much.

To my undergraduate theatre professors, **Dr. Peter Cockett** and **Dr. Catherine Graham**: My classes with you instilled my passion in pursuing a PhD and focus on theatre research. Your influence has played a profound impact on my life's trajectory. Thank you.

To **Dr. Kirsty Johnston**. Thank you for laying the meaningful foundation to the landscape of Canadian disability theatre. Your work has been a constant source of reference and grounding to my research. Your generosity and mentorship has meant the world to me.

Thank you to members of **Concordia's Critical Disability Studies Working Group**, **Canadian Association of Theatre Research**, the **IFTR Performance and Disability Working Group**, and the 2014 and 2019 **Encuentro Performance and Disability Working Group**.

To my PhD cohort, **Dylan, Azra, Theo, Magda, Irene, and Alison**: Thank you for being the brilliant people you are and intellectually inspiring me to boundaries I never could have imagined with this project.

To my theatre sisters: **Lindsay, Kathleen, Jess, Sandy, Blythe, Alison, Meredith, Kerry.** You are family. You are the reason I fell in love with this field. Thank you for your good energy and ongoing friendship.

To my dear friends: **Rachel, Mira, Christina H, Corey, Sacha, Darian, Luciano, Trish, Nic, Megan, Anna, Ashley, Ali, Constance, Laurence, Sacha, Akhila, Matt, Brian, Sam, Jessica, Aimee, Véro, Julia H, Kelsie and Mariam**. You have all played a significant role in supporting me throughout this writing process, personally and academically. You were the place I went when I needed to cry, vent, laugh, problem-solve, and find grounding.

To my best friend, **Kendall Kolne**: My lifestyle partner, Thelma-to-my-Louise, Beyoncé-to-my-Kelly, Birch-to-my-Maple I love you so much. Riding out these last 8 years with you while living in Montréal was a dream come true. You are a beautiful human being and I am just so happy us two Hamilton gals found ourselves living in the big city together while doing our PhDs.

To **Susanna Uchatius, Menka Nagrani, Cindy Schwartz, and all my participating artists**: your presence and energy in this project has been life changing for me. Thank you for all your time and patience as I learned how to navigate myself as a researcher. I look forward to continuing our collaboration, our friendships, and dialogues.

To my cats, **Gizmo and Kit McAskill**: Thank you for your snuggles, unconditional love, and overall cuteness. I love you and I am so happy to be fur mama.

To my **Hicks, McAskill, and Samson extended family**: I am so proud to have you in my life. Thank you for always being supportive of my academic pursuits and encouraging me.

To my love, **Nicolas Samson**: Where to begin. Thank you for your unconditional way of loving me for who I am and all that I am. Thank you for wiping my tears when I felt like I would never finish. You will forever be my inspiration for good energy and all that is right in the world. I love you so much.

To **my mom, Holly McAskill, dad, Stuart McAskill, and sister, Carly McAskill**: Thank you for everything. Thank you for being my solid team I can rely on and the canoe that has paddled me through this course of life. My life is love because I have love from you.

To the people I lost in these past 8 years, **my uncle Howard McAskill, my dear aunt Lorna Lee Snowie, and my beautiful grandmother, Anne Hicks**: I have thought of you every moment since I last saw you. I think of you every day. I miss you dearly. I celebrate you even more.

To the **L'Arche Hamilton Community**: This is a dissertation dedicated to you. Inspired by you. In community with you. Thank you for being a centering place in the world for me. Where I feel loved and always at home.

To **my friend I prefer not to name**: ***Taps on wall three times*** I hope you are catching the biggest pizza fish wherever you are.

Thank you to **Fonds de recherche du Québec - Société et culture** for the generous funding of my doctoral project. This funding allowed me the flexibility to lead my fieldwork with such care.

I am forever grateful.

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Disabilities are states of being that are in themselves generative and, once de-stigmatized, allow us to envision an enormous range of human variety—in terms of bodily, spatial, and social configuration-Sandahl, 2002, p. 19

Personal Context

My introduction to disability culture began before I was born when my mother's brother and dear uncle, Peter Hicks, was diagnosed with a non-invasive, epidermoid brain tumour. Located at the cerebellum at the lower back of his brain and about the size of an egg, the tumour was removed in 1993. As a result of the tumour, he no longer moves with symmetrical balance and has a slurred-style of speech. At several points during his lifetime (in 1992, 2001, 2011, and 2015), the tumour returned. However, my uncle Peter has continued to live his life according to his own terms as much as possible, even including moving to Victoria, British Columbia in 2002 after living in Guelph, Ontario around all of us, his family. I recall speaking to him shortly after he moved, and his sharing with me his experience of flipping his kayak in the ocean, and losing his digital camera and sunglasses in the process. Over the years, my uncle has emphasized how living on the West Coast has given him the opportunity to breathe deeper, be more mobile, and live more independently. After living in Montréal for 8 years and experiencing some harsh winters, I have a deeper understanding now of why my uncle moved away all those years ago.

When my uncle walks, his wobbly, unbalanced, and jolty movement style is beautiful. I cannot remember a time when he has not used a cane or another mobile support device. Witnessing how he moves through the world, I am able to see how each of his steps are very different from the next—similar to an improvised dance. Unsure of where his legs and cane might land, he takes up space in his movement. In 2013, I stayed with him at his condo in downtown Victoria while attending a conference for the Canadian Association of Theatre Research (CATR). He had started using hiking poles to help with his balance. Walking to his favourite coffee shop one afternoon, I remember seeing him use both poles, flailing them in the air as he walked. Sensing my nervousness of his potentially losing balance and falling (as he had done in the past), he asked me to walk behind him. I remember the tension between being fearful of him falling and the simultaneous love of watching him command the paved sidewalk with his shaky movements. His way of moving offered me new ways of understanding how to be in urban spaces. Thus, my dissertation begins with considering how disability offers new ways of understanding relationships of community, space, and environment.

Research Context

Theatre companies that include and work with disabled artists are radical, not necessarily only because they make spaces for these artists to work, but also by the way they introduce new perspectives on creative practices and artistic training. These new perspectives include an acknowledgement of and respect for different kinds of artistic rhythms, cognitive perceptions, and paces; and the ways they embrace these differences. I use the word *radical* to emphasize how uncommon this openness is in the professional performing arts. Disability is a complex lens of how to move in this world that opposes normative standards of time and space. This is not to say that such complex concepts do not involve normative rhythms, nor does it insist that such a pace must be the most productive and valuable of temporalities. The lens of disability offers a perspective of flexibility and openness when considering how the aesthetics of time and space, and different bodies with a variety of perceptions and physicalities can exist together.

Many theatre makers continue to be intimidated to work with disabled artists, whether their disabilities are visible, less visible, or invisible. An ongoing perception exists that the bodies of these artists are unable to compete or "keep up" with the fast-moving and highly-demanding requirements of the mainstream theatre industry. Thus, many disabled artists are rarely cast and remain aesthetically devalued. These kinds of perceptions ultimately continue to frame disability as a limited way of being in the world. This dissertation, like many others emerging from a critical disability studies and performance theoretical perspective, argues that disability is a generative, rich way of being human. Thus, this dissertation examines how disability can be generative in the realm of the performing arts. The central question of this research is: How are disabled artists in Vancouver and Montréal creating new legacies of theatre-making that mobilize against ableism and accommodation culture in Canada?

This research emerges from my love of working in and with disability and theatre communities. Admittedly, at the beginning of my PhD career, I had an entirely different idea of what I wanted to explore. Yet, over time, my supervisor, Dr. Lorna Roth, inspired me to consider this project idea. While sharing my lack of inspiration for a new research idea in a phone conversation in early 2012, Roth simply said to me, "Well whenever you talk about your experience of working at L'Arche and theatre, you light up." I always will be thankful for these words. During 2009–2010, I worked as a Day Program Assistant for L'Arche Hamilton. Founded in 1964 by Jean Vanier, L'Arche is an international federation "dedicated to the creation and growth of homes, programs, and support networks with people who have intellectual disabilities" ("L'Arche"). During my time at L'Arche, I was able to work with its *core members*—the title given to its disabled community members—on various art projects, including pottery, drawing and painting, and short theatre pieces. On many occasions, I have described my time with this community as one of the happiest in my life. Returning to Roth's words, I was immediately inspired to think of this relationship between disability and theatre. Several years later, I am writing this dissertation and reflecting on witnessing some of the most incredible artistic work in Canada.

In her pioneering book *Stage Turns: Canadian Disability Theatre*, Kirsty Johnston (2012), Canadian theatre scholar and University of British Columbia professor, acknowledges how the term "*disability theatre* is neither easy to define nor homogeneous in its expression" (p. xiii). She describes her lack of interest in defining it as a "fixed practice or aesthetic," particularly when considering the ways that Canadian disability theatre groups and artists are "troubling received concepts of disability" (Johnston, 2012, p. 4). Disability theatre often is understood as a "branch of disability art" or a "specific art practice connected to disability arts and culture movement" (Johnston, 2012, p. 5). The disability arts movement involves artists with disabilities having "an activist perspective, dismantling stereotypes, challenging stigma, and reimagining disability as a valued human condition" (Johnston, 2012, p. 5). According to scholars from the United Kingdom and Canada, *disability arts* commonly is defined as a varied field in which disabled artists (with physical, mental illness, or cognitive disabilities) engage in artwork that focuses on the disability experience (Jacobson & McMurchy, 2010; Masefield, 2006).

However, not all Canadian Deaf artists include themselves in this disability arts movement. Some Deaf artists and community members feel Deaf culture has a "unique and independent history, language, and cultural forms" that are entirely different from "those who do not view deafness as an impairment" (Johnston, 2012, p. 5). Due to the debate about what and who belongs to this category of disability arts, it is difficult to provide a clear definition of the terms *disability arts* and *disability theatre*. Johnston (2012) notes that the most compelling characteristic of disabled artists is "their self-conscious contribution to a growing international disability arts and culture" (p. 4). Thus, a need exists to undo how disability is understood and represented, and to change the practices of theatre-making in Canada. The questions on which Johnston (2012) reflects in *Stage Turns* also are critical to this dissertation:

> What impulses drive disability theatre practices in Canada? How have disability artists articulated cultures and identities? Where have they set, pushed, or disregarded the boundaries for both? What dramaturgical, production, and collaborative methods have been employed or rejected in their practice? What aesthetic principles have informed artists' works? What kinds of audiences have they realized and to what effects? How has disability theatre challenged all Canadian theatre artists and audiences to question their casting, staging, publicity, and other production choices? (p. 14)

Given that Canadian disabled artists' creative work is helping to form new relationships amongst disability, theatre aesthetics, and artistic practice, my central question/focus is: How are different Canadian provinces and independent theatre companies doing this? My research responds to this question by drawing on my intensive fieldwork in Vancouver, British Columbia and Montréal, Québec.

Original Contribution

Whereas previous and ongoing studies have focused on the history and professional survival of these companies, my research focuses on how they are creating the leading edges of artistic legacies for disabled artists working in professional theatre and film. Through in-depth interviews with artistic directors and artists, participant observation of rehearsals and performance classes, and ethnographic research engaging in theatre exercises with my participants, my research uses intensive fieldwork with Canadian theatre companies in Vancouver and Montréal that work with disabled artists. I center on how my relationships with my participants to discuss how their access needs created ways for me to explore diverse approaches to my methods. I argue how these approaches are at the core of allyship and community-led research.

Past cultural reviews of disability arts in Canada have yet to provide a thorough analysis of the companies and disabled artists working in Québec. In the *Stage Turns*, Johnston (2012) focuses on theatre companies and disabled artists working primarily in Toronto, Ontario; Vancouver, British Columbia; and Calgary, Alberta. In 2004, members of Ryerson University's Institute of Disability Studies Research and Education—Jihan Abbas, Kathryn Church, Catherine

Frazee, and Melanie Panitch—wrote an introduction to the emerging field of disability arts and culture, using snapshots of the different kinds of creative works happening in Canada at the time (photography, theatre, performance, dance, autobiography, music, poetry, and visual arts). With respect to Québec disabled artists, their report "Lights…Camera…Attitude! An Introduction to Disability Arts and Culture" only mentions the Québec company *Pourquoi pas nous?* (Why Not Us?)—a theatre troupe comprised of seven actors with cognitive disabilities that represented Québec in the fifth European Festival of Mentally Disabled Artists in France—and France Geoffroy, one of Canada's pioneering disabled dancers. From 2002–2004, Rose Jacobson, project manager and artistic principal of Picasso Pro, a Toronto-based organization bridging disability and Deaf cultures with the performing and media arts, and Alex Bulmer, a blind award-winning actor and playwright, collaborated on a two-year research and training program to challenge ableism in the performing arts. Supported by the Trillium Foundation, their project focused primarily on disability arts organizations and theatre groups in London, England; Toronto, Ontario; and Vancouver, British Columbia, with no mention of Québec. In 2010, Jacobson continued her survey of the disability arts in Canada along with Geoff McMurchy, a disabled artist and co-founder of the Society for Disability Arts and Culture (S4AC, now known as Kickstart). Jacobson and McMurchy's (2010) report of the disability arts field was contracted by the Canada Council of the Arts to provide histories of the field and brief descriptions of the companies and artists emerging from different provinces. Although Jacobson and McMurchy (2010) provide short descriptions of some of the leading disability arts organizations, programs, and theatre and dance companies in Québec (p. 31–32)—which I describe and name in "Chapter 3: Setting the Scene"—they do not go into detail about their artistic practices or their impacts on disability culture in Québec. However, it is important to note that these works are critical introductions to the early histories of Canadian disability arts, since they were the first surveys and longer projects on how to understand and study disability arts in Canada. This dissertation adds to these dialogues with respect to the ways that Québécois disabled artists are contributing to the greater disability arts movement in Canada.

Conceptual Approach

Each chapter in this dissertation theorizes on aesthetic politics of time and space, and explores how disabled artists working in Montréal and Vancouver are creating new understandings of disability culture in Canada. My chapters, conceptually divided, resituate terms like *atypique*, slowness, and tenderness as central ways to describe the creative practices of my participants. Although my participants include members from diverse disability communities, the majority of them have cognitive disabilities. Also, since none of my participants self-identify as Deaf, my research focuses more on disability arts than Deaf arts. However, I want to emphasize that a need exists for more focused research on Deaf arts in Canada and their importance to the development and cultural significance of the Deaf and disability arts movement worldwide.

Taking an interdisciplinary theoretical approach, my thesis uses theatre, cultural, feminist, communications, critical disability, phenomenology, and affect theories. Some of my theorizations will emerge from “what is a concept” (Deleuze, 1991), “tender research” (Gagnon, 2005), “politics of emotion” (Ahmed, 2004, 2010), “aesthetic of injury” (Salverson, 1999, 2001), “face-to-face encounter” (Levinas, 1969, 1981), “disability aesthetics” (Sandahl, 2002, 2010; Siebers, 2010), and “slowness” (Barber-Stetson, 2014; Koepnick, 2014). I bring all of these concepts into dialogue with the concept of *tenderness*—a term I use to articulate the ways diverse performances and human encounters deformalize static ways of understanding the world. My emphasis on tenderness does not associate the disabled body with emotions such as fragility and weakness; rather, I theorize *tenderness* as an aesthetic quality that opens up other dimensions for understanding diversity and modes of performance.

My dissertation utilizes three critical conceptual approaches—the *atypique* approach, slowness, and tenderness. These concepts, which I introduce in the following paragraphs, are not fixed and extend from many philosophical conceptualizations that have existed prior to my own theorization of them. For example, Deleuze and Guattari’s (1991) last literary collaboration *What is a Philosophy?* situates philosophy as the creation of concepts: “to extract an event from things and being, to set up the new event from things and beings, always to give them a new event: space, time, matter, thought, the possible as events” (p. 33). The concepts I use to theorize the artistic work of my participants provide new ways of understanding the work of the disability arts emerging from Vancouver and Montréal. Moreover, although my dissertation provides new language to theorize and understand the work of disabled artists in Canada, I am not the originator of these concepts; rather, I articulate new possibilities of how to use them. Deleuze and Guattari (1991) argue that no concept has only one component, since “every concept relates back to other concepts” in its becoming (p. 19). Every concept has a history that *zigzags* “through other problems or onto different planes" (p. 18). Every concept is a plurality, a multiplicity of relationships with other problems and different subjects. Concepts are always in flux, carrying out new planes, and taking on new contours that "must be reactivated or recut" (p. 18). When considering the different movements of a concept, Deleuze and Guattari (1991) define a *concept* as "the inseparability of a finite number of heterogeneous components traversed by a point of absolute survey at infinite speed" (p. 21). My intention with respect to my theorizations of the *atypique* approach, slowness, and tenderness is to provide a new plane on how they can work in the field of disability and theatre, and reactivate an affective way to use them in relationship to performance and the human relations of difference.

Atypique approach: The word *atypique* has emerged in Québec as a way to describe the aesthetic richness of unconventional artists, such as those who are disabled. I use the word *unconventional* to emphasize how certain bodies are all-too-often robbed of their artistic legitimacy due to their assumed non-normative physical and/or cognitive styles. Chapter 4- The Atypique Approach critiques the histories of the traditionally valued healthy performer body. Giving rich descriptions of workshop practices, classroom spaces, and rehearsals from performance programs and theatre companies that work with disabled artists, I argue how *atypique* or atypical artists are creatively privileged and socially integrated. I explain how disability is used as a way to artistically open up the teaching practices of instructors, and overall creative energies ignited in these spaces. Using interviews with some of the artists participating in my project, I expand on the personal impact these groups have had on their members and how they have prompted a major cultural shift in the rights of disabled artists working in the Canadian performing arts industry. I situate this shift in what I call the *atypique* approach—the conscious effort these groups put forth to include all of their members in the most meaningful and creative ways possible. Through this lens, disability begins to be seen as a generative versus a limited way of being. The atypique approach unhinges affective processes that enable us to see and value the world and different bodies from an ethical perspective. This is an important aspect of *tenderness*, a process of softening the hard lenses through which we see others. Atypique artists prompt such affective responses in their creative work.

Slowness: *Slowness*, as Barber-Stetson (2014) suggests, is a "specific cognitive style" that gives individuals more time to access different parts of their environment and that avoids putting pressure on them to achieve a normative temporality of processing (p. 148). In Chapter 5-

Slowness, I discuss the ways that theatre groups working with disabled artists move away from valuing one kind of temporality in their creative spaces. I examine how slowness is used as a way of acknowledging the array of cognitive styles energizing the creative space. To lay a foundation for this examination, I discuss the histories of the "slow movement" and its political and affective significance on how we define what are productive bodies and temporalities. In this chapter, *slowness* is defined as a mode of critical perception-making for understanding human diversity. Slowing down one's pace opens up an opportunity to explore different qualities of experience that our "contemporary culture of speed rarely allows us to," and as Koepnick (2014) says, "[i]t sharpens our sense of coexistence of difference and often incompatible vectors of time, and in doing so, it invites us to reflect on the impact of contemporary speed on our notions of place, subjectivity, and sociability" (Introduction). By referring to different experiences and exercises of the creative practices of my participants, I discuss my observations of how disabled artists use slowness as a political and artistic tool to acknowledge/explore cognitive styles and differential human mobilities. Slowness is a moment when we can give space to understand the needs of ourselves and others, and more importantly, constitute relationality. Slowness provides the space for us to have greater and richer ethical encounters with others, and ignite important conversations about difference.

Tenderness: Tenderness is an affective process that I develop throughout this dissertation. I develop the concept of *tenderness* as a) an ethical principal to ground my research approach in Chapter 2: With Tenderness, With Care, and b) as an affective response to the creative work of disabled artists in Chapter 6: Tenderness. Developing the concept of *tenderness* using these theoretical approaches provides a language to understand the affectivities produced by disabled artists.

Grounding my role as a researcher in tenderness in Chapter 2, I use tenderness as an ethical principal to understand how, as an ally researcher, I can meaningfully approach my fieldwork, particularly when working with communities outside of my own lived experience of the world. I situate my research approach using Monika Gagnon's (2006) notion of *tender research*—a critical engagement of the tender gestures that emerge and are performed between researcher and research subject (p. 216). Within the context of disability studies, I consider how the tender gestures I perform for my participants speak to understandings of accessibility, allyship, and academic approaches to community fieldwork.

In Chapter 6, I describe *tenderness* as an affective process whereby *fixed* understandings of the world become softened and complicated. Using theorists such as Sara Ahmed and her conceptualization of *stickiness*, and Julie Salverson's concept of the *aesthetic of injury*, I examine how certain affectivities have been culturally associated with different communities and how this affects our responses to different communities. With respect to the disability community, preconceptions exist regarding the disabled body as being emotionally fragile, child-like, dependent, etc. Using the process of tenderness, I show how disabled artists unhinge such perceptions to promote disability as multidimensional and valuable (Sandahl, 2005; Siebers, 2010). Essentially their art presents the multiplicity of being human and offers an ethical lens on how to move through the world; a lens that counters standards of normalcy and expectations of what being a human means. I describe how disabled artists' artistic work produces "encounters" of tenderness. The goal of Chapter 6 is to provide a language to understand the responses to the creative work of disabled artists, responses that many find in this work affectively unsettling and aesthetically surprising.

Language and Categories

Similar to Johnston (2012), who is wary of giving a concrete definition of *disability theatre*, I do not articulate specific principles of what and what is not disability theatre. For many of my participants, disability theatre is not a category to which they ascribe. In this dissertation, I do use the term *disability arts* to identify artistic work that has an activist perspective. Although not always explicit, I argue that all the artistic work of my participants follows a disability arts approach—an intention to destigmatize disability onstage and in their locales of Vancouver and Montréal. In addition, despite *intellectual disability* being a term used frequently in Canada today, I choose to use *cognitive disability* instead in my dissertation. In the United Kingdom, *learning disability* is a common term used in conjunction with the severity of the disability, such as *mild, moderate, severe,* and *profound* (often used in cases of Down's syndrome and autism), whereas in North America, the terms *intellectual disability* or its predecessor *mental retardation* are used (Perring, 2005, p. 178). The term *intellectual disability* itself is only the latest in the historical line of other terms that have been used to divide disabled people from nondisabled people. For example, in 1846, physician Samuel Gridley Howe was appointed to a commission in Massachusetts to research three blind children thought to be "idiots" (Carlson, 2010, p. 25).

During his research, Howe divided *idiocy* into three categories: *idiots, fools* ("a higher class of idiots"), and *simpletons* ("the highest class of idiots") (p. 25). These terms represent a history of cognitive discrimination that many of my participants are still facing today. The term *cognitive disability* is a less ablest term that works against ascribing normative ways of knowing the world and performing intelligence.

I also choose to use the term *disabled artists* versus *artists with disabilities* when referring to my participants and other Canadian artists as well. According to the document "A Way with Words and Images: Suggestions for the Portrayal of People With Disabilities" produced by Human and Resources and Skills Development Canada (2013):

> A disability is a functional limitation or restriction of an individual's ability to perform an activity. The word "disabled" is an adjective, not a noun. People are not conditions. It is therefore preferable not to use the term "the disabled" but rather "people with disabilities" (p. 2).

However, even in this description, the word *disability* is still contextualized as *limiting* and *restrictive*, which I argue against in this dissertation. Person-first language (PFL) has been linguistically valued in professional spheres. PFL uses the word *person* first followed by the disability to move away from identifying people with a diagnosis (Kapitan, 2017). The concern with using the phrase "with disability" is that it situates disability as more of a quality of a person than as a part of who they are. Many activists in the disability community, particularly in the United Kingdom, have expressed how this situates disability as a negative quality, unworthy of placing it as a primary part of how to describe someone. In her article "Why Person-First Language Doesn't Always Put the Person First," disability activist and writer Emily Ladau (2015) says:

> Consider how PFL intentionally separates a person from their disability. Although supposedly acknowledging personhood, it also implies that "disability" or "disabled" are negative, derogatory words. In other words, disability is something society believes a person should try to dissociate from if they want to be considered a whole person. This makes it seem as though being disabled is something of which you should be ashamed. PFL essentially buys into the stigma it claims to be fighting.

I choose to use the term *disabled artist* as a means to use an "identity-first" approach to emphasize how disability is an important lived experience of my participants' identities. I use it in the same capacity as other ways of identifying other communities (e.g., Black people, Jewish artists, Muslim women). An identity-first linguistic approach centralizes important ways of experiencing the world, ways that often are confronted with discrimination and are undervalued. Using an identity-first approach provides ways to powerfully recognize these experiences and communities. This is not to say that it is wrong to identify as an artist with disability. It is important for people to self-identify in the ways they find most meaningful. Ladau (2015) explains how the word *disabled* is:

> […] much more than a descriptor. It is an identity and culture. It is a source of pride. So I am disabled. I am disabled just as much as I am a brown-haired, brown-eyed, glasses-wearing female. It is part of me. It is part of who I am.

I explore the complexity of self-identity politics more in Chapter 4: *Atypique* Approach in which my participants share their own ways of describing themselves in French and English. Since this dissertation uses quotes in both French and English, I provide English translations of the French quotes in footnotes.

Dancing in Allyship

This is a dissertation written in collaboration, allyship, love, and friendship. I have been dancing throughout my doctoral career—dancing with my beloved participants at a party they were kind enough to invite me to. It is an inclusive disability arts party that is not very popular among other mainstream theatre companies who often are too intimidated by disabled artists. My participants, Les Muses, Les Productions des pieds des mains, and Theatre Terrific are my dancing partners, twirling me through their histories, artistic approaches, and vulnerabilities. Each partner I have met has moved, spoken, breathed, and held me differently as a researcher. I have danced in Montréal and Vancouver, over Skype, and in emails to a myriad of slow and fast moving music; and sometimes it has felt like one long song over the course of 8 years. We have learned to move together in French, English, sign language, and with the help of computer assistive technologies. During both the conversational and literal dances with my participants, toes were sometimes stepped on and there were many lost-in-translation moments. Yet, even with the occasional painful toe or confusion, the core of this project has remained an exploration of what it means to be human and to make art.

Chapter 1: Participants and Ethics

Introduction

Two critically acclaimed professional performance companies and one pioneering performance training program are featured in this dissertation: Theatre Terrific from Vancouver, British Columbia; Les Muses from Montréal, Québec; and Les Productions des pieds des mains also from Montréal, Québec. My participants belong to an array of diverse cultural and disability communities, and although most of them are artists with cognitive disabilities, some of them are artists with sensorial, emotional, and physical disabilities. The majority of them are between the ages of 20 to 40 years old, with a small number over 50 years old. Common to all of them is a dedication to reconfiguring the professional status of disabled artists in Canada, particularly the aesthetic standards on which their work is judged.

When I first started this project, I was unaware of how many companies already existed that worked with disabled artists, particularly in British Columbia, Alberta, Québec, and Ontario. Originally, I had intended to create my own performance collaborative, using applied theatre techniques to unhinge the different ways my participants and I could encounter one another. However, after working as a teaching assistant in Concordia University's Theatre Department with Sarah Garton Stanley during the Fall of 2012 for a course called "Current Canadian Theatre," I gained knowledge of Theatre Terrific which opened me up to a whole new awareness of disability theatre-making in Canada. After gaining this knowledge, my approach to my doctoral project changed. I began to find ways to connect with these companies, and became interested in the aesthetics each company was using in the production of their theatre work., particularly when considering what provinces they are working from.

The groups that participated in my research are all major advocates in the disability arts movement in Canada, particularly in their home provinces of British Columbia and Québec. Theatre Terrific is Canada's oldest "mixed ability" theatre company, and it has been the site of much scholarly and critical acclaim for its original work and adapted exercises. Within the arts, the term *mixed ability* has been adopted by other integrated dance and theatre groups that work with artists with and without disabilities. In contrast to Theatre Terrific, Les Muses is one of Canada's only formal professional performance training programs for artists with cognitive disabilities. Les Productions des pieds des mains is a leading Canadian dance-theatre company that works with artists with and without disabilities to create provocative productions that are pushing disability aesthetics to new heights.

After my following descriptions of Theatre Terrific, Les Muses, and Les Productions des pieds des mains, I list the individual artists that participate in this research project. In addition to their names, I also describe their artistic practice and affiliation with Theatre Terrific, Les Muses, and Les Productions des pieds des mains. All participants, with the exception of one, chose to use their full names in this study. Since many of these artists identify as professional performers, I use their full names to bring more recognition to them as artists and as public figures. Using their first name only would undermine this motivation and disallow my readers to learn more about these artists and their work outside this dissertation. The majority of my participating disabled artists want to make connections with other collaborators and desire to have more cultural recognition. Beyond the academic contribution of this dissertation to the field of theatre studies and critical disability studies, it also serves as a document to help mobilize other potential collaborators for my participants and to provide a deeper understanding of their creative work.

Theatre Terrific

Theatre Terrific, based in Vancouver, British Columbia, is arguably the first Canadian theatre company to work with disabled artists for purely artistic purposes. Founder Connie Hargrave originated the idea for Theatre Terrific after contemplating the benefits of a theatre company for creatively inclined disabled people (Johnston, 2012, p. 67). Pursuing her interests, she founded Theatre Terrific in 1985 on the pretense that it would provide artistic training and performance opportunities for disabled people in Vancouver. At the time, no other Canadian theatre company was like it. After listing the company as a non-profit organization and forming a board, Hargrave recruited Susan Lister from England as its main artistic instructor due to her professional background in theatre and social work (Johnston, 2012, p. 68). In a 1988 interview Lister said: “We want to let the disabled community know that this facility is here if they want to get into the industry, and we also want to sensitize other people to the abilities of the physically challenged” (Boyd, 1988, A3).

By the late 1980s, the company was locally understood as “moving far beyond providing feel-good therapy for the disadvantaged” to being an important site of professional training for disabled artists (Boyd, 1988, A3). By the 1990s, Theatre Terrific had validated its professional status with the Vancouver Professional Theatre Alliance and gained recognition for its inclusive approach (Johnston, 2012, p. 73). New artistic director James Norris (1994–1998) alongside instructors Elaine Avila and Trevor Found expressed a desire to move the company from being a site of artistic training (class-based) to “a more streamlined professional troupe” (Johnston, 2012, p. 75). Much of this momentum reflected the significant growth and support for new disability arts organizations in Vancouver. During the late 1990s and early 2000s, an “emerging disability culture movement” was “gaining momentum” (Milner, 2001, p. 11). The Society for Disability Arts and Culture (S4DAC), incorporated in November, 1998, focused on presenting and promoting disability art from an array of disciplines in Vancouver and also began hosting the KicksART! festival to help in this endeavour. Theatre Terrific’s new artistic directors, Avila and Found (1998–2000), also were beginning to change the company’s focus. Found said, “If the art is strong, the disability is not the focus, but the fuel” (Milner, 2001, p. 11). Avila emphasized, “There’s a whole new view taking shape around the world… and that is that these are the artists who happen to have disabilities, not people with disabilities who happen to be doing art” (Milner, 2001, p. 11).

However, by the end of 1999, the company went into dormancy for a year and a half due to financial distress, and by 2000, both Avila and Found had left. From October 2013 to April 2014, the company also took a hiatus because of financial and administrative complications. During this time, the company appointed a new board of directors and redrew its artistic vision. Even Liesl Lafferty (2001–2005) expressed how she learned more about accounting in her tenure as artistic director than people’s diagnosed disabilities (2005, p. 64–66). However, Johnston (2012) has emphasized how “such crises are a common feature of enterprises in which resources are few and many at stake in the outcome” (p. 78). Yet, in the landscape of disability and theatre, Theatre Terrific has always remained dedicated to its members, always returning with “clarified and reinvigorated purpose” (Johnston, 2012, p. 78). Although during Theatre Terrific’s earlier years, the company produced more explicitly disability-themed shows, it has endeavoured to move beyond “the narrow special interest label of ‘disability theatre’” after Susanna Uchatius became its current artistic director in 2005 (“Theatre Terrific”). Uchatius has emphasized, “we’re interested in doing universal stories, in dealing with artists of all abilities” (Johnston, 2012, p. 82). Uchatius has gained notoriety from her colleagues for her adaptation of methods from her acting training to support and unify the company’s diverse members.

Being one of the oldest theatre companies in Canada that works with artists with and without disabilities, Theatre Terrific has served as a major reference point for other companies. However, it is Canada's only professional *theatre* company that works consistently with mixed-ability casts, since other integrated performance companies work more with dance and other choreographic work.[1] Theatre Terrific is known for "its demanding and yet accessible inclusive" ways of casting its productions, which I will expand on in Chapter 5: Slowness ("Theatre Terrific"). Currently, the company operates from an office located in the Woodwards Heritage Building in east Vancouver's downtown. The company offers regular classes for movement and singing throughout Vancouver, and has produced over 14 Fringe Festival productions. Theatre Terrific's professional productions deal with a range of topics from "sex, to myth, to belief systems, to unique friendships and families" ("Theatre Terrific"). Some of its most recent productions include:

- *Hello* (2015, 2019): a stage adaption of the life of Arthur Miller's unknown child Daniel who had Down syndrome.
- *Breath-Ahhh* (2016): an exploration of breath and its essence for different bodies.
- *Being Animal* (2015): an outdoor production that asks the question "What would happen if we fully embraced otherness in ourselves, in our communities, and in nature?"
- *Roy and Janet* (2018): a perspective on Shakespeare's famous play *Romeo and Juliet*, and the problem of "us vs. them" dynamics that emerge in society around gender, outward difference, beliefs, and clothes.

Following are some recent awards and recognitions that Theatre Terrific has garnered under the artistic leadership of Uchatius:

- Nightswimming Pure Research Award in 2011 given by The Center for Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies at the University of Toronto and the School for Contemporary Arts at Simon Fraser University for Uchatius and Mary Jane Coomber's (Uchatius' collaborator) work on supporting inclusive voice exploration.[2]

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[1] Some of these other companies include MoMo Mixed Ability (Calgary, Alberta), Cripsie (Edmonton, Alberta), and Propeller Dance (Ottawa, Ontario).

[2] To learn more about this project, please refer to the online publication of this work at http://nightswimmingtheatre.com/pure-research/experiencing-sprechgesang/.

- Inclusion Through Innovation Award in 2013 given by Metro Vancouver BC to Uchatius for her inclusive theatre work with Theatre Terrific members.
- Theatre Terrific was chosen to perform a scene from their production *Egni's Eye* in 2014 by the School of Theatre, Performance and Cultural Policy Studies of Warwick in England at the International Federation of Theatre Research conference.
- Theatre Terrific was one of five finalists for the Jessie Award for the category of Representation and Inclusion in 2016.

During the winter of 2013, I called the Theatre Terrific office to introduce myself. After a long and memorable conversation with Uchatius, she was kind enough to invite me out to Vancouver to spend time with the company. From mid-July to early September 2013, and mid-August to early September 2014, I worked as a creative associate and pseudo-ensemble member in Theatre Terrific's Fringe Festival productions *Portraits* (2013) and *Stuffed* (2014). Engaging in their workshops to develop these pieces with approximately 15–20 other cast members, I was able to gain deep insights into the personal nature of how Theatre Terrific creates original scripts. This includes adapting methods for creating theatre, including the use of exploratory choreography, responses to life questions, collaborative image making, drawing, and spoken poetry exercises. Although the disability experience is not the primary intention of Theatre Terrific's creative work, the personal lives of their members is embedded in the narratives of the Fringe Festival productions.

Although I did participate in the workshopping of the pieces, I did not perform in the final productions, nor were my creative contributions from the workshops used in the final scripts. My main role was to immerse myself in the workshop processes as a form of ethnographic research. During the workshopping of *Portraits*, I was able to be present during the entire creative process. However, for *Stuffed*, I arrived towards the second half of the rehearsal process, and consequently, I chose to observe the workshopping process rather than participate. During my time with the company, it became apparent to me that Theatre Terrific is an important meeting point for local professional nondisabled and disabled actors. For the Fringe Festival productions, the majority of the cast are disabled, with only a few nondisabled actors. Unlike my Montréal participants, who primarily belong to cognitive disability communities, Theatre Terrific has members from physical disability communities who use wheelchairs and/or mobility aids.

Theatre Terrific also is the only Anglophone company I worked with for this dissertation. The members of Theatre Terrific who are included in this dissertation are:

- “Adam”: an anonymous actor who only performed in *Portraits*.
- Alex Edwards: actor who performs regularly with Theatre Terrific; performed in both *Portraits* and *Stuffed*.
- Candice Larsheid: actor, long-time member of Theatre Terrific, wheelchair user; performed in both *Portraits* and *Stuffed*.
- Daryl Dixon: actor, long-time member of Theatre Terrific, uses an adapted form of sign language; performed in both *Portraits* and *Stuffed*.
- Duran Cruikshank: nondisabled actor who performed in *Portraits*.
- Edna Randaje: actor, attendant to Katrina Costello inside and outside rehearsal; performs regularly with Theatre Terrific; performed in both *Portraits* and *Stuffed*.
- Erica Kemp: retired actor, long-time member of Theatre Terrific; performed in both *Portraits* and *Stuffed*.
- Ian Brown: actor, long-time member of Theatre Terrific; performed in both *Portraits* and *Stuffed*.
- Jonah Killoran: actor, performs regularly with Theatre Terrific; performed in both *Portraits* and *Stuffed*.
- Katrina Costello: actor, performs regularly with Theatre Terrific, wheelchair user, uses a hearing device; performed in both *Portraits* and *Stuffed*.
- Larry Wong: actor, performs regularly with Theatre Terrific; performed in both *Portraits* and *Stuffed*.
- Michelle Korelus: actor, performs regularly with Theatre Terrific; performed in both *Portraits* and *Stuffed*.
- Selena Garcia: performed only in *Portraits*, and does not engage in much theatre performance work.
- Susanna Uchatius: artistic director and director of *Portraits* and *Stuffed*. Her biography on the company’s website describes her as having “pioneered an accessible respectful, rigorous and risk-taking theatre ensemble process, that collaboratively included Equity and emerging actors of all abilities in the creation of high quality productions that take on universal human issues” (“Theatre Terrific”).

- Adam Warren: co-director of *Stuffed*; local Vancouver-based disabled actor and playwright.
- Tyson Aubin: actor, performs regularly with Theatre Terrific; also performs with other smaller community theatres across Vancouver; uses an assistive communication device, which I expand on in Chapter 5: Slowness—how this device opened up other ways of collaboration; performed in both *Portraits* and *Stuffed*.

Les Muses

Les Muses, located in Montréal, Québec, is the only full-time professional performance training program in Canada available to individuals with cognitive disabilities. Founded in 1997 by dancer Cindy Schwartz, Les Muses was born to fill the void of artistic education available for disabled people. In 1991, after years of dancing, Schwartz decided she wanted to be a dance teacher and began to teach children in high school spaces and local dance studios (personal interview, September 2017). On a personal note, Schwartz was introduced to disability by some of her family members who worked as medical practitioners, particularly an uncle who was a social worker for clients with cognitive disabilities (personal interview, September 2017). After talking with other local dancers and teachers, she began to notice the void of artistic training available for disabled people. So, she decided to begin working as a self-employed dance teacher for disabled people at recreational and rehabilitation centers. She called her dance programming, "For the Love of Dance." While working with high school students without disabilities, and students with cognitive disabilities at another school, she chose to combine her best dance students from each class to form an integrated amateur dance troupe which toured the local festivals (personal interview, September 2017). Schwartz continued to expand her passion for integrated arts training, inspired by a woman she had met—a mother of a child with a cognitive disability. Together, they formed a group to provide classes in visual art, music, and theatre, but sadly, midway through the project preparations, her collaborator suddenly passed away. To honour her colleague, Schwartz kept the name "Les Muses," since they had chosen it together (personal interview, September 2017). Although still working on a recreational basis, Schwartz noticed that some of the disabled people she was working with had real talent. Since no performance training programs for disabled people existed outside of Schwartz's classes, her clientele had no way of measuring or recognizing their artistic potential to work in professional performing arts. So, she decided to create a *professional* performance training program, particularly for people with cognitive disabilities, since many post-secondary institutions remain academically inaccessible to them (personal interview, September 2017). By 1997, she transformed her recreational program into a non-profit organization, and began looking for ways to fund her new endeavor.

After meeting with an array of people who worked in rehabilitation centres, she started a 2-year (2001–2003) pilot project with the Centre de Réadaptation Gabrielle Major (personal interview, September 2017). The goal of this collaboration was to work with some of their clientele with cognitive disabilities who were artistically inclined, and explore whether any of them showed a potential to lead professional performance careers. After teaching a series of dance classes, along with hiring other teachers in 2001 for singing, dancing, and theatre classes 4 days a week, and an integrated theatre production which was performed at the Maison de la Culture Mercier, Schwartz and the members of the Centre de Réadaptation Gabrielle Major were convinced a lot of talent existed in the group. Les Muses formally began full-time classes at the Maison de la Culture Mercier, hiring teachers (industry artists) for their new students. Although working with very little funding, the Centre de Réadaption Gabrielle Major funded 10 spots for students who participated in the pilot project from 2001–2003 (personal interview, September 2017). By 2006, Les Muses began a new partnership with Centre Champagnat—a centre for adults with motor, sensory, and learning disabilities—whereby adapted programs are offered from the Commission scolaire de Montréal. Les Muses continues to work with Centre Champagnat to this day.

Students of Les Muses engage in a series of singing, theatre, dance, and performance-based classes from Monday to Friday. To verify their artistic abilities, each student auditions for 3–6 months, attending classes with other already accepted students. The program is competitive and holds its students to a high standard. The program often hosts an average of 15 students each year, and "depending on their specific needs," full time students graduate the program in a minimum of 5 years or more ("Les Muses"). Students are asked to leave the program if they are unable to maintain a strong performance. Teachers adapt and negotiate traditional performance training methods according to each student's needs. The program does not train students to conceal their disability to fit in to normative standards of professional performance styles; rather, teachers of Les Muses work with students to find ways to use their disability to articulate and present an original artistic performance aesthetic. I discuss this program further in Chapter 4:

Atypique Approach. Students are exposed to a multitude of neuro-diversities in the classroom and work towards building professional careers in film and theatre.

After the success of Louise Archambault's 2013 film *Gabrielle*, Les Muses was on an international stage. The film follows the life of the main character Gabrielle, a young disabled woman with William's syndrome who wants to live independently and pursue a romantic relationship with her new boyfriend, a member of the same choir she belongs to for cognitively disabled singers. Gabrielle Marion-Rivard—lead actress in the film and an advanced student from Les Muses—was awarded the 2013 Canadian Screen Award for Best Actress for her role. Although points of similarity exist between the lead character Gabrielle and Marion-Rivard, the film is not an autobiography of the young actress' life. Many students from Les Muses also performed in the film as supporting characters. The film was my introduction to Les Muses and the work of disability arts happening in Montréal.

Awards and recognitions that Les Muses has received are as follows:

- Honorary partner of the Semaine québecoise des Personne handicapées in 2014 given by the L'Office des Personnes handicapées du Québec (OPHQ).
- Partner of the Semaine québecoise de la Déficience intellectuelle de l'Association québecoise pour l'Intégration social (AQIS).
- Recipient of the Prix Á Part Entière from the L'Office des Personnes handicapées du Québec (OPHQ) in 2012.
- Recipient of the Prix Janine Sutto given by the L'Association montréalaise de la Déficience intellectuelle (AMDI) for the Cabaret Les Muses in 2011.
- Recognized by the Centre de Réadaption Gabrielle Major as Partenaire Coup de Cœur for outstanding contribution of social inclusion and participation of clients in 2007.

After an email exchange with Schwartz in the winter of 2014, she invited me to attend one of their classes. Having class visitors, whether they be casting directors or interested theatre artists who want to learn more about inclusive approaches, is a common occurrence for students of Les Muses. Students appreciate having outside people observing their work, since often their teachers contextualize these visitations as their having someone else to perform for beyond their fellow classmates. After this first visit and long administrative process of ethics (which I explain later in this chapter), I began to attend the classes of Les Muses in the spring of 2015. During this time—the summer of 2015 and the winter of 2016—I observed and participated in their singing, dancing, acting, and clown classes. With Les Muses, I explored the complexities of the creative training of these students, and witnessed how exercises were adapted and negotiated to support the different cognitive styles of the students.

Unlike my involvement with Theatre Terrific in which I heavily engaged in the creative processes, I kept my participation with classroom activities of the students of Les Muses at a minimum. One of the main reasons for this was because I did not feel I was bilingual enough to engage in some of the acting exercises, and was concerned that this lack of linguistic ability might disrupt teacher-to-student directions. However, during class warm ups and select partner exercises when there was an uneven number of students, I would participate or would be asked to by the teachers. My level of interaction with class activities also was contingent on the particular teacher I was working with that day. Some teachers preferred that I participate more, whereas others felt more comfortable with me just observing. My time with Les Muses also was significantly longer than my fieldwork with Theatre Terrific and Les Productions des pieds des mains. Beyond spending time with the students inside the classroom, I also was able to support them by attending their production performances and the annual general assemblies of Les Muses, and by volunteering my time when they needed additional support at specific events. During this time, I also became very familiar with the students and their access needs.

However, on some occasions, the language differences between the students and myself affected the clarity of our communication. Prior to working with Les Muses, my French was at best beginner-intermediate. Although as a child I was enrolled in French immersion until the age of 9 and studied French every year in high school, when I moved to Montréal in 2011 to begin my PhD, I quickly realized that I was a "débutante." Prior to working with Les Muses, I was concerned with whether I would be able to communicate with them at a comfortable level. Most of my fears quickly diminished as the students became my teachers, helping with my diction, accent, and instilling confidence in me to practice more and more. The teachers of Les Muses also showed a lot of patience towards me, some speaking in English and translating for me when necessary.

Les Muses teachers and students who participated in this dissertation include the following:

- Anthony Dolbec: actor in film and theatre, singer, dancer, advanced student of Les Muses
- Anne Tremblay: actor in theatre, dancer, intermediate student of Les Muses.

- Cindy Schwartz: founder and artistic director; recipient of the Lauréate du Prix Janine Sutto de l'Association (AMDI) in 2006.
- Edon Descollines: actor in theatre and film, dancer, visual artist, poet, advanced student of Les Muses.
- Gabrielle Marion-Rivard: actor in film and theatre, singer, dancer, advanced student of Les Muses; recipient of the Prix Janine-Sutton artist category in 2014; recipient of the best actress award from the Canadian Screen awards for her work in *Gabrielle* (2013) in 2014; special mention by the Festival du Film francophone de Namur in 2013.
- Geneviève Morin-Dupont: actor in film and theatre, dancer, advanced student of Les Muses; recipient of the Prix Janine-Sutto in the artist category in 2011; Honorary President (along with Jean-Marie Lapointe) of the D'une Oeil Différent from 2012–2016.
- Hélène-Élise Blais: singing teacher for Les Muses.
- Jean-François Hupé: actor in film and theatre, dancer, advanced student of Les Muses.
- Marc Barakat: actor in film and theatre, advanced student of Les Muses; recipient of the Prix Janine-Sutto in the artists category in 2012.
- Marie-Anik Deschamps: dance, miming, and clowning teacher for Les Muses.
- Menka Nagrani: dance teacher for Les Muses.
- Michael Nimbley: actor in film and theatre, dancer, advanced student, speaks French and English; recipient of the Prix Cochon Vedette for his work in the *Just Fake It-Gala des Cochons d'Or*; recipient of the Prix Janine-Sutto in the artist category in 2013.
- Phillippe David: actor in film and theatre, advanced student of Les Muses.
- Richard Gaulin: theatre teacher for Les Muses.
- Roxane Charest-Landy: actor in theatre, dancer, advanced student of les Muses.
- Stephanie Colle: actor in theatre, dancer, intermediate student of Les Muses.

Les Productions des pieds des mains

Founded by Les Muses' dance teacher and internationally acclaimed choreographer Menka Nagrani in 2004, Les Productions des pieds des mains is a "socially committed company that features actors and dancers working alongside atypically cast artists, with a view of provoking thought on artistic and social issues" ("Les Productions des pieds des mains").

In 1999, Nagrani began working as a dance teacher for Les Muses and quickly became inspired by her students and their way of moving. As she explained in a 2014 interview with Christina

Brossard, "They animate my creative breadth. Their authenticity, their no-censorship way of being, their spontaneity, and their performance approach seduced me" (Brossard, 2014, p. 41). Nagrani, like other choreographers in Québec, uses the word *atypique* versus *handicapée* when describing the disabled artists with whom she works with. *Atypique*, which translates to *atypical* in English, opens up new ways of understanding disability, particularly in a Québécois context in which language around disability culture remains very limited and highly ablest in comparison to English. This shift to atypique is explored further in Chapter 4: Atypique Approach. Nagrani privileges the use of *atypique* in her work. She explains, "Je trouve l'expression beaucoup plus poétique et elle amène une perspective plus large de la difference" (personal communication, January 2016*)*.[3] Important to note is how the word *atypique*, particularly in relationship to the work of Les Production des pieds des mains, gives language and feeling to the new and stimulating choreographic work that emerges from this company and their disabled artists. Nagrani's work with atypique artists provides her with an opportunity to deeply interrogate the various social and political problems that directly affect these artists' respective communities.

Although Nagrani teaches at Les Muses, Les Productions des pieds des mains is an entirely different entity separate from that program. Unlike Les Muses and Theatre Terrific which began in more recreational contexts, Nagrani wanted to create a professional performance company that integrated *atypique* artists with *neurotypique*/neurotypical artists. She wanted to create a professional performance company that enabled artists, particularly with cognitive disabilities, to work onstage beyond a therapeutic context. To better hone her own approach to working with disabled artists, Nagrani travelled to Europe from 2002-2003 to learn more from other integrated dance and theatre companies. Adapting the methods she learned from her European colleagues, Nagrani has continued to innovate her own methods of co-producing original choreographic approaches for disabled artists. Disability, for Nagrani, is a creative opportunity to explore different ways of imagining choreographic work. For example, physical tremors, adapted into a collaborative gestural movements and physical responses to improvised partner work, often are incorporated in final pieces. Les Productions des pieds des mains has been described as *interdisciplinary* and *experimental* in its dance-theatre pieces, pushing the aesthetic boundaries of what some may expect from such a diverse group.

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[3] Translation: "I find the expression much more poetic and it offers a broader perspective of differences."

Les Productions des pieds des mains has presented its pieces and short films in the Montréal professional arts scene (Tangente, Le Chapelle Theatre, Prospero, Maison de la culture) and at international festivals across Canada, and in India, Belgium, France, England, the United States, Poland, and Japan. Although the company has performed in disability art contexts, most of the festivals and venues it works with are not a part of disability arts. For Nagrani, this separates the work of Les Productions des pieds des mains from other disabled artistic work. As she explained to me, "With performing in the regular venues, we are submitted to the same standards and are competing with other 'regular' theatre companies" (personal communication, June 2019). Unlike other professional dance companies working with nondisabled artists who may take 3–6 months to create a piece, Nagrani and members of Les Productions des pieds des mains may work on one piece for an entire 2 years, depending on the access needs of the artists and their creative process (more about this in Chapter 5: Slowness). Some productions of Les Productions des pieds des mains include the following:

- *Bonne fête !* (2017, 2018): a short dance-theatre creation featuring two artists based on an excerpt of David Paquet's play *Porc-Épic*; deals with the candid, humorous, and tender ways humans connect and cope with solitude.
- *Le Chemin des Passes-dangereuses* (2014, 2015, 2016 [tour]): this 80-minute dance-theatre-piece of Michel Marc Bouchard's famous text follows three brothers who get into a car accident in the same spot where their father tragically died years prior; the piece involves three actors and mixes contemporary dance with Québécois traditional step-dancing (gigue).
- *Pharmakon* (2011, 2012 to 2015 [tour]): this six-performer dance-theatre piece explores the complex relationships and debates over medicine with humour and sensitivity.
- *Les Temps des Marguerites…à la folie ou pas du tout !* (2005, 2007, 2008 [tour]): this piece, which is discussed in Chapter 4: *Atypique* Approach, is an adaptation of the opera *Faust,* exploring the relationship between beauty, aging, and disability.
- *Leçons* (2004): inspired by Ionesco's *The Lesson,* this production combines contemporary dance with the theatre of the absurd. The company's provocative work also has received national recognitions and awards for its innovative inclusive approaches and diverse dance-theatre aesthetics. Some of these awards include:
- Recipient of the Janine Sutto Award in 2010.

- Recipient of a social commitment award at Cochon d'or for *Pharmakon* and an honourable mention for most remarkable production in 2011.
- Nagrani was the recipient of an artistic achievement award from the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec in 2012.
- *Globe and Mail* rated *Le Temps des Marguerites…à la folie ou pas du tout !* as the fourth best dance-theatre production in Canada in 2007.

Unlike Theatre Terrific and Les Muses, Les Productions des pieds des mains does not have a main office. To create the productions, Nagrani and the company members work from an array of studios across Montréal. In the winter of 2014, I emailed Nagrani about my interest to work with her and the members of Les Productions des pieds des mains. After meeting at her apartment a few weeks later, she invited me to join her and a big crew from Les Production des pieds des mains in Ripon, Québec to film the original short film *Eurêka!*, co-directed by her and another Montréal-based filmmaker, David Ricard. Shot in 1 week during early August 2014, the contemporary film includes three lead dancers with Down syndrome—Geneviève Morin-Dupont, Jean François Hupé, and Carl Hennebert-Faulkner—and one nondisabled dancer, Marylin Castonguay. During the film shoot, I worked as a production assistant, helping support the dancers and serving as an extra when necessary. I documented moments in between filming when Nagrani worked with the dancers to co-choreograph scenes and provide artistic direction. I also interviewed Nagrani, Morin-Dupont, Hupé, and Hennebert-Faulkner about their experiences on set and working with the company in general. Although Morin-Dupont and Hupé are current advanced students of Les Muses (and Hennebert-Faulkner was a previous student), their work on *Eurêka* and with Les Production des pieds des mains is separate from the Les Muses program. However, in this dissertation, I discuss how teachers of Les Muses, like Nagrani, and their long-standing relationships with their students has created meaningful and professional collaborations outside of the program. As artistic director of Les Productions des pieds des mains, Nagrani works to move her company beyond the label of disability theatre and strives to have her artists critiqued at the same level as other mainstream theatre companies. Although *Eurêka* included a large production crew, my dissertation focuses on the following people:[4]

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[4] I would like to mention and thank the following crew members who I had the pleasure to work alongside during the week of filming *Eurêka*. Although they are not necessarily as much a part of my main analysis, they are still very important to the development of this thesis, and supported me during my time on set with them. These individuals

- Carl Hennebert-Faulkner: long-standing company member; performed in *Leçons* in 2004 as well.
- Geneviève Morin-Dupont: long-standing company member; performed in *Leçons* in 2004, 2005 and from 2005–2008 played outstandingly in the role of young Marguerite in *Le Temps des Marguerites…à la folie ou pas du tout!*.
- Jean-François Hupé: long-standing company member; danced in *Pharmakon* in Montréal and Rouen, France.
- Menka Nagrani: artistic director of Les Production des pieds des mains.

Consent and Ethics

Each participating company had a very different process to ensure consent and ethics confirmation. During my first application process to gain ethics clearance from Concordia University to work with Theatre Terrific on *Portraits*, it was recommended that I make three separate consent forms for different participant constituencies: a) for legal guardians and/or parents, b) for disabled participants with cognitive disabilities who had legal guardians, and c) for disabled and nondisabled participants who did not have legal guardians. When I arrived in Vancouver in August 2013, Uchatius advised me to create one inclusive consent form that would include a space for legal guardians to sign, and to use accessible language that explained the project for all interested Theatre Terrific members (see Appendix 2). I continued to use this new consent form model, translated into French, for Les Production des pieds des mains (see Appendix 4) and Les Muses (see Appendix 8), and also for my second round of fieldwork with Theatre Terrific during *Stuffed* (see Appendix 3).

Writing and introducing the consent forms was a very different process for each company and the kind of documentation I was using for that round of fieldwork. Before meeting my participants, I emailed them to introduce myself and the research (see Appendix 1 and 7). In the case of Les Muses, I had to go through a different process, since the program works within the *Commission scolaire de Montréal*. To obtain legal permission to work with the students, I had to complete an application and write a proposal about the project with respect to my research intentions (see Appendix 5 and Appendix 6). Schwartz and I worked on this application together.

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include David Ricard (co-director and camera operator), Marylin Castonguay (principal dancer), Andrew Beaudoin (sound operator), Yves Whissell (camera operator), and Karin Charbanneau (production manager and assistant).

For each consent form, I worked with Uchiatius, Schwartz, and Nagrani to confirm I had included the necessary information about the project.

I wrote the consent forms in a friendly and informal style to ensure my approachability as a researcher and the project itself. I did this by structuring the forms as letters to my participants (e.g., "Dear Cast/Crew/Members and family members/caregivers"). Below this salutation, I explained my own position as a PhD student in Communication Studies at Concordia University in Montréal, Québec, and outlined my intentions to learn more about their creative work and experiences as disabled artists. I also explained what I would be taking notes for: "[…] on the diverse and compelling work" and "on some of the more difficult and fun times in rehearsal" (see Appendix 3). Furthermore, I outlined the ways I would be documenting them by photography or video. I only began to photograph and film my participants after my second round of fieldwork with Theatre Terrific. On my 2014 consent forms for the *Stuffed* participants, I explained, "I may also take pictures during the final rehearsal; however, I will only use images of individuals with their consent" (see Appendix 3). For my potential participants, I contextualized my intentions as a researcher as wanting to "share the beautiful work" they were creating and also "the profound affect it has on diversifying Canadian theatre at large" (see Appendix 3). To ensure clarity, I avoided using any academic language, and kept the length of the consent form to no more than a page and a half.

I wrote the second half of my consent forms in point form describing my research project and what I would doing during my time with them. I created questions and statements—such as "Why is Ashley asking me to participate?" "I understand Ashley is/will be…" "If I use my real name…" and "By signing my name I understand…"—and below questions, I provided quick points about the projects and what was expected from my participants. I wanted to ensure my participants understood that they always had options about how they could participate. For example, when describing the different options for interviews for *Stuffed* participants, I wrote the following:

> Once the rehearsals are done, Ashley may email me questions about my time with Theatre Terrific. This is called an "exit interview." She will ask me about my feelings during rehearsal: moments that I cried, laughed, made friends with my cast members, etc. If I do not want to answer a question, I do not have to. I can answer these questions any

> way I want to—over the phone, computer, or in person with Ashley. These interviews will be set according to my schedule. (see Appendix 3)

I also wanted my participants to know that there was no constraint in how they could participate and contribute, for example, they could to do their interviews via the phone, Skype, or in person with me. Particularly when working with members of the cognitive disability community, it is important to create accessible ways of understanding what you are doing as a researcher. I did not want them to feel my presence had a medical or therapeutic intention, since these frameworks tend to create tension when they are doing their creative work. By collaborating closely with Uchatius, Schwartz, and Nagrani, I worked through the complexity of my participants' access needs and legalities. My biggest concern was to alleviate any pressure on my participants from feeling like they had to participate in a certain way to meet my research goals, particularly considering the constant ways they are forced every day to adapt their access needs for nondisabled people.

Disclosure and Researcher-Participant Intimacy

Many members of the disability community feel they *have to share* their personal experiences of the world to create accessible spaces. Thus, I was concerned that my participants would potentially feel obligated to disclose their vulnerabilities and/or medical diagnosis to me in this project. The demand for disclosure emphasizes the ways in which we still live in a world based on ablest regimes that exclude many identities and personal rhythms of how to be human. Disabled bodies are incessantly medicalized and pathologized—even in theatre, it is rare to see a wheelchair user onstage without a tragic story as to why they are paralyzed (e.g., car accident or incurable disease). Nondisabled bodies do not face the same diagnostic scrutiny and questioning about physical presence. Particularly when a less disabled person is asking for access needs, medical documentation and formal reasoning usually are required. This is implicit cruelty, even with the kindest of intentions. Mia Mingus (2017), writer and educator of disability justice, describes this demand for disclosure as a kind of "forced intimacy." Trying to survive our ableist world, Mingus (2017) describes how, for disabled people,

> [t]his often takes the form of being expected to share (very) personal information with able-bodied people to get their *basic* access, but it also includes forced physical intimacy, especially for those of us who need physical help that often requires touching of our bodies. All-too-often there is an assumption and expectation that disabled people must

> "strip down" and "show all their cards," and be "the ones who *must be vulnerable*— whether we [they] want to or not[...]" (emphasis mine).

Although different forms of disclosure can achieve a form of accessibility, it is not an accessibility genuinely developed out of respect and love for the recipient. It merely emphasizes the exhaustion that many disabled people endure while constantly self-advocating for their needs and ways to participate in the world. Mingus (2017) has described forced disclosure as "exploitative, exhausting and at times violating." Although I am dedicated to developing meaningful relationships with my participants, I needed to be aware of these histories of *forced disclosures* and the ways my presence as a researcher might trigger their past negative experiences of being a research object. Disability, in the context of forced intimacy, loses its potential to change the way we can learn to relate to one another as humans.

My relationships with my participants were built slowly and felt deeply. I did not conduct interviews with most of them until after they had months of becoming familiar and comfortable with me. For example, I did not interview members of Theatre Terrific until my second round of fieldwork with them during the production of *Stuffed*, and similarly, I waited a solid 9 months after my first day with Les Muses before I interviewed their students. During this time, they grew to learn more about me, and visa-versa. I became more aware of who was more comfortable around me, and who preferred to work with me from a distance. For some participants, an intimacy grew between us of close association and personal understanding. I also understand that not all fieldwork can be practically grounded in such closeness, but as a funded doctoral student, I was able to give my time to these relationships. I must emphasize that the different relationships I did develop with my participants were relationships of community, friendship, and allyship. Some were easier to continue than others. Due to the close locality of Les Muses, for example, I have been able to continue to participate in the lives of their students, such as attending productions they are working on and volunteering at different Les Muses events. Mingus (2017) has pointed out that, "There is a magnificent vulnerability to access and to disability that is powerful and potentially transformative, if we could only tap into it." How can accessibility be central to the way we design communication practices between each other, when disclosure is not imperative? How can we adopt ways of communicating our needs that carry less shame and discomfort in our bodies, so we feel we are not the "burden" and/or the "problem?"

When considering my methodological approach, I chose to respond to these questions with tenderness. I wanted to understand how this project and the creative work of my participants could explore how we could respond to each other as humans. This approach would be an invitation to learn how to feel safe and happy with one another. Mingus (2017) would call this approach *access intimacy*, a term she has described as being hard to name:

> Access intimacy is that elusive, hard to describe feeling when someone else "gets" your access needs. The kind of eerie comfort that your disabled self feels with someone on a purely access level. Sometimes it can happen with complete strangers, disabled or not, or sometimes it can be built over years. It could also be the way your body relaxes and opens up with someone when all your access needs are being met. It is not dependent on someone having a political understanding of disability, ableism or access. Some of the people I have experienced the deepest access intimacy with (especially able-bodied people) have had no education or exposure to a political understanding of disability.

Although Mingus' article on access intimacy was written after I completed my fieldwork, her words help to explicate my understanding of my methodological approach, which is one of care and love that invites a feeling that Mingus describes as "exciting and relieving, like a long slow exhale." There is a way to reach each other that does not involve objectification and feelings of uncomfortable obligation to one another. Mingus (2017) has described this kind of reaching out:

> It is a freeing, light, loving feeling. It brings the people who are a part of it closer; it builds and deepens connection. […] Sometimes it is someone just sitting and holding your hand while you both stare back at an inaccessible world.

When reflecting on my methodological approach, this feeling of love, care, and accessibility is central to this project.

A current urgency exists for academic researchers to show more flexibility with respect to the needs of their study participants—of which I explain in further in Chapter 3: With Tenderness, With Care (Gagnon, 2006; Lather, 1995). Does the participant prefer more vocalized conversations or are there other more accessible ways of communicating for them? How will you support a participant who uses less formalized sentences? Do the participants need different supports during interviews, such as having a caregiver, translator, or friend present? How will you work with them to decide what and when is appropriate to film and not to film?

When considering the cognitive diversity of your participants, how will you engage in meaningful and productive conversations? How will you change or shift your methods to dismantle problematic relationships of power between the “researched” and the “researcher?” How will you adapt methods to support your own emotional and cognitive needs? Such questions are crucial to pose when conducting research with participants with diverse needs. A desire to adapt and use different methods to care for my participants is at the core of my research approach.

Chapter 2: With Tenderness, With Care

Love doesn't mean doing extraordinary or heroic things. It means knowing how to do ordinary things with tenderness- Jean Vanier

Introduction

My own conception of my role as a researcher has shifted radically as my relationships with my participants have grown. My roles as a researcher have been multiple. I have been a valued community member, caregiver, friend, advocate, and collaborator. My situated methodological approach extends from my experiences in these multiple roles and is grounded in the ethical principal of tenderness. Building on reciprocal relationships between my participants and myself, I have reflected on the kinds of relationalities and politics of care that have emerged during this research project. How do researchers and their participants choose to support, care for, and share with one another? As researchers, how does this support, caring, and sharing speak to the ways that we conduct our research and build connections with our participants? Importantly, how does this support, caring, and sharing speak to how tenderness may be produced in our relationships with one another? I use the principle of tenderness to analyze how my relationships with my participants have developed and changed over time; and to theorize and interpret my participants' creative work.

My research is based on examining how we, as human beings, may re-understand and re-articulate our environments and ourselves based on our aesthetic and sensorial experiences with others. Such experiences help to loosen prior fixed perceptions of what it means to be a human being, and can mobilize different ways of moving through the world. I categorize these affective processes under the concept of *tenderness*—an epistemological awakening that shifts how we perceive certain communities. I apply the concept of tenderness in my arguments about how the creative work of disabled artists is changing perceptions of artistic production and disability in Canada. As a contribution to understanding this change, I use tenderness to understand how affective values shift and become complicated when produced in an atypical way. I also am concerned with understanding how researchers can conduct their research while, at the same time, developing meaningful and reciprocal relationships with their participants. How can researchers and their participants support and care for one another, particularly in artistic and academic partnerships? Tenderness enables the creation of a productive space to reflect on these questions, both pedagogically and personally, as a human being and a researcher.

“Tender Researcher”

Monika Gagnon (2006) categorizes community-based research that carries strong affective forces as *tender research*. When describing her visit to the Nikkei Internment Memorial Centre, a community-led preservation project that honours the stories and archives of previously interned Japanese Canadians located in New Denver, British Columbia, Gagnon was emotionally moved by its compelling gardens. Knowing that the greenery of the memorial was a site of healing for the Japanese survivors of the internment camp, Gagnon (2006) describes “losing her bearings as a researcher” and being “unprepared for the strong affect” of the BC landscape. For her, the action of gardening came to embody “tender gestures that have a temporal and affective quality, as well as being subject to other forces” (p. 215–216). Gagnon’s response to the Centre expanded her ways of understanding the kinds of relations that could exist between researchers and their research subjects as a deep affective receptivity. As a researcher, she began to adapt how she approached her methods based on the relationship she was developing with the gardens, such as ultimately deciding against documenting anything that would be overly “intrusive and predatory,” and instead choosing to film her own reactions in lieu of note-taking (p. 219). This article provides an important model for articulating the different sensitivities that can emerge in community-engaged fieldwork, and how they can impact the ways we document our experiences as researchers.

Tenderness as an ethical principle for guiding community fieldwork practice invites researchers to reveal the sensitivities that emerge between themselves and their research subjects/participants. Tenderness also invites researchers not to put a critical distance between themselves and their participants, and to embrace the closeness of the researcher-participant relationship as an important site of inquiry. Researchers, like myself and Gagnon, situate themselves in their research and in their responses to what and whom they are researching. They put emphasis on their being meaningfully accountable to their participants. They have a desire to engage in research that respects the needs of research subjects. Whether through adapting the interview process or by ensuring that accessibility needs are met, the emphasis rests on using methods that will better inform research practices and ways of communicating to different communities. This is the responsibility that drives “community-related research” (Gagnon, 2006, 218). Tenderness calls these researchers to be sensitive to the different cultural histories and stakes lived by the participants of their research (whether human or nonhuman). Community-related research has a heightened attentiveness to how we can build research communities and create loving ways of connecting, which foregrounds the intimacy involved in this kind of fieldwork.

My choice to use the word *tender* in my research has been a long and complicated process. The word itself often is associated with actions of affection and gentleness, such as a person who is "acutely sensitive to pain," "soft acting," and/or "tenders or waits upon" others (Oxford Dictionary). *Tender* is rooted in *toh*, an Old English word meaning to be tough, which sharply contrasts with the Old French *tendre* meaning "to be soft, delicate, or young" (Wiebe, 2015, pp. 157–158). *Toh* and *tendre* also have been used to describe the qualities of meat: "toh being the hard, chewy parts, and then tender being soft, underdeveloped parts" (Wiebe, 2015, pp. 157–158). My interest in tender emerges from these processes of hardness and softness. When looking at other associations of *toh* (hardness) and *tender* (softness), notions of manliness and boyishness emerge specifically with respect to "the idea of men being strong and powerful, and boys being tender and mild" (Wiebe, 2015, p. 158). Within this context, using the word *tender* in a project on disability and performance is entirely risky due to its potential to represent the disability community as being emotionally fragile, a perspective to which I strongly object.

Yet, other definitional associations of *tender* suggest that it is a tool of support and caregiving (Wiebe, 2015, pp. 157–158). During the twelfth century, *tender* referred to cartilage (pp. 157–158), a tough and flexible tissue that works as a cushion between bones, that endures pain but maintains flexibility and adaptability. There is also *tendon*, a flexible and slightly elastic fibrous cord that connects tissue between muscles and bones. Essentially, for me, *tender* is a word with an aesthetic depth that has deeply impacted my research approach. My interest in tender extends from its potential to provide an affective language concerning how humans relate to one another, particularly with respect to diversity, and their lived environments. Some readers of this dissertation may find my choice of the word *tender* to be overly sentimental, but I argue that *tender*ness opens up a multitude of perspectives on how we can witness and connect to each other as human beings. Affectively, tender invites a different sensitivity to how we can relate/care for the world and each other, and how to be sensitive to our own and others' needs, wishes, and desires. Understanding how we take care of one another, in community and in research, opens up new perspectives of relationality and academic partnerships for scholars engaged in intensive fieldwork.

Politics of Care and Relationality

Conceptions of care take on different meanings within private and public situations. Within the public sector, care services privilege professional expectations over relationships between healthcare workers and clients. For example, in Canada, "long-term care homes are governed by provincial legislation, which attempts to standardize care and accountability and requires homes, their management, staff members to operationalize codes of conduct through institution-specific policies and practices (Gray et al., 2017, p. 112).

Provincial guidelines, like the Long-Term Care Act of Ontario and Québec's Act Respecting Heath Services and Social Services, include hundreds of pages of standards about the legalities of care practices. However, all-too-often, these regulations do not include standards "about meaningful relationships and supporting living" (Gray et al., 2017, p. 112). In Québec, problems have arisen with healthcare worker-client relationships. In July 2018, a patients' rights group filed a $500 million class action suit against Québec's network of long-term care centers for providing its residents with "bad service," which the lawsuit described as abusive (Fidelman, 2018). The class action that included 22 examples cited that living conditions were "unacceptable, ranging from quality of care and food, to poor hygiene and the maintenance of the centers" (Fidelman, 2018). Unlike the 2007 Long-Term Care Act of Ontario that included a "residents' bill of rights" as well as clauses on nursing care, diet and hydration, and other services," no laws "protect the elderly and disabled living in public and private nursing homes" in Québec (Derfel, 2019). Thus, a major human relationship component is missing between healthcare workers and clients of long-term care facilities in Québec. This observation is echoed by many scholars writing about care politics (e.g., Gray et. al, 2017; Gray, 2018; Thompson, 2015). Kontos and Nagalie (2007) have described the need to measure care against the qualities of human interactions versus the economic efficiency of physical tasks (e.g., bathing and eating) (p. 550). Understanding care in a context that emphasizes the mutuality of human relationships provides a new perspective of social justice and everyday interdependency between people, whether the care environment is public or private.

In his article "Toward an Aesthetic of Care," James Thompson (2015), an applied theatre scholar based at the University in Manchester, has rethought how the boundaries of care relate to professional practice and personal politics. His article was inspired by his experiences of being a caregiver to his colleague, Antoine Muvunyi, from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Muvunyi stayed with Thompson and his family in Manchester, England for a 6-month period after surviving a horrific incident in which he was attacked and seven of his colleagues and friends were killed by a militia group in the DRC while they were travelling to a training course. Muvunyi stayed with Thompson and his wife while he had surgery and physiotherapy to recover from his extensive injuries. Writing about working in close proximity with his colleague to help with his physio exercises, Thompson (2015) points out that despite the harder moments of the recovery process, he and his wife still refer to their experiences with Muvunyi as "*beautiful*" (p. 432). In the article, Thompson (2015) also considers how this "intimate challenge" forced him to "rethink the boundaries of" his own practice as an applied theatre practitioner and arts researcher (p. 430). Whereas care in private spaces calls for ethical behavior, public spaces are in need of being more attentive to the caring relations between people (Thompson, 2015, p. 433). Thompson (2015) argues that the value of caring for others, once valued by society, has been replaced by the "domination of an individualized ethic of self-realization, where a person is deemed free when able to act unencumbered by debilitating social constraint" (p. 435). Thus, a need exists to raise our general awareness of the interdependence of all human beings, an interdependence that is at the core of an aesthetics of care, and a collective sense of justice:

> […] care ethics values real attachments between individuals and groups, where there is a felt responsibility for the other and concomitant commitment to aid that other. These close relationships become the source of a morality that starts from valuing certain dispositions to the other, whether it be love, affection, or trust, and then viewing positive caring relations as a source for concepts of justice that might be relevant beyond the interpersonal (Thompson, 2015, p. 434).

An ethics of care encourages critical self-reflection on the reciprocal relations we have every day with each other, and how our everyday lives are completely relational. This understanding of care is central to this dissertation, and how I understand my relationships with my research participants.

An *aesthetics of care* is "a set of values realized in a relational process that emphasize engagements between individuals or groups over time" (Thompson, 2015, p. 437). Although his argument has been shaped by his own practice as an applied theatre practitioner, Thompson's division of care aesthetics also can be used in other forms of research practices:

a) ***Preparation*****:** "openness and honesty of intention;" creating ways of supporting; having mutual regard for other participants. Thompson (2015) refers to decisions around accessibility as an example of care aesthetics preparation with respect to location selection and cost of travel (p. 438).
b) ***Execution*****:** process of collaborative working that "forge inter-human relationships:" exploring aesthetics of "shape, feel, sensation, and affect;" the "intimate negotiations" we make for a project (Thompson, 2015, p. 438).
c) ***Exhibition*****:** public acts that present relational opportunities; "displaying respect for the different possible capacities of the audience and also a recognition of the different expectations of purposes of attendance;" thinking critically about the needs and experiences of others; creating opportunities of reciprocity (Thompson, 2015, p. 439).

Thompson presents a model of care that includes the micro and macro ways that all humans are interdependent, and how to use this model in academic practice. For my own practice as a researcher, it was crucial during my fieldwork to be attentive to the ways I also was a body in this space and a place of support. I had to *prepare* to create accessible ways for my participants to be present and feel comfortable. I *executed* an effort to play with my participants during their rehearsals and workshop processes, and engaged in processes of affect with them, which I describe in Chapter 6: Tenderness. I *exhibited* an ongoing effort to be with them in community, attended their performances, and displayed my support for their incredible work.

According to Pia Kontos (2017, 2018), a qualitative health researcher from the University of Toronto, understanding relationality begins with an embodied selfhood. According to Kontos and her frequent co-author Alison Grigorovich (2018), *embodied selfhood* is:

> a theory of selfhood that considers both the pre-reflective intentionality of the body and its natural (pre-social) engagement with the world (the body's power of natural expression), as well as the ongoing socio-cultural relationship between the pre-reflective body and the world (history, culture, power, and discourse). (p. 718)

Particularly in the context of people with dementia, which is Kontos' research focus, this pre-reflective intentionality of the body and its natural engagement with the environment transforms "the perceptible into something meaningful" (Kontos & Grigorovich, 2018, p. 718).

Thus, embodied selfhood undermines the assumption that people with dementia do not have agency, since the body's pre-reflective capacities do not rely on cognitive capabilities, and the body's intentionality lies "in its capacity to perceive and experience" (Kontos and Grigorovich, 2018, p. 718). We exist in the world due to our relationality capacities: "Intercorporeality captures the ways which bodies are interconnected with one another through pre-reflective intertwining of body schemas […]" (Kontos and Grigorovich, 2018, p. 718). Kontos and Grigorovich (2018) extend this understanding further in a model of *relational citizenship* that ties citizenship and human rights to relay uses of accountability and relationality in relationship to social justice and human rights (p. 717). Such concepts foreground the necessity to recognize how different bodies enter spaces, and the privileging of experiencing the world with different bodies that open our lens to different relational capacities. Kontos and Grigorovich (2018) have argued that *human flourishing* is possible when we create spaces for self-embodied relationality to thrive (p. 720). My situated methodological approach encourages researchers to flourish in their embodied selfhood relationship with their participants to create new ways of valuing different communication modes, both verbal and nonverbal.

Situated Methods

When I began this project, I was nervous about how my identity as a "researcher" would affect the relationships with my participants. Would they feel comfortable opening up, despite knowing they were "research subjects"? Would they harbor feelings of distrust for me? How would I express my genuine interest in getting to know them, beyond my academic interests? What did this mean with respect to how I understood my role as a researcher? I experienced many moments of imposter syndrome: "Who are you to do research on disability and theatre when you don't even have a disability?" Much of this uncertainty came from my immense awareness of the histories of separation and confinement within the disability community, particularly at the hands of the nondisabled. I did not want to propagate any sort of "us vs. them" power dynamic.

Julie Salverson (2001), community theatre practitioner and performance ethics theorist, explains the dangers of being caught in problematic power relations as an *aesthetic of injury*, which means that certain power configurations have set up human communities as being more injured than others (p. 108), either as "fixers" and those who need "fixing." For Salverson (2001), the danger of fixing roles like the "injured and oppressor, helper and helped" fundamentally limits “choices as to where to be positioned” (p. 147). These words echoed through my thinking during my fieldwork, provoking me to reconsider my approach and myself as a researcher. She also has pointed to the importance of developing working techniques whereby all parties can simultaneously testify, witness, and feel “exposed, vulnerable” to show that everyone has “something else at stake” (p. 33). During my fieldwork and writing of this dissertation, I consistently have tried to make space for my participants to discuss what is at stake for us all with respect to this project. I am interested in the pockets of reflexivity that often surface in informal conversations or one-on-one interviews. My participants and I have shared our concerns; for example, I have been open about my nervousness about speaking French, and they have exposed some of their insecurities about being disabled artists.

Many scholars consider this self-reflexive approach to be a feminist situated methodological approach (Lather 1995; Basberg Neumann & Neumann, 2015, 2018). For example, Patti Lather, educator and psychologist, and her colleague Christine Smithies (1995) observed and chronicled support groups for women with HIV and AIDS. Similar to Gagnon “losing her bearings” as a researcher while conducting her fieldwork at the Nikkei Internment Memorial Centre, Lather and Smithies (1995) also shared their own personal experiences of shifting their research practices while doing their study on support groups for women with HIV and AIDS. In this study, Lather and Smithies (1995) were interested in “exploring what it means to do empirical work in the human sciences in more participatory and collaborative ways,” particularly when “efforts towards ‘knowing’ have often been intrusive and exploitive” (p. 46). They contextualized their approach as “situated”—being self-aware of their roles as researchers and undoing their own ways of knowing how to do research, and being the experts in the space. Lather and Smithies (1995) describe how situated methods “mark provisional space in which different sciences might take form” and enable research findings to be circulated in broader (more accessible) forms (p. 42). Cecile Basberg Neumann and Iver B. Neumann (2015) describe *being situated* as “being mindful, or aware of the relationship between oneself and one’s context:”

> We argue that, since research is intersubjective, and since it is the researcher who initiates and takes charge of the research process in order to produce as reliable data as possible, the more the researcher knows about why she has chosen to attempt data

> production about phenomenon X rather than Y, how she goes about producing that data and how she produces her stories about X, the better the data, and the better texts. (p. 2)

With respect to the three main levels of research—pre-field stage (gathering theoretical perspectives and choosing a topic), in-field stage (creating empirical data and analyses), and post-field stage (writing of findings and exhibition)—an assumption exists that a researcher should be neutral and personally distant from their research subjects (Basberg Neumann and Neumann, 2018, p. 3). Using a situated methodological approach problematizes this assumption and challenges researchers to ask more questions about the relationality between themselves and their participants. For example, Lather and Smithies (1995) discuss their experiences of attending a retreat for women diagnosed with HIV by describing how they entered the space as workshop participants versus researchers:

> I [Lather] was introduced at the retreat as not there to gather data, but rather to participate in the workshops so that the women could get to know me and decide whether to join in the research. I deliberately took neither a tape recorder nor a notepad. It was an immersion experience; it was awkward; the touchy feelingness of it was too much for me sometimes. I had a lot of struggles with voyeurism. I took a lot of walks by myself. (p. 47)

Lather's struggle with feelings of being voyeuristic are similar to Gagnon's experience and her decision to not take notes. When using a situated research approach, methodological repositioning is constant. Even when writing her own project, Lather (1995) points to the importance of working by "indirection" and promotes "no 'best way' to work with interview text[s]" (p. 58). Reflecting on her postscript or post-field stages, Lather (1995) writes:

> Absolutely invested in a postscript that inscribes what I do not yet know, where issues remain unfinished and questions remain elusive and tangled, suffice to say here, that as I write, what I feel pressing upward in me are the words of the women that Chris and I have listened to about living with HIV/AIDS. We are full with their stories and will be cooking out of our experience together, for some time to come (p. 63).

A situated methodological approach compliments the principle of tenderness that I have used in my fieldwork. The relationality between my participants and myself has inspired me to resituate myself as a researcher and also as a human being. Particularly when working with disability communities, a researcher must constantly resituate him/herself by adapting to the diverse needs of her/his participants and by embracing different ways to explore these relationalities together in atypical ways.

Disability as Method

Arseli Dokumaci (2018) discusses her application of "disability as a method" for "critical theorizing about access and ableism," and her approach to media making. Disability as method exposes "the possibilities that a *seemingly neutral world* of supports afford the normate body, while putting other bodies out of places" (Dokumaci, 2018, emphasis mine). Dokumaci (2018) calls the neutral space that disavows disability the *habitus of ableism* whereby "certain action possibilities are rendered *unreachable*, *improbable*, or simply *unthinkable* because of what has already been actualized, materialized, and concretized" (emphasis mine). She also uses the medium-specificity of film and editing to render the habitus of ableism visible, and to draw attention to the mobility instruments that situate how disabled people perform everyday what she calls *affordances* to move through an inaccessible world; and most importantly, she uses audio description "as a form of blind intervention into the moving image by freezing frames and cripping sighted time of visual media."[5]Although grounded in a more research creation practice, disability as method invites researchers to critically reflect on how they are documenting, writing, and methodologically approaching their work with the disability community. As a researcher, whose needs are being served by the methods you choose—your own or your participants? What kind of possibilities open up when access is used as a framework to determine the methodological practices you use? Dokumaci's (2018) article provides politically powerful language that reveals the richness that disability as a method can offer and how it can unveil the troubling implicitness of ableism. Methodologically leading with disability and tenderness enables the potential of access intimacy to emerge and offers ways for temporarily able-bodied researchers to better understand the sensitivity and community work involved with disability.

Prior to filming or interviewing my research participants in their rehearsals and classes, I was not always aware of their needs because I could not assume that they would disclose them tome, nor was there any obligation for them to do so. My choice, as a researcher, to start filming and interviewing my participants came later in my fieldwork, after I had a better understanding

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[5] To learn more about Dokumaci's freeze framing editing strategy, go to http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/6491/5095 and watch her 22 minute short film *Disability as a Method of Creative Practice.*

of my positionings and relationships with each community and individual. With respect to some participants, my interviews were located closer to their personal residences, and/or conducted at a different time length due to personal needs and comfort levels. Also important was finding communication models for myself and my participants that were accessible and equitable. As a researcher working with participants who speak French and/or English and use assistive communication devices, I moved away from privileging one kind of communication style to valuing many. Returning to Salverson's (1999, 2001) question about the researcher's obligations to the communities they work with, I had to ensure that my participants were not adapting themselves to my needs, and that I had an active intention to adapt my practices to their ways of moving in the world. As researchers, particularly allied researchers, we must do our best to reveal the habitus of ableism. Particularly when applying a critical disability studies approach, allied researchers, like myself, can move away from the power dynamics of being *fixers* and seeing communities we are working with as in need of *fixing*.

Methods

In this dissertation, I use a multitude of qualitative methods, including ethnography, participant-observation, on-site interviews, and journal writing. This multi-methodological approach enables me to support the complex needs of my participants and engage on a more personal level with them. A desire to adapt and use different methods to care for participants is at the core of my use of *tenderness* as a key principle within my multi-method approach. The following sections outline some of the methods I use in my research. However, I also go into more detail about these methods in my following chapters, which enables me to delineate how these approaches were altered, shifted, and negotiated when introducing individual participants.

By outlining my personal experiences with each group (Theatre Terrific, summer 2013 and 2014; Les Productions des pieds des mains, August 2014; Les Muses, winter and spring 2015, and winter 2016), I address the ways in which my personal relationships with their artists altered my interviewing and filming. With each new participant and interaction, varying forms of relationalities and ways of communicating emerged—some were not always vocal, some were mobilized by different physicalities and emotional expressions, and some represented a range of cognitive diversities. These methodological adaptations grew out of the necessity to ensure that each participant could express him/herself in the best and most meaningful way possible.

Ethnographic Approach: Although these groups were professional companies, in many respects their approach to the arts resembles that of community performance. Although no concrete definition of *community performance* exists, it has been described as a “work that facilitates creative expression of a diverse group of people, for aims of self-expression and political change” (Kuppers, 2007, p. 4). My *ethnographic work*, which I define as my participation in different exercises and my own adoptive memberships into these communities, introduced to me how diversity is managed and respected in these groups. Although my participation was limited to certain activities during rehearsals and classes, the immense social interaction I had with my participants inside and outside of these spaces made me feel I was a part of their communities.

Within Theatre Terrific, I participated as an ensemble member during the workshopping of *Portraits* and *Stuffed*. Although I did not perform in the final productions, my presence during the making of these pieces offered me an in-depth understanding of the politics of how mixed-ability troupes work through difference. During my weeklong film project with members of Les Productions des pieds des mains, I participated as a production assistant and film extra. I also spent 24/7 with the artists and their caregiver, staying at the same hostel, helping to prepare them before certain shots, eating meals together, and washing dishes. In contrast, with Les Muses, I worked alongside the students during warm-ups, partner exercises, and listened when someone wanted to speak. Although performing my role as “researcher,” I became immersed in my role as a community member. When working with disability communities, a need exists to always be “open to change, open to be challenged, open to be improvised” (Kuppers, 2007, p. 8). Ethnographic experiences, for example, may lead to working with communities, and so a potential exists “to develop a language for engaging performance processes and forms which attempt to ethically meet and bear witness to testimony” (Salverson, 2001, p. 6).

Film Documentation: Visual and audio documentation was one of the most important tools I used to engage and understand the aesthetic complexities of these artists. During my first round of fieldwork in 2013 with Theatre Terrific, I was initially uncomfortable about filming and photographing the cast of *Portraits* because I had a feeling that the camera would make my participants feel like research objects and perpetuate histories of being medically surveyed.

Although knowing my project moved away from defining disability through a medical lens, I was unsure about how my presence as a temporarily able-bodied woman and researcher would be received. Upon deciding to work with Les Muses, my choice on how I would document the class activities shifted. Filming and photographing moments in fieldwork gave me the opportunity to go back and review class moments, and directions given by teachers in French that perhaps I did not fully understand at the time. The camera also became an additional spectator for which the students could perform. For example, when teaching a dance class, Nagrani would use the presence of my camera to encourage the students to enhance their performance level. Film documentation also came with its own understandable practical and legal challenges. Due to some participants being "wards of the state" and/or having personal preferences of not wanting to be filmed, I had to avoid filming their faces, which often was difficult when filming partner activities and larger group numbers.

Performance Descriptions: Film recordings are mentioned throughout this dissertation in the context of rich performance descriptions that include individual, partner, and group improvised choreographic work; short scenes; script readings; and movement exercises. My intention is to give a feeling of the different kinds of cognitive styles present in the classroom and the aesthetic choices of the participating artists. I used these recordings as a tool to analyze my data. Although performance descriptions are not a new practice in theatre-based research projects, my intention is to encourage my readers to imagine alternative ways of presenting visual material such as videos and photographs.

On-Site Interviews: I interviewed artists and teachers, as a crucial element of my research, to give them an opportunity to represent themselves and their artistry. Some of these interviewees included teachers of theatre, dance, singing, and clowning; artistic directors and founders of the participating companies; and artists. Interviews, as McNish (2013) suggests, offer "solutions, but equally useful would be conversations that help to direct the course of research in the future" (p. 8). Data from interviews, if organized into "concepts and categories," can lead subsequently to a "list of 'positive practices'" for actor training for disabled people (McNish, 2013, p. 8). However, it is not my intention to provide a list of "best practices" in this dissertation due to the immense diversity of my participants. However, I do make suggestions about how to create more inclusive working environments, both creatively and practically. Depending on the interviewee, their time constraints, and their personal capacities (comfort level with me or being interviewed in general), my interviews lasted from 10 minutes to 2 hours. Many of these were done before and after rehearsals and/or were conducted outside these creative spaces during convenient availabilities. Some interviews turned into conversations about the state of disability and performance in Canada, whereas others were more structured. However, one consistent element was my insistence that all the participants ask me questions. In most cases, many of the artists asked me: "How did you find yourself working on this project?"

Challenging Journaling Writing Methods: Hickey-Moody (2009) has discussed the importance of journal writing in her fieldwork with the Australian Restless Dance Company—a group that works with young dancers with cognitive disabilities:

> I kept to two different kinds of research journals, one of which functioned as an itinerary or logbook of rehearsals. The second journal was a reflective and analytic text, which was written on the cultural politics, aesthetic choices and political significances of the Company's practice. The styles of my journal entries range from analyses configured around quotes, which constitute discussions of relationships between theory and practice, to theorizations of Company culture, to reflexive pieces about my dance theatre practice. (p. xvii)

Originally, I intended to keep an in-depth journal of my experiences. Like so many scholars before me, I was interested in exploring how a journal could serve as a space for self-reflexivity. This proved to be effective during my work with Les Productions des pieds des mains; particularly when working primarily in French, the journal was a space for me to articulate my thoughts in my mother tongue, and it also served as a space for me to slow down. However, when working with Theatre Terrific and Les Muses, journal writing became less useful for my research. As I began to write, I felt as though I was diminishing my relationships with my participants, treating them as "research subjects" rather than meaningful participants. When I felt like this, I would stop writing and ask myself if I was invested in using this technique. Although this is not the case for all qualitative researchers, such as Hickey-Moody, I found I was less connected to writing field notes. I recognized it was important to choose methods based on how they ethically informed my research and provided the necessary space for me to analyze and articulate my documentation. Ultimately, my analysis extends from my own recollections of conversations with my participants, extensive film documentation, multiple audio recordings, and interviews.

Different Stakes

While working with my participants, I became an extended member of their communities. Working in allyship with them, I became aware of the intense histories of discrimination they have faced—both in the medical spheres and the performing arts industries. Being in relation with them, I came to understand what was at stake for each of them. Each participating group—Theatre Terrific, Les Muses, and Les Productions des pieds des mains—has a different stake in the cultural space of disability theatre in Canada. Although all these groups are engaged in the same goal of legitimizing the work of disabled artists in Canada, they enter the conversations at different points, with different aesthetics. When reflecting on how Canada's disability arts movement has evolved in comparison to the movement in the United States and United Kingdom, there is something to be said about how each Canadian province is offering new professional standards of disability theatre. However, these conversations are affected by how disability culture is received in different Canadian regions. Whereas Vancouver is represented as being one of Canada's most accessible cities (Johnston, 2012; Jacobson and Bulmer, 2004), Montréal remains one of the country's least physically accessible cities (Parent, 2017). Thus, the following question arises: How do the accessibilities of a particular city affect the progression and recognition of the disability arts movement in that city?

Chapter 3: Setting the Scene

How long must we keep fighting

For our right to be living?
Wrongs overdue for righting
We're a bit too forgiving

So when you hear them
Make claims of progress
Take a good look
And see who isn't there

We need a seat now
At the table
So please invite us
Or don't pretend to care.

— Gaelyn Lea, Lyrics from *I Wait*, 2018

Introduction

In the introduction to her book *Stage Turns* Johnston (2012) describes how disability theatre in Canada "may be understood as an intercultural project, one in which artists from a range of disability cultures contribute to a polyvalent disability culture" (p. 6). Considering the diverse politics and histories of treatment of disabled people in Canadian provinces, the disability arts movement has mobilized differently. Disability is a heterogenous culture, consisting of many different communities with diverse physical, sensorial, emotional, communicative, and cognitive needs. Although this dissertation does not give a detailed description of the disability rights movements or its particular policies and advocacy, my participants' creative work aligns with those disability activists and groups. Thus, Johnston (2012) argues that "many disability theatre artists see their work—explicitly and implicitly—as contributing to social change and disability rights" (p. 6). In other words, disability art is a branch of this political activism.

The Canadian histories of the disability arts and rights movements also correlate with those of the United States (US) and United Kingdom (UK), two of the leading countries for disability arts. In particular, for some disability theatre companies in Canada, the UK has served as a model of working practices. Canadian disability theatre companies and independent disabled artists have created longstanding collaborations and professional partnerships with US- and UK-based groups. Although the disability arts movements in Canada, the UK, and the US have many important points of similarity, for the purposes of this dissertation, I have prioritized the histories of the disability theatre and disabled artists that have emerged from the cognitive disability communities, since this dissertation includes many members from this community. I also have focused specifically on the disability arts and artists in Vancouver and Montréal. Unlike the Vancouver disability arts scene, which has been surveyed extensively, Montréal has received very little academic and national study, particularly by Anglophone researchers. Although I expand on this Montréal scene in Chapter 4: The *Atypique* Approach, especially the contribution of Les Muses and Les Productions des pieds des mains, I also describe the work of other significant Québécois companies that work with disabled artists in this chapter.

Prior to describing the disability art movements in Canada, the UK, and the US, I begin by sharing the histories of confinement and separation that still haunt disability culture. I intentionally use the word *haunt* to emphasize the violence that disabled people endured during earlier understandings of mental illness and cognitive disability. I map out the philosophical views on cognitive (what many call *intellectual*) disability to highlight how disability arts is a platform that provides worth and significance to a group of people who historically have been treated as less than human, and feared. Similar to other scholars mentioned in this dissertation, I argue that disability arts is a reaction to these histories of mistreatment and immense discrimination. Disability arts aesthetically re-philosophizes the disabled body, and challenges audiences to confront the uncomfortable assumptions they hold about disability culture; thus, it calls on them to witness the human complexity of disabled people and their art-making.

Confinement and Separation

Historically, practices of confinement and segregation have been used to “civilly purify” non-disabled people from disabled people (Foucault, 1973). One of the earliest examples of this purification was the leprosiums used during the High to Middle Ages to separate lepers from the rest of society. Leprosy became a feared condition largely due to the disfigurement and disability that it caused sufferers. Leper colonies formed by the Roman Catholic Order (also called *lazar houses*) were located in remote areas to ensure quarantine and the moral well-being of the healthy. Often, lepers would be neglected, and they endured horrible living conditions, very much like criminals in prisons. Practices of exclusion informed the societal divisions between the non-human and the human, and the sick and the healthy. Foucault (1973) points out:

> Often, in these same places, the formulas of exclusion would be repeated, strangely similar, two or three centuries later. Poor vagabonds, criminals, and "deranged minds" would take the part played by the leper, and we shall see what salvation was expected from this exclusion, for them and for those who excluded them as well. With an altogether new meaning and in a very different culture, the forms would remain—essentially that major rigorous division which is social exclusion but spiritual reintegration. (p. 7)

Foucault (1973) uses the example of the "mad man" as the "most obscure and the most visible, the most insistent symbols of confining power" (p. 225), especially with respect to institutional practices, a major site at which most medical understandings about disability were produced.

Spaces of medical confinement, such as hospitals, became sites for the non-disabled to be students of disability. Staff became caregivers, teachers, therapists, and guardians of their "inmates," a central part of the "self-perpetuating machine" of the institution (Carlson, 2010, p. 27). Within the boundaries of these confinements—often called *schools, life schools*, or *asylums*—medical professionals and other caregivers used "therapeutic and reformative" practices on residents and produced discourses about how to cure disability (especially cognitive or developmental) (Carlson, 2010, p. 41). As previously mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, categories like *idiots, fools*, and *simpletons* were used by physicians to distinguish how curable a patient was with respect to their mental impairments. Under the control of non-disabled practitioners, disabled people with cognitive disabilities were medical objects within the walls of institutions.

In *Committed to the State Asylum: Insanity and Society in Nineteenth Century Quebec and Ontario*, James E. Moran (2000), currently a professor in the History Department at University of Prince Edward Island, examined the 19th century government-funded asylums for the insane in Québec and Ontario. Moran (2000) described an institutional form of care system called *farming out* that resulted from:

> […] the interactions of the provincial state, with its concerns about the costs of asylum provision, and a group of Quebec physicians, driven by professional and proprietary ambitions. The farming-out arrangements reached between the state and these physicians, the proprietors of Quebec's first permanent lunatic asylum [Beauport Lunatic Asylum] of the insane (p. 13).

Prior to this system, during the earlier nineteenth century, systems of care for the insane were a *système des loges* operated by the religious orders of the general hospitals in Montréal and Trois Riviéres (Moran, 2000, p. 15). The earliest *loge* (*box*), which housed one patient, dates back to 1720 when six loges were built at the Québec General Hospital for the insane (Moran, 2000, p. 15). To help with admission, a Commission of Insane Persons and Foundlings was established, but soon it became apparent that this system was insufficient because the "upkeep of the cells, medical and non-medical care and food provisioners" was underfunded, and as a result, the Commission often was forced to petition for more funding from the government (Moran, 2000, p. 15). In 1824, the Québec government held an inquiry about the state of mental care in the province and deemed it to be "appalling," describing the ways that "patients were sent all over to prisons and madhouses with little regard for their wellbeing or treatment;" however, no action was taken to remedy the situation (Chouinard, 2005, p. 7). At the time, hospitals lacked the space to care for more patients, so many people deemed to be insane continued to be housed in district jails. The mixture of *social deviancy* in the jails was "considered more and more unacceptable in Canada (as in England and the United States) over the course of the nineteenth century" (Moran, 2000, p. 17). An emphasis on "separating and classifying 'problem' groups in society for specialized institutional confinement was frequently voiced in Lower and Upper Canada" (Moran, 2000, p. 17). "Asylum promoters" felt that people deemed to be "insane members" of the community were both "disruptive and unhealthy for both patient and family," and they pushed for the "curative influence of the asylum setting" (Moran, 2000, pp. 18–19). Thus, this perspective on those deemed mentally impaired influenced the Québec government to create an asylum.

The Beauport Lunatic Asylum (now known as the L'Institut Universitaire en Santé Mentale de Québec) was founded in 1845 by the physicians Joseph Morin, James Douglas, and

Charles Jacques Fémont (Chouinard, 2005, p. 5).[6] These three physicians also founded other medical training and treatment centers in Lower Canada:

- In 1848, Morin helped to found the Québec Medical School, which in 1852 became the Medical Faculty of the then new Laval University.
- From 1844–1849, Morin was involved in moving along the attempt to create a Canadian Medical Association.
- Frémont taught at the Faculty of Medicine at Laval University in 1856, and was the second Dean to the faculty; he notably modernized the faculty's "equipment and practices such as proper pathology museum, microscopes, clinical internships, a library, and more professors" (Chouinard, 2005, p. 5).
- Douglas fled from Auburn College to set up practice in Québec after being caught bodysnatching—stealing corpses from burial sites.
- In 1837, he became the director of the Marine Immigrants Hospital (Chouinard, 2005, p. 7).

In 1843, the Québec government approached James Douglas, who had garnered a prestigious reputation as a surgeon, to create the Beauport Lunatic Asylum—the government would pay a fee for each housed patient (Chouinard, 2005, p. 7). Working with Frémont and Morrin, Douglas and his colleagues bought the manor of Robert Giffard de Mondel, one of the first surgeons in Canada, and transformed the property into a treatment facility (Chouinard, 2005, p. 7). Over the years of their tenure as proprietors of the Beauport Lunatic Asylum, the three physicians struggled with the government to obtain adequate funding for their research. Debates over patient intake caps, issues of overcrowding, living conditions, and threat of state-control and intervention were causes for high tension. Decisions and negotiations always boiled down to how much money the state was willing to pay the proprietors per patient. Patients suffered great hardships due to the ongoing business negotiations versus a genuine interest in improving their quality of care. In 1865, a visiting physician hired by the Québec government, Dr. E. F. Roy, reported the cause of death of two Beauport patients to be the lack of heating in their accommodations:

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[6] Max Chouinard (2016), curator at the Museum of Health Care in Kingston, has described how the Beauport Lunatic Museum has gone through several name changes since it opened in 1845: "Beauport Lunatic Asylum to the Saint-Michel-Archange Asylum, to the Centre hospitalier Robert-Giffard, and, finally, it its latest appellation: L'Institut Universitaire en Santé Mentale de Québec (IUSMQ)" (p. 1).

> He noted that the heating apparatus was not yet operational in the new wing and that there was insufficient use of stoves to compensate for the lack of heating. In particular, Roy was concerned about patients who refused to keep covered in bed, or those who could not get out of bed and were thus constantly confined to cold, damp atmosphere. He warned that such patients should be removed to a better-heated area in the asylum. On 27 October he reported that one of the patients whom he had observed to be very ill had died "without being moved to a different cell" and the that another was "almost numb with cold" (Moran, 2000, p. 36).

The investigation into the matter was closed after no clear evidence was found for the accusation, and no further actions were taken. Ultimately, the Beauport Lunatic Asylum established a desire amongst other Québec citizens to want more institutions to house what they deemed to be the insane. From 1840–1889, several asylum proposals were submitted to the Québec government due to the example being set by Beauport: a) that asylums were a profitable business enterprise and b) that Beauport was not fulfilling the needs of the community or the insane in Québec (Moran, 2000, p. 38). The proposals came from private petitioners who wanted to enter into contracts with the state to take care of patients as proprietors, and also from contractors who wanted to build asylums in different Québec communities (Moran, 2000, p. 38). Classifications of different kinds of asylums also were proposed, such as for patients deemed "incurable lunatics" to those who were "curative" (Moran, 2000, p. 26). Some contended that some patient populations needed more round-the-clock clinical observation and treatment, whereas others populations did not need curative attention, "being either idiotic, from birth, or imbecilic from long continued disease of the brain" (Moran, 2000, p. 26). By 1865, both Frémont and Morin had died, and Douglas had sold his ownership rights to Beauport (Chouinard, 2005, p. 7). By 1893, the Québec government transferred the responsibility of the asylum to the *Soeurs de la Charité* congregations (Chouinard, 2005, p. 7). In 1997, the Québec government took back responsibility for the hospital, which today works closely with Laval University (Chouinard, 2005, p. 7). The history of the Beauport Lunatic Asylum is a way to understand how the Québec government adopted the practices of confinement and separation. Moreover, the inhumane treatment of patients of the Beauport asylum also demonstrates how medical institutions operating during the nineteenth century were monopolized as money makers for their proprietors rather than as meaningful places of medically humane treatment.

In these places of confinement, rehabilitation was emphasized. The more a disabled person could be reformed, the more potential there was for that person to be considered *wholly human*. I use this term to emphasize the ways in which disabled people were historically deemed less than human or nonhuman. Outside of being considered as having a medical defect, disabled people were associated with having a *moral* flaw. Emphasis was placed on trying to cure citizens of their "defects," so they could be a fully appreciated citizen of society. When schools for the *feebleminded* began in the United States, subcategories such as *educable, trainable*, and *incurable* existed to identify the severity of patients' conditions (Carlson, 2010, p. 37). Also, the practice of immersion in water was thought to be capable of curing the *mad*. Patients described as *manic* were plunged into water several times until they had lost their strength and forgotten their fury (Foucault, 1973, p. 167). Cures and other forms of rehabilitation were intended to "improve" the emotional, physical, and mental well-being of disabled people.

Lucia Ferretti (n.d.), researcher of socio-religious history and professor at the Université du Québec à Trois Rivières, describes how psychiatric hospitals in Québec between 1920 and 1975 served as important sites of rehabilitation for people with cognitive disabilities. According to Ferritti's research, rehabilitation activities for individuals with *intellectual disabilities* (the term she uses to describe this community) began during the 1920s at the Hôpital Saint-Jean-de-Dieu by the Sisters of Providence (Ferretti, n.d.). She also suggests that it is widely unknown that the rehabilitation facilities operated by nuns in Québec were major sites of "educational and psychosocial innovations," which played a significant role in understanding the rehabilitative treatments for people with intellectual disabilities (Ferretti, n.d.). Their main work focused on developing intelligence and better functional behaviour. During the de-institutionalization movement, hospitals began to close, and the idea of rehabilitation began to be more specialized with a focus on how people with cognitive impairments could improve their social adaption abilities (Ferretti, n.d.). Unlike English-speaking countries that prioritized long-term psychotherapy and intervention by medical practitioners, Québec followed a more European model by investing in specialised educators (Ferretti, n.d.). Québec's approach, which included a more social perspective model on disability, was invested in improving the social interactions of people with intellectual disabilities rather than curing them (Ferretti, n.d.). From 1964 to 1975, Hôpital Saint-Anne, operated by the sisters of the Catholic order of the Little Franciscans of Mary, ran a rehabilitation experiment, and it was the first hospital to accept a mass transfer of long-stay patients with intellectual disabilities in Québec (Ferretti, n.d.). As a result, Saint-Anne became an important site for developing a variety of programmes that used developmental approaches for patients of all ages and disabilities:

> The hospital was also an incubator for community-based facilities, such as foster family placements, group homes, holiday camps for children with severe disabilities and sheltered workshops focusing on therapeutic rather than production activities. Sainte-Anne's also encouraged some of its staff members to undergo training in rehabilitation and they later moved on to new care facilities. It was also the main training venue in Quebec and fostered the spread of expert knowledge to school boards, schools, social service centres and job centres. It also equipped the Ministry of Social Affairs with skills for assessing rehabilitation programmes. By spearheading the move towards adapted support in the community, Sainte-Anne's therefore contributed to the introduction and spread of the social integration concept. (Ferretti, n.d.)

During the Quiet Revolution, the Québec government showed interest in a "full state" solution to the practices of institutionalisation and normalisation, which Ferretti (n.d.) discovered had never been fully implemented anywhere else in Canada. Thus, the government supported Saint-Anne's campaign, run by parents' associations, to change the operational management and decision- making responsibilities of smaller care facilities to the State (Ferretti, n.d.). Based on the reception of the government to these kinds of decisions during the 1970s, other Québec parents' associations and umbrella organizations started to carry out more advocacy and support work for people with intellectual disabilities and their families (Ferretti, n.d.). During the 1970s, disabled people were one of the last minority groups to organize alongside the feminist and black civil rights movements.

Disability Legislation

For hundreds of years, disabled people were confronted with inaccessible buildings, institutional living, unethical treatment from medical caregivers, lack of legitimacy in the workforce, and lack of basic civil rights. Moreover, most people from the cognitive disability community, some of whom had lived most of their lives in institutions like Beauport, lacked the funding to help them live independently, and they faced huge political inequality. To support the disability community in their struggle, advocates of the disability movement in the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States began to mobilize for inclusion of disability in civil right laws and accessibility legislation. The history of disability rights in the United States and Canada reveals a close relationship as to when disability rights acts and organizations were developed in these two countries.

In 1973, the United States adopted the Rehabilitation Act, which "ushered in a new age of activism and accomplishment in the pursuit of rights for individuals with disabilities in higher education, government, and private industry" (Wilcher, 2018). Signed by President Richard M. Nixon on September 26, 1973, the first disability rights legislation promoted "the notion of equal access for individuals with disabilities through the removal of architectural, employment, and transportation" barriers (Wilcher, 2018). Its predecessor, the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917, created a Federal Board of Vocational Education that addressed the needs of veterans with disabilities. Section 501 and 503 of the Rehabilitation Act declares that an employer cannot discriminate against disabled people, and Section 504 requires that "all federal entities," including public schools, "make reasonable accommodations for qualified individuals with disabilities" (United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office for Civil Rights, 1973). Section 504 establishes that students who do not qualify for accessibility assistance or other forms of accommodation with respect to their education may still receive help at any level to "remove barriers to learning" (United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office for Civil Rights, 1973). Finally, Section 508 "requires federal agencies to make their electronic and information technology (EIT) accessible" (United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office for Civil Rights, 1973).

Following the passage of the United States Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Canadian Rehabilitation Council for the Disabled (CRCD) held a conference in Toronto, Ontario to provide a platform for disabled people to gather and create a sense of collective solidarity (Jacobson & McMurchy, 2010, p. 5). After this conference, many consumer and activist groups were established: the Scarborough Recreation Club for Disabled Adults, the UnitedHandicapped Groups of Ontario, the British Columbia Coalition of the Disabled, Committee of Action Groups of the Disabled (Alberta), Voice of the Handicapped (Saskatchewan), League of the Physically Handicapped (Manitoba), United Groups of Ontario, Carrefour Adaption (Québec), Council of the Disabled (Prince Edwards Island), and Lead for Equal Opportunities (Nova Scotia)

("Disability Rights Movement in Canada"). By 1976, these organizations came together to form the Coalition of Provincial Organizations of the Handicapped (COPOH) to encourage disability advocacy group formation and to give the community "A Voice of Our Own" (Jacobson & McMurchy, 2010, p. 5). The COPOH has helped to lobby and coordinate public information on subjects such as "housing, employment, and independent living" and released the *Report of the Special Committee on the Disabled and the Handicapped*, also known as the *Obstacles Report*, in February 1981, which made "129 recommendations to the federal government in areas of concern to disabled people" ("Celebrating Parliament's Disability Pioneers;" Jacobson & McMurchy, 2010, p. 5).

Beginning in 1972, the United States and Canada both participated in the Independent Living (IL) movement. Established in California, IL was ignited by a group of disabled students who formed the Berkley Centre for Independent Living at the University of California (Jacobson & McMurchy, 2010, p. 5). This group had three guiding principles: a) those who best know the needs of the disability community are disabled people themselves, b) needs are best accommodated by programs that offer diverse services versus independent programs that offer limited services, and c) all disabled people should be included in communities as much as possible (Willi, n.a.). The concept of IL was introduced to Canada by the COPOH in 1980 when Gerben DeJong, an IL theorist, spoke at the Parameters of Rehabilitation Conference in Vancouver, British Columbia (D'Aubin, 1992). Today, Canada has many centres that support disabled people with self-help training to help them "gain and maintain control over their lives" (Jacobson & McMurchy, 2010, p. 6). In Canada, IL philosophy has evolved to be about empowerment, and it uses a "a consumer-controlled, community-based, cross-disability approach as a basis for operation" (Willi, n.a.). Today, Independent Living Centers are located all across Canada.

Johnston (2012) describes how, during the early 1980s, disability rights were more significantly considered and adopted in Canadian constitutional law. Under the tenure of Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, the Canadian government "sought to patriate the Canadian constitution from the British Parliament and add it to a Charter of Rights and Freedoms" (Johnston, 2012, p. 7). Johnston (2012) also has points out that although disability was not explicitly in the first drafts of the Charter, it was added after the COPOH lobbied for it (p. 7). Johnston (2012) argues that, "Much more needs to be done, of course, not least in the area of arts funding, but the

Charter did mark an important break in the recognition of disability rights" (p. 7). In 1981, the United Nations (UN) International Year of Disabled Persons (IYDP) was celebrated: "The IYDP and the subsequent UN Decade of the Disabled Persons (1983–92) fostered an unprecedented level of public and political interest in Canada regarding the rights and opportunities afforded to people with disabilities" ("Disability Rights Movement in Canada").

Canada's participation in the IYDP played a role in helping the COPOH to prove their case to include disability as an important minority identity in the Canadian Charter. By 1986, disability—along with women, visible minorities, and Aboriginal people—were represented in the new Employment Equity Act and the Report of the Royal Commission on Equality in Employment ("Disability Rights Movement in Canada"). By 1990, the United States passed the Disabilities Act (ADA), prohibiting "discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation, and all private and public places that are open to the general public" ("What is the ADA?"). These historical changes in legislation mark important shifts in the acknowledgement of disability as a minority identity entitled to civil rights in North America. Johnston (2012) describes how these political movements inspired, "a broader re-evaluation of disability in scholarship and the arts, leading to the new fields of *disability studies* and *disability arts* in the 1980s" (p. 9).

The Scope of Disability Arts

The disability arts movement has mobilized new political activism concerning the disability experience, and has helped to undo the histories that limit how the disability community is represented (Jacobson & McMurchy, 2010; Masefield, 2006). Johnston (2012) describes how the UK and the US have been leaders of the disability arts movement, "putting forward a range of special initiatives, and setting up arts councils for disability arts projects decades before any comparable effort was made in Canada (Johnston, 2012, p. 8). Over the last 15 years, Canada has followed with disability culture events and festivals, such as Cripping the Arts, a 3-day disability arts event put on by Tangled Arts, Ryerson University, and the Harbourfront Centre in Toronto, Ontario; and the National Arts Centre English Theatre 2-year project on Deaf, disability, Mad arts and Inclusion (the 2016-2017 Cycle) whereby 3 events were held to bring together leading artists and students from the field. Since the scope of these events—which include individual artists, theatre groups, and partnerships—is vast, I focus only on the most important cultural events and groups from the UK, US, and Canada that speak to conversations of cognitive disability and the experiences of artists in Montréal and Vancouver. Some of these topics include: debates about the development of disability arts as a professional practice, the issue concerning how the creative work of disabled artists is categorized as therapeutic, and the development of major theatre companies working with disabled artists from the cognitive disability community.

United Kingdom

When describing three important moments in the UK's history of disability and theatre, Colette Conroy (2009), disability arts researcher and faculty member of the University of Hull, points out how the "three areas of *drama for disabled people*, *theatre by disabled people* and *political disability arts* co-existed without much conversation" (p. 5). Conroy (2009) also notes that although it is possible to find disability arts culture in the UK, "these moments remain trapped in the time and place of their happening" (p. 5).

***Moment one 1978, Drama for disabled people*:** In 1978, in Darlington, England, a series of papers were presented about inclusive arts. Funded by the Carnegie Foundation UK in 1981, these papers were published in a collection called *The Arts and Disabilities: A Creative Response to Social Handicap*. The collection emphasized "the benefits for disabled people of their participation in arts activities" and was divided into four categories: entertainment/recreation, social interaction, education, and clinical therapy (Conroy, 2009, p. 6). However, Conroy has noted that this collection lacks a dialogue about the development of disabled artists working in the professional arts industry. Also problematic is how this collection contextualizes theatre and disability in categories of *recreation* and *clinical therapy* alongside *entertainment*. Conroy (2009) also points out that the introduction to the collection supports the idea of *art as therapy* for disabled people (p. 6).

***Moment two 1982, Theatre and disabled people*:** In 1982, Richard Tomlinson, co-founder of Graeae Theatre (along with disabled actor Nabil Shaban), a pioneering theatre company for disabled people, published a book called *Disability, Theatre and Education*. Conroy (2009) describes how Tomlinson felt disability theatre was a "strong form of politically active art because in the encounter between disabled performer and non-disabled audience, something significant changed" (p. 6). Conroy (2009) describes this significant moment that Tomlinson believed in:

> The enforced passivity of theatre offers a reversal of the usual habits of looking at disabled people. The individual performer is empowered and is accorded status because of his presence on stage as performer, as speaker and actor, as object of the audience's attention. Here, disability, theatre, and education are linked by the experiential nature of all three. In this conversation, the skills to make theatre emerge from an educational context, but the trajectory is towards professional theatre work, in which the finished piece of performance work is the transformative object of the spectator's attention. (p. 7)

This moment also is significant to Conroy when she reflects on her own tenure as associate director of Graeae Theatre. She describes this experience as her first encounter with professional disability theatre. However, this encounter was interrupted by the tension with what a professional theatre aesthetic looks like when disabled artists are producing it:

> The injunction "look at our work" turned into an injunction to look at us as *professional*. That got us jumping through hoops and participating in the sorts of exclusionary practices that stand against any kind of meaningful interplay of difference. Graeae wished to stand against mainstream aesthetics but instead were driven to embrace them in pursuit of dominant conservative aesthetics in the pursuit of "quality." (Conroy, 2009, p. 7)

This pursuit of creating professional theatre artists relates to the conversations I include in this dissertation, particularly with members of Les Muses whose work, even in professional film, faces constant discrimination. However, for theatre companies like Les Productions des pieds des mains, an ongoing push against these conservative aesthetics takes form in experimental approaches that exceed the boundaries of what audiences might expect from disabled artists and their movement styles. As Conroy (2009) explains, Graeae Theatre began to rethink its own practices: "The process of re-imagining the world and rethinking spectatorship is one of the central tasks identified by makers of disability arts and disability theatre, and one of the pleasures of scholarship in this area" (p. 8). This important shift of re-imagining the world is "to stop *perceiving* disability as the meaning of theatre work by disabled performers, more disabled people have to appear as producers of culture" (Conroy, 2009, p. 8).

Moment three 1991, Disability arts and culture**:** Conroy (2009) describes how disability arts in the UK, not yet adequately defined, faces many issues concerning support and the closures of major funding organizations (p. 9). In agreement with Paddy Masefield, Conroy (2009) describes how the mid-1990s "saw a crystallisation of articulations of the relationship between politics of identity and the notion of representation in the Disability Arts and Culture Seminar in London" (p. 9). This seminar provided an opportunity for leading artists to come together to discuss strategies and feelings around funding and the role of the disability arts sector in the UK. However, the National Disability Arts Forum (NDAF) closed in February 2008, and its parent company, the London Disability Arts Forum (LDAF), closed in July 2008 (p. 9). Founded in 1992, the LDAF was a disability-led organisation focused on promoting disability arts and disabled artists (Chase, 2008). It was born out of the dialogues that were carried out at the Disability Arts Forum Day event called *Our Arts, Our Culture* at the Albany Centre on July 26, 1986. Artists like Mat Fraser, who created the *Thalidomide! A Musical*, tried to save the organization, but unfortunately the Arts Council did not renew its funding. The Arts Council addressed its decision in a statement:

> Despite substantial investment since 2004, London Disability Arts Forum has been unable to address serious concerns and to provide a strong service for the promotion and support of disabled artists. We believe that our funding will better serve disabled artists through investment elsewhere. (Chase, 2008)

Mat Fraser responded to the statement:

> Where else will younger disabled people wanting to enter and work in the arts be able to go? We know that without a dedicated disability arts organisation, other bodies will fail miserably as they attempt to provide the necessary support to disabled artists that is second nature to LDAF. We will get lumped in with other "minority" funding already suffering from too much competition, no doubt, until we no longer have a strong voice with which to speak our own valuable arts message to the world. (Chase, 2008)

During this time in the UK, questions were being raised about the role of disability arts. In 2007, Melvyn Bragg published an article in *The Guardian* entitled "The last remaining avant-garde movement" in which he discussed his experience in a debate concerning the importance of Deaf and disability arts in the cultural life in the UK (Bragg, 2007). The debate, which was held on the United Nation's International Day of Disabled People, was hosted by the LDAF. Bragg described the surprise he felt over the "intensity of feeling" from the disabled people who participated in the debate, particularly with respect to their art and the sense of exclusion they felt from their country. Panelists in the debate included Sandy Narine (director of the Portrait

Gallery), Paddy Masefield (disabled artist and scholar),[7] Yinka Shonibare (former Turner Prize Nominee),[8] Nabil Shaban (disabled artist and performer), Ju Gosling (artist in residence at the National Disability Arts Collection and Archive),[9] and Jenny Sealey (artistic director of Graeae Theatre company).[10] During the "heated discussion," Bragg was struck by Shonibare's comment on how "disability arts can be seen as the last remaining avant-garde movement." According to Bragg (2007), it was apparent that the participants in the debate had no interest in categorizing Deaf and disability arts within mainstream arts. Gosling argued about the political and ethical significance of the disability arts movement: "Should we bury a movement which points out that we can only be really happy when we accept the reality of the human condition as being vulnerable and imperfect" (Bragg, 2007). During the debate, all the participants outlined their own struggles and passions for their artistic practices and communities. By the end of the debate, 99% of the participants voted to maintain the category of Deaf and disability arts, and unanimously recognized the need for more funding. Although Bragg represents a European perspective, this article highlights the international political significance of the Deaf and disability arts movement, and to prompt a provocation of what this category has meant in Canada. Melvynn (2007) has describes his observations on witnessing strangers entering the space of this debate, and choosing to stay for its duration:

> At one stage I noticed at the back of the auditorium a dozen or so people had drifted in clearly from another event. They stayed and watched and listened. They stayed for

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[7] I recall reading Masefield's 2006 book *Strength: Broadside from Disability on the Arts* during the time when I was writing my doctoral proposal. This book is an insightful look at the disability arts movement and its histories in the UK. What I found most interesting was Masefield's perspectives on being a person who had become disabled later in life. As a temporary able-bodied scholar myself, I think his perspective offers important insights into the different kinds of disability temporalities.

[8] Established in 1984, the Turner Prize is awarded to a British visual artist (someone who was born in or works primarily in Britain). Founded by a group called the Patrons of New Art, the award is supposed to encourage more interest in contemporary art and help the Tate (a family of four galleries in London, Liverpool, and Cornwall) obtain new works. The recipient of the award is judged by a new panel of judges each year. The award is named after Joseph Mallord William Turner, a 19th century British artist. The winner receives £25,000, and each shortlisted artist receives £5,000 (Tate—What is the Turner Prize?).

[9] Dr. Ju Gosling is now the artistic director of a disability arts organization called Together! 2012 CIC. I had the pleasure of working with Dr Gosling on a project called Vibrations for which I served as the coordinator from May 2017 until the end of the project in December 2018. Vibrations was a collaboration between VibraFusionLab (London, Ontario), Together! 2012 CIC (East London, UK), and Concordia University's Millieux: Institute for Arts Culture and Technology. The project brought together Montreal-based and East London-based disabled artists through co-produced digital artworks. The project was funded by the British Council Canada and the Province of Quebec through a 2-year bilateral cultural exchange program QC-UK Connections.

> awhile—*they looked very surprised* at what they had stumbled on in the Tate Modern—*I think they may have been seeing the emergence of a new world.* (emphasis mine)

I am interested in why these unexpected guests felt like they had entered a “whole new world,” and the significance of this world to how they re-understood art and disability.

Graeae Theatre continues to be a leading disability arts group in the UK. In 2012, its current artistic director (1997 to present), Jenny Sealey, was the co-artistic director for the opening ceremony for the Paralympics, alongside Bradely Hemmings of the Greenwish and Docklands Festival. Upon receiving this position, Sealey recalled the excitement she felt: “This was a job bigger than I could imagine. Traditionally the Paralympics has never had the same kudos as the other games. We see it as our mission to change that” (Gardner, 2012). Sealey, a Deaf artist herself, also remarked on how she wanted the Paralympics to highlight the immense talents of disabled artists:

> I want people to see a great show and come out saying: “Bloody hell, I never knew there were so many disabled people.” This is our chance not to be hidden anymore (and with a grin she added) And a chance to be naughty. (Gardner, 2012)

The opening ceremonies for the Paralympics called *Enlightenment*—held on August 29, 2012 in London, England in the Olympic stadium in front of 80,000 people—averaged 7.6 million viewers on Channel 4 (Plunkett, 2012). Charlotte Higgins (2012), writer for *The Guardian,* reviewed the opening:

> It was a ceremony of ideas. It was a brilliant stroke by the artistic directors to latch upon the theme of enlightenment, and to link it to two apparently quite different notions: a hoped-for lifting of prejudice against disabled people; and the 18th-century onrush of scientific knowledge and quest for the rights of man. The two prongs of this idea found their perfect embodiment in the presence of Stephen Hawking, specific citation whose words urged the audience: “Look at the stars and not down at your feet … Be curious.” This was a ceremony about the life of the mind as much as the body.

This world stage presentation not only brought more recognition to Graeae, but also to the UK disability community at large. Today, Graeae’s artistic mandate is to be “a force in world-class theatre, boldly placing D/deaf and disabled actors centre stage and challenging preconceptions” (Graeae Theatre Company). The company is invested in casting Deaf and disabled artists in new and existing productions, exploring new territories and theatrical genres, and pioneering “a radical dramatical language by exploring ‘the aesthetics of access,’ creatively embedding a range of tools such as audio description and sign language from the beginning of the artistic process” (Graeae Theatre Company).

United States

Prior to the 1970s in the US, little discussion had occurred on art in the lives of those who had cognitive disabilities. (Finley, 2013, p. 6). With the rise of the de-institutional movement whereby, as described at the end of the “Confinement and Separation” section of this chapter, more recreational groups were formed after there was a need for more services (Finley, 2013, p. 6). A national recognition of the arts in their relationship to disability was mobilized by Jean Kennedy Smith. Inspired by the experience of her disabled sister, Rosemary Kennedy, Jean Kennedy Smith founded the National Committee of the Arts for the Handicapped (NCAH) in 1974 in Washington, D.C. (Finley, 2013, p. 6).[10] This committee was later renamed the Very Special Arts, an international, non-profit organization. Mobilized by the disability and Deaf cultural communities, “it is committed to a society where all people with disabilities learn through, participate in and enjoy the arts” (Jacobson & McMurchy, 2010, p. 15). The original committee was comprised of leaders from national arts, disability, and education organizations: The Alliance for Arts in Education, the Bureau of Education for People with Disabilities, and the Department of Health Education and Welfare; and the Joseph Kennedy, Jr. Foundation provided the initial funding (Finley, 2013, p. 6). In 1977, the NCAH held a conference called *The Arts and Handicapped People: Defining the National Direction*, with a goal to determine the future “outlook for arts and disability programming” (Finley, 2013, p. 6). Finley (2013) describes some of the questions of concern amongst the conference attendees. Some central ones include the following:

> What is the federal role in the development of the arts for people with disabilities? What relationship does the arts play in the aesthetic development of a human being? What is

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[10] Rosemary Kennedy, whose mother was Rose Kennedy and father Joseph Kennedy Sr (a prominent businessman), was born with a cognitive disability as a result of a nurse holding her in the birth canal of her mother for over 2 hours. At the age of 23, Rosemary Kennedy endured a lobotomy based on a decision made by her father, which was against the will of the rest of her family. Like many other adults with cognitive disabilities who suffered and survived this heinous procedure (many disabled people did not), Rosemary’s mobility and speech were affected. Post-lobotomy, she spent her time in seclusion from her family and out of the public’s eye (Lenz, 2017). For information about the details of her life, see https://www.marieclaire.com/celebrity/a26261/secret-lobotomy-rosemary-kennedy/.

> the state of career development and utilization of leisure time in relation to the arts and people with disabilities? What is the nature of society's attitude towards these individuals, and how do the arts affect such attitudes? What contributions can the disciplines make to the field of arts and people? (Finley, 2013, p. 7)

These questions still apply to many conversations around disability and theatre today, particularly with respect to how some performances by disabled theatre artists are continually perceived as drama therapy.

By 1985, the NCAH established the Very Special Arts (VSA), which until then was only used in the context of the Very Special Festivals (Finley, 2013, p. 7). Finley (2013) notes by "1985, there were 450 festivals nationwide, located in each of the 50 states, with over 600,000 participants," and since then, these festivals are held internationally every 5 years (p. 7). In 1981, the NCAH was designated as a "national resource to coordinate arts programming for individuals with disabilities" (Finley, 2013, p. 7). By 2010, Very Special Arts became known as the acronym VSA, and in 2011 it merged with the Kennedy's Center's Office on Accessibility to become the Department of VSA and Accessibility at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (Kennedy Center). Today, the VSA is more of an art program for disabled students with chapters around the US and across the world. Although not a theatre company, the VSA was one of the first sites of disability arts in the US, and it remains an important factor as to why artists from the cognitive disability community are able to practice today.

VSA Arts offers many programs that include: Arts in Action helps disabled artists to showcase their work; promotes accessibility in the arts; provides education programs forparents, teachers, and artists; and shares its resources in schools and communities; Arts in Action also presents The Playwright Award that recognizes young disabled playwrights by providing award recipients with scholarships that enable them to stage their work at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, and to take a trip to Washington to view their work performed (Jacobson and McMurchy, 2010, p. 15).

Creative Art Centers were founded by Elias Katz (a clinical psychologist) and his wife Florence Ludins-Katz (a psychologist and arts educator). The original centers had a therapeutic programming support goal: "a full-time supportive and stimulation environment without pressure, threat, or competitiveness, in which creative work," particularly visual art practices, "is carried on in a studio setting for people with mental, physical, or social disabilities" (Katz and

Ludins-Katz, 1990, p. 14). The Katzs founded their first center in 1973, specifically for adults with cognitive disabilities, and today there are 25 art centers around California (Finley, 2013, p. 8). Although not entirely different than other day programming centers that work from rehabilitation and recreational centers, Arts Centers "provide a unique opportunity for fulfillment through creative development" (Finley, 2013, p. 8). The model, which focuses on visual art practices, ensures that an Art Center has a creative studio space, programming for disabled adults, and a gallery to display work (Finley, 2013, p. 8). During the 1970s, more Art Centers for people with cognitive disabilities were set up, and by 1984, the Katzs had established the National Institute of Art and Disabilities (NIAD) (Finley, 2013, p. 8). Today NIAD stands for Nurturing Independence Through Artistic Development.

Although these organizations have helped to further the artistic development of artists with cognitive disabilities, their community roots do not speak to the experience and politics of disabled artists who want to work in the *professional* performance industry. This drawback is most obvious with respect to the Katz Art Center model that emphasizes creating a non-competitive atmosphere to establish feelings of community amongst the disabled artists they support. For example, disabled artists in Montréal, such as the students from Les Muses, attend the full time classes of Les Muses with the hope that the training will improve their chances of leading successful careers in theatre and film—not for recreational interest.

When speaking of her own experience trying to find theatre training in the US, American theatre scholar and disabled artist Victoria Anne Lewis (2009) recalls:

> Like many of my disabled colleagues, I found doors rarely opened on demand. Long before the Americans with Disabilities Act, I made my way to New York's Neighborhood Playhouse in search of actor training. My interview was brief. Neighborhood Playhouse, the interviewer explained, offered *professional* training. The school would not, *could* not, accept me as an acting student. Childhood polio had left me with a pronounced limp and an atrophied leg. I would never work as a professional actor. If I wanted to seek medical advice and somehow eliminate the disability they might reconsider. But I knew there was no "cure" for my condition… Finding traditional training closed. (p. 238)

Many American scholars have written about the barriers that many disabled students across the US have experienced with respect to theatre programs and the entertainment business at large (Lewis, 2009; McNish, 2013; Sandahl, 2002, 2005; Siebers, 2010). If finding work in the performing arts already is tough and competitive for any "struggling actor," consider how disabled actors are "disproportionately discouraged," given the odds set against them (McNish, 2013, p. 59). When considering whether or not to admit an actor into a program, gatekeepers often ask themselves whether a student will be employable upon completion (McNish, 2013, p. 68). Lewis (2009) says that most of her theatre experience came from working with alternative theatre companies that did not put restrictions on the kinds of people they would work with. Her experience highlights the struggle that disabled actors have endured in professional theatre in the US.

Nevertheless, since the time when Lewis was a young actress, more theatre companies across the US have included and meaningfully integrated disabled people in their companies. Nancy Devault (2019), an online contributor for *America's Disability Community,* has described her frustration over a recent study that stated the ratio of how many nondisabled actors play disabled characters:

> Non-disabled actors play approximately 95 percent of television characters with disabilities in top ranked shows, according to a study by the Ruderman White Paper. Data pertaining to stage actors is pretty much non-existent, but odds are statistics are similar to or, more likely, skewed even worse. Simply put: 5 percent doesn't come close to matching up with viewer demographics. You see, data published by the U.S. Census Bureau cited that nearly 20 percent of the population has a disability—over 56 million people. That means that representation of characters portrayed by actors with disabilities is, at a minimum, off by 15 percent.

Devault (2019) contemplates over the ways that Hollywood recently has pushed for more inclusion in film, yet has been unsuccessful with respect to including disabled actors. She also suggests that American theatre companies have offered a better model than film production concerning how to include disabled artists:

> In recent years, Hollywood has made a push for more inclusion; specifically pertaining to women and people of color, with some focus on actors with disabilities. While stage entertainment doesn't quite reach the masses like television, a nationwide grassroots

effort to cast actors with disabilities seems to be picking up thanks to inclusive theater troupes. And we say “Bravo” to that!

To support her claim, Devault (2019) shares the work of nine theatre companies across the US that work with disabled artists. I provide only a partial selection of Devault’s list of companies known for working with artists with cognitive disabilities:[11]

- ***Identity Theater Company*** (Astoria, NY): Founded in 2011, the company is “a group of differently abled artists devoted to exploring and challenging issues of the human condition” (Identity Theater). Founder and executive director, Nicholas Linnehan, shared with *AmeriDisability* that in 2019 they are anticipating doing productions with adults, one children’s show, and a reading series of new works. On the company’s website, Linnehan describes how he tried to hide his disability for 3 years after facing discriminatory remarks from teachers. However, this experience changed when his disability was approached as being something “cool” by his colleagues and when his new professors “start[ed] showing [him] how to bring all of [himself] into a role, such as proposing that a character traditionally represented as not having a disability, as having Cerebral Palsy: ‘I was floored. That was the moment of my rebirth into theater and I have never looked back’” (Identity Theater).
- ***That Uppity Theatre Company*** (Saint Louis, MO): Founded in 1989, the award-winning company mandate is: “Our name reflects who we are. Bold, brave, willing to step outside the status quo in order to instigate social change, promote civic dialogue and produce transformative theatrical art of the highest quality for people of all ages” (That Uppity Theatre Company). The company works with a diversity of communities, such as disabled people, Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transgendered Adults and Youth, survivors of suicides, university students, at risk youth, and women with cancer (That Uppity Theatre Company). The artistic director, Joan Lipkin, also has written extensively on disability theatre practices.
- ***Detour Company Theatre*** (Scottsdale, AZ): Incorporated in 2003 as a non-profit dedicated to accessible theatre programming, the artistic director of the company, who

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[11] Other companies that Devault mentions are The Apothetae (Brooklyn, NY), National Theatre of the Deaf (West Hartford, CT), Theater Breaking Through Barriers (New York, NY), Phamaly Theatre Company (Denver, CO), and Deaf West Theatre (Los Angeles, CA)

only goes by Sam, was inspired to make the company after her "23- year old, developmentally disabled son" asked, "When is it going to be my turn?" (Detour Company Theatre). Working primarily from adapted Broadway scripts, Detour has done shows, such as *Shrek the Musical* and *Legally Blonde the Musical* (Devault, 2019). Detour also has 50 actors, "most of whom have cognitive impairments and some who have physical disabilities," and thus when trying to include as many artists at once, the company often will turn to double features (Devault, 2019).

- ***Barrier-Free Theatre Company of Maryland*** (Westminister, MA): This is "an all-inclusive company that comes together to create original one-act plays," working with "adults with intellectual/developmental disabilities" (Barrier-Free Theatre Company of Maryland).

Devault's (2019) online article provides context for the diversity of theatre groups working with disabled artists in the US and also for what inspired them to be created: the need to create theatre education for a son; to create new spaces of theatre training and making that were not available to them; to adapt big musicals that rarely include disabled performers; to find ways to ensure that all 50 people with cognitive disabilities had an opportunity to perform during one weekend. This is the American disability theatre landscape.

Canada

In comparison to the UK and US national programs that began in the 1970s, "in Canada this has been less evident until recently" (Johnston, 2012, p. 13). Nevertheless, Johnston (2012) describes how Canada is still an international force to be reckoned with in the field of disability arts:

> Canada nonetheless boasts important and pioneering artists and companies, and events that have helped shape the international field. Disability art festivals in Vancouver, Calgary, and Toronto, for example, have become hubs for artistic exchange between Canadian and international artists. (p. 13)

Although many disabled artists and groups could be referred to in the context of Canadian disability arts, I mainly focus on artists who are based in British Columbia and Québec. Johnston (2012) also asserts her own reasoning to only refer to certain artists and companies:

> […] some companies come in for greater attention than others. This is not a statement about quality or importance on my part, but rather the result of the research process as well as an assessment of interesting and illuminating cases, both representative in some ways and distinctive in others. (p. 15)

Echoing Johnston's sentiments, my exclusion of other artists and companies is not a reflection or comment on their work, but a way for me to focus my research on the provinces and cities that have influenced my research participants.

Unlike the UK and US, Canada's beginnings in the disability art movements did not involve a cultural event or a national association; rather the formation of theatre groups was the first step. In their report on disability arts funded by the Canada Council, Jacobson and McMurchy (2010) linked Canada with the international movement during the 1990s, "prior to which activities were scattered and intermittent, organizations few, and artistic practice rooted in stereotypical and old school representations of disability" (p. 11). Scoping out some of these more *scattered* events reveals important moments that have played a crucial role in Canada's development of disability art culture. One of the earliest pieces of disability theatre was *Creeps,* written by David Freeman, a Canadian playwright with cerebral palsy, in 1971. Premiering at the Factory Theatre in Toronto, Ontario on February 5th, 1971, the piece follows "the conversation of four disabled men who work in a sheltered workshop and go to the bathroom, the setting for the play, whenever they need some privacy from the supervisor" (Jacobson & McMurchy, 2010, p. 8). However, since *Creeps* was produced well before more critical awareness arose around the issues of disability arts (such as casting), it is safe to assume that the actors of the original production were nondisabled (Johnston, 2012, p. 172). However, I do not wish to critique Freeman or the original director of the 1971 production, Bill Glassco, since this would be counter-productive due to the history of the time when *Creeps* was shown, and the fact that it pioneered the disabled experience to Canadian audiences in ways they had not encountered before. In addition, as mentioned in Chapter 1: Participants and Ethics, Theatre Terrific remains the oldest disability theatre company in Western Canada since 1985.

In Québec, disability arts organizations have a connection to community groups and a rehabilitation context. For example, Folie/Culture was founded in 1984 "as a non-profit organization seeking to inform awareness and undertake promotion in the area of mental health" (Jacobson and McMurchy, 2010, p. 31). The Folie/Culture website (Folie/Culture) describes their events as following “unusual directions in research while at the same time motivating reflection on questions relating to painful social issues” (Folie/Culture). Interestingly, the company says it uses an “atypical approach to raising awareness” about social and mental health (Folie/Culture). This *atypical* approach includes privileging an “innovative cultural expression,” and questioning “theories that are supposedly scientific on ‘mental health’ and its treatment” (Folie/Culture). The group ultimately uses artistic expression as a means for people to personally research their relationships with madness and with certain social anxiety (Folie/Culture). Québec also established its own chapter of the Very Special Arts in 1986 with Visions sur L’Art Québec (VSAQ). VSAQ is “dedicated to promoting artists with disabilities and limitations in the visual and performing arts, as well as the trades” (Jacobson and McMurchy, 2010, p. 32). VSAQ works with corporations, rehabilitation and activity centers, as well as artists and trainers, and is invested in promoting disability awareness and showcasing artistic excellence (Jacobson and McMurchy, 2010, p. 32). However, similar to my inquiry into the VSA and Arts Centers in the US, many of these groups still take a rehabilitative approach to the artistic development of disabled people, with the exception of Theatre Terrific.

By the mid to late 1990s, the disability arts movement in Canada had grown, particularly in Vancouver. The Society for Disability Arts and Culture (S4AC, now known as Kickstart) was established in 1998. S4AC was sparked after “a small group of artists and advocates with disabilities got together in Vancouver to talk about bringing disability arts to British Columbia” (Kickstart Disability Arts and Culture). Some of these people included Bonnie Sherr Klein (filmmaker), Catherine Frazee (disability activist), and Geoffrey McMurchy (sculptor and dancer (Kickstart Disability Arts and Culture). After being registered as an organization in 1998, S4DAC began its work with a mandate to:

- support and promote artists with disabilities and to present disability arts festivals to BC audiences.
- present “authentic non-sentimental expressions of the disability experience”
- include all artistic disciplines, and to welcome all disabilities
- comprise at least 50 percent of the board of directors (Kickstart Disability Arts and Culture).

By 2001, the organization held the first KicksART international festival of Disability Arts and Culture in Canada, and in 2004, it produced a handbook for disabled artists called *Arts*

Smarts (Abbas et. al, 2004, p. 42). In 2009, the Society for Disability Arts and Culture (S4ADC) formally changed its name to Kickstart Disability Arts and Culture, echoing the name of their celebrated festivals (Kickstart Disability Arts and Culture). Unlike the UK's positive experience of the opening of the 2012 Paralympics in London, members of Kickstart felt differently:

> Expectations of fame and fortune (or at least better cash flow) ran high in the disability arts community. But as long-time Kickstart board member David Roche commented after the dust settled, "Olympic reality was not as anticipated…The Cultural Olympiad process seemed less interested in building community than in creating a big splash event." (Kickstart Disability Arts and Culture)

Diverging from their usual partner, the Roundhouse Community Centre, for the 2010 KicksART festival, Kickstart decided to present different events throughout Vancouver during the month of March under the theme "Unleashing the Extraordinary":

> With Olympiad funding, artistic director Geoff McMurchy was able to bring in internationally renowned hip-hop dance artist Bill Shannon, AKA "The Crutchmaster," a pioneer whose brilliant moves had widely influenced "able-bodied" dance companies. Kickstart also mounted the Heroes art show with a glossy Olympic-funded catalogue, but several other Kickstart community-based events went ahead without Olympic funding, and garnered more community response, leaving McMurchy with doubts that any lasting legacy for disability arts resulted from the Olympics/Paralympics. Roche believes that rather than leaving a dramatically altered legacy, the Olympics/Paralympics merely reinforced the community-oriented values and practices that have always been at the heart of disability arts: mentoring, inclusion, initiative/leadership, and cooperation/collaboration. (Kickstart Disability Arts and Culture)

For Kickstart, "what was thought to be Paralympic moment to fame," merely emphasized the community roots of their organization and models of working. Today, Kickstart continues to host events, festivals, and workshops to support disabled artists across Canada.

From the mid-1990s to the early 2000s, the disability arts field had significant growth. Les Muses was founded in 1997 by Cindy Schwartz as a recreational setting, which later developed into a full-time program. Also, a theatre troupe of actors with cognitive disabilities *Pourquoi pas nous?* was part of this growth, although it is very difficult to find any information on their activities today. Johnston (2012) acknowledges that this group was important to the development of disability arts in Canada, but she does not expand on them further, since her survey focuses on Vancouver, Calgary, and Toronto (p. 19). Abbas et al (2004) refer to the group as "changing the role of disabled theatre artists":

> The National Film Board of Canada chronicled the journey of this troupe as they represented Québec at the fifth European Festival for Mentally Disabled Artists in France. This troupe is distinctive within the Disability Arts movement as artists with intellectual disabilities have struggled to gain recognition, even within otherwise inclusive arts organizations (p. 20).

One of the few available articles on the Pourquoi pas nous? troupe is "*The Engagement*: Theatre Troupe Members Explore What the World has to Offer" by Edward Jacobi (2003), a freelance writer from Niagara Falls. This magazine article introduces some of the diverse members of the troupe and their participation in the NFB film *The Engagement*, which is a film about their experience at a festival in France: "It is a voyage of discovery as seven individuals learn about themselves and their place in society" (Jacobi, 2003). Pourquoi pas nous? members involved in *The Engagement* are listed with first names only with short personal descriptions on the back of the NFB VHS cover:

- Anne-Marie, 34 year old: "Fiesty, curious, willful, she works in a daycare centre. Has never lived with her parents. Wants children. Suffers from Down syndrome and has been sterilized."
- André, 46 years old: "Timid tactful, meticulous. Says he's slow because 'of my brain.' Works as a file clerk in a hospital. Has never lost a file."
- Gisèle, 37 years old: "Loving, lovable, enthusiastic. Lives with her parents and works in a sheltered workshop. Obvious physical and intellectual disabilities."
- Serge, 34 years old: "Handsome, engaging, works in a garage where he enjoys being 'one of the boys.'"
- Other members included but do not have a featured description: Bobby, Colette, and Lisette (Blanchard & Blais, 1994).

Unfortunately, this film, produced by Colette Blanchard and Gilles Blais, is no longer available for view at the NFB, so I will continue to make inquires post-PhD. Jacobi (2003) emphasizes the themes and scenes of the film that directly related to the actors' everyday lives, such as "the rights of people with intellectual disability," "the context of the control exercises by authority figures (family members, healthcare workers),” cognitive disability and romantic relationships, sexuality and disability, prejudice, deinstitutionalization and integration. However, two themes that Jacobi (2003) says were “emphasized constantly” throughout the film were: a) theatre as therapy and b) access to a job to ensure a better integration of people with cognitive disabilities:

> Both the director and the staff associated with “Pourquoi pas nous?” stress their belief that theatre leads to an increase in the development of social skills and self-image and gives the troupe members the courage to break out of isolation. All the actors have either full- or part-time jobs and are contributing members of society. “The Engagement” is a film about people who challenge life, and win.

Although little is known about the group, particularly since *The Engagement* is unavailable for viewing, Pourquoi pas nous? is still one of the first manifestations of disability theatre in Québec, particularly for members of the cognitive disability community.

During the early 2000s, theatre groups primarily working with physically disabled artists increased. According to Johnston (2012), “Realwheels, founded and incorporated as a not-for-profit organization and registered federal charity by Sanders in 2003, is best known for its touring production of *Skydive*, a technologically innovative show […]” (p. 37). One the most commercially successful pieces of disability theatre in Canada starred James Sanders—artistic director and founder of Realwheels, and a quadriplegic actor himself—and Bob Frazer. The piece had both actors flying the sky using innovative technology—an ES Dance Instrument, “an invention of BC choreographer Sven Johansson” (Johnston, 2012, p. 115). The instrument was adapted to Sanders body, and essentially enabled both actors’ bodies to be equalized, according to Kevin Kerr, the writer of *Skydive*. In 2000, the first integrated dance company in Québec, Corpuscule Danse, was formed:

> […] born out of France Geoffroy’s long term passion for exploring contemporary dance as a quadriplegic dancer. The mandate of Corpuscule Danse revolves around creation, production and education and includes the integration of people with disabilities into society through two interrelated teaching and performance components. (Jacobson and McMurchy, 2010, p. 31).

In a recent interview with Olivia Lopez, writer for *The Nizh Telegram,* Geoffroy shares a critique of the current climate disability arts reception in Québec:

> […]For the common person with disabilities, to project in a career in the arts or in dance remains very, very difficult, but now, it is at least plausible. Before, it was said that I was a non-dancer. The spectators see that I move the head and arms. But there are so many techniques of dance integrated, for each of the disabilities, than among the professional dancers without disabilities. The taboo of disability is as big as the planet in Quebec. Here, the dancers without a disability are not interested in the dance integrated, whereas in Europe, there are plenty of pros who are taking these courses. (Lopez, 2019)

Geoffroy is a significant force in the disability arts movement in Québec, along with the atypique artist movement that I expand on in the following chapter.

Other significant Québec groups that formed during the mid-2000s that I discuss in later chapters in this dissertation are Joe Jack and John and Théâtre Aphasique. Joe Jack and John was founded in 2003 with the intention of creating "socially relevant and avant garde theatre, exploring boundaries between theatre and performance" (Jacobson and McMurchy, 2010, p. 31). This company often works with students from Les Muses. Théatre Aphasique is a "non-profit organization focusing on rehabilitation and social reintegration of people with aphasia through drama" (Jacobson and McMurchy, 2010, p. 31). The Les Muses drama teacher, Richard Gaulin, is an artistic affiliate of this organization. As previously mentioned, Les Production des pieds des mains was founded in 2004.

In her article "From Ruplicans to Hacktivists: Recent Inclusion Initiative in Canadian Theatre," Johnston (2017) maps out the significance of recent cultural events that brought new energy and recognition to Canadian disability arts. Focusing on the 2015/2016 season, she describes these years as a "watershed moment in Canadian disability theatre:"

> Ten years later in Canada, the 2015/2016 season has prompted me to reflect on a similar set of linked events, this time from my own national context. Many participants at these events have likewise flagged this season as a watershed moment in Canadian disability theatre and performance. It was indeed remarkable for its series of large-scale events dedicated to communal exploration of the core precepts and tensions at play in disability theatre practice (Johnston, 2012, p. 353).

Three of the events to which Johnston refers are:

- ***The Republic of Inclusion:*** February 2015 event, programming for the PRO-GRESS International Festival of Performance Ideas, co-produced by SummerWorks Performance

Festival, was held in The Theatre Centre. The event was organized by playwright Alex Bulmer—referenced in the introduction of this dissertation—and award winning director and Associate Artistic Director of English Theatre at Canada's Arts Centre, Sarah Stanley. This event was also in collaboration with Jan Derbyshire (comedian and inclusion expert) and Eliza Chandler (founder of Tangled Arts). The day consisted of conversations around inclusive theatre practices with a long-table style conversation to enable attendees to feel comfortable about expressing their opinions in the space (Chandler, 2015). The event also was live streamed on the SpiderWebShowPerformance website.

- ***The Summit*:** Hosted by the National Arts Centre English Theatre (NAC), this event extended from the work on the NAC Cycle on Indigenous Theatre, and was based on a "subsequent commitment to launch a national Indigenous Theatre in 2019, the NAC began its second cycle, this time focused on inclusion, Deaf and disability arts" (Johnston, 2017, p. 354). During April 10–12, 2016, the NAC partnered with the Stratford Festival to host *The Summit: Changing Space of Canadian Theatre and Impacting the Processes Used for it Creation*. With other institutions onboard, the event gathered 13 leaders of the Deaf and disability arts (Johnston, 2017). This gathering served as Part 1 of this review. Part 2, called *The Study*, ran from June 19–27, 2017 in Ottawa and included Deaf, disabled, and Mad artists from across Canada to "explore modes of inclusive performance practise" (NAC). Finally, Part 3, called *The Republic of Inclusion*, which I attended, ran from June 27–29, 2017 in Ottawa and was open to the public. It invited people to:

  > Dive into the immersive, accessible and inclusive world of Deaf, disability and Mad art. Performance bursts, curated conversations, fine food and drink, djs and dance, live music and visual art await you! Featuring leading artists and creators from around the country, The Republic of Inclusion promises to reveal its scope of existing works, and practise in Canada (NAC).

  This event, the largest of its scale in Canadian history, brought together artists from diverse communities.

- ***Cripping the Arts Symposium***: An annual event run by Toronto's Tangled Art+ Disability. The event Johnston (2017) referred to in her article was held from April 28 to

April 30, 2016, bringing together Deaf and disabled artists from around the world to present their work. After registration, the event was filled within 12 hours, and so Tangled had to seek a larger venue to accommodate the long waitlist (which I also was on) (Johston, 2017, 355). The big question that focused the event was: "How do Deaf, disabled, and Mad people access the arts both as audience members and creators" (Johnston, 2017. p. 355).

Events such as these are more common in Canada today, whereas in the mid-1990s, groups were still establishing themselves, along with the field of disability arts in general. In December 2018, at Concordia University, I co-organized, along with my colleagues Dr. Sam Thulin and Dr. Kim Sawchuk, *Vibrations*, an international Deaf and disability arts symposium that attracted Deaf and disabled artists from the US and Canada. One of the important goals of *Vibrations* was to feature the work of the Montréal disability community. Les Muses, Les Productions des pieds des mains, and Joe Jack and John shared their work.

Finding Place

Despite the long histories of the disability arts pioneers fighting for cultural legitimacy, artistic institutions that offer professional training still remain a rarity in the United Kingdom, United States, and Canada collectively. There is also the contention of how institutions offer artistic development- whether through workshops, formal classes, or just solely through theatrical productions. Particularly in Canada, each province invites disabled artists differently, and provides independent approaches to the ever evolving Canadian disability arts landscape. Arts companies may emphasize working with specific disability communities over others. For example, Workman Arts in Toronto, Ontario is a "multidisciplinary arts organization that promotes a greater understanding of mental health and addiction issues through creation and presentation" (Workman Arts). In addition, the mission of Seeing Voices in Montréal is to "provide educational and collaborative opportunities to build connections between D/deaf* and hearing people" (Seeing Voices). There is also Spectrum Productions in Montréal which focuses on "creating opportunities for autism in media and the arts" (Spectrum Productions). These arts organizations come to support and create new disability arts hubs for Deaf and disabled artists. Artists that come into contact with organizations like Theatre Terrific, Les Productions des pieds des mains and Les Muses will often maintain a long-standing presence and working relationship with them.

Longtime member of Theatre Terrific, Lianne Crowe, originally from Victoria, British Columbia, has worked with the company on and off for 27 years. Theatre Terrific originally approached Crowe to participate in its 1987 Fringe Festival production, but unfortunately, she was unable to take part due to a prior social commitment. In her interview, Crowe explained, "Growing up I had always wanted to be an actor, but there was nothing in Victoria for me to do. So when my mom found out about Theatre Terrific, I decided to move over from Victoria to join Theatre Terrific" (interview, August 2014). Alex Edwards, daughter of Uchatius, began to work with Theatre Terrific in 2003. Another longtime member, Erica Kemp, first became aware of Theatre Terrific through a woman she worked with at the time, and attended a free class day when she met Edwards (they formed a very close relationship). Kemp described her experience: "Then I wanted to do the class, but wasn't sure. So then I went to grab a chocolate dip ice cream cone to think about it, and decided I would do the class. And then from then onwards, I got to know everybody" (interview, August 2014). Theatre companies that work with disabled artists not only become a site of artistic development, but of community and disability pride for disabled artists.

For students of Les Muses, the program has become a site of crucial artistic encouragement for their prospering professional careers, particularly as individuals with cognitive disabilities. As outlined in Chapter 1: Participants and Ethics, Schwartz founded the program on the premise of giving artists with cognitive disabilities a way to realize their artistic potential in ways that had not been offered to them before. This encouragement is evident when students describe the feeling of being "discovered" by their teachers, similar to a film star. Student Alexia Léger Moran, who was already attending Centre Champagnat but enrolled in a different program, revealed in her interview how she was approached by Kim Perrault, an improvisation teacher of Les Muses, to audition for the program after seeing her read a poem at a school assembly (interview, February 2016). Another student, Roxanne Charest-Landry, was also encouraged by Perrault. In her interview, she shared the following:

> C'est grâce à elle parce c'est elle qui me parlait des Muses pis elle travaille... Elle travaille aux Muses avec nous autres en même temps c'est comme... C'est elle qui m'a parlé des

> Muses. Pis qu'est-ce qui se passe ici. Pis qu'est qui font comme cours... Pour euh..., la formation pour (inaudible) de ça. Elle s'appelle Kim. (interview, February 2016)[12]

These invitations created gateways to artistic training and also opened doors to provoking new artistic legacies not only in Canadian disability theatre, but also in the performance industry at large.

This feeling of welcome and positive encouragement is rare for many disabled artists whose bodies and cognitive styles are all-too-often perceived as being unideal for the performing arts industry. However, disability arts organizations like Theatre Terrific, Les Productions des pieds des mains, and Les Muses are creating new models for disabled artists to feel accepted and to be creatively valued. Disability becomes an artistic opportunity to be creatively enriched, and not an inconvenience. Cognitive and physical differences help inform their unconventional artistry, which is at the center of the atypique movement in Montréal.

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[12] Translation: "It's thanks to her because she's the one who told me about Les Muses, and she works... She works at Les Muses with us at the same time… it's like... She told me about Les Muses. And what's going on here. What is being done as a course... For uh... training for (inaudible) that. Her name is Kim."

Chapter 4: Atypique Approach

> *My point is that disability aesthetics is valuable because it introduces a new mode of perception concerning what a human being is. It asks us to see our fellow human beings differently and introduces a critical distance in the perception of society and cultural values. At the same time, it contributes to an age-old concern about what you call human weakness. It asks us to set down this usage, to understand that ability is not one-dimensional, that there is a great diversity in the ways that human beings belong to and contribute to the world.- Tobin Siebers in an interview with Mike Levin, 2010.*

Introduction

The word *atypique* offers new alternatives to other words in French surrounding disability culture that tend to limit the ways many disabled artists living in Québec can self-identify and talk about their creative work. The atypique body "c'est souvent penser au corps handicapé, au corps malade et à la maladie, au corps de la différence irréductible" (Pizzinat. 2014, p. 50).[13] As Caemerbeke (2014) describes " hors norme " révélerait un aveu d'impuissance, une impossibilité à considérer œuvres ou personnes à l'aune des critères d'appréciation, et désignerait en réalité l'indésirable" (p. 150).[14] As Cyr (2014) declares les corps atypiques reveal the ways in which "Le corps " normal " est une fiction" (p. 13).[15]

In Montréal alone, there has been a wave of choreographers and theatre-makers fighting to culturally legitimate the artistic value of atypique artistes—disabled artists and others that identify as having unconventional bodies or non-normative cognitive styles. As previously described in Chapter 1, Les Productions des pieds des mains prides itself on casting atypique artists. The theatre company Joe Jack et John, co-founded by theatre maker Catherine Bourgeois in 2003, also describe how the company opens "les univers *atypiques*" through its collective creation approach that explores questions around social subjects on "solitude, deuil, apparences sociales, américanité, identité, etc" ("Mandat- Joe Jack et John").[16] Each piece is affected by the multiple perspectives of their diverse artists that include les "acteurs ayant une déficience,

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[13] Translation: "is often thought of as the disabled body, the sick or diseased body, the body of the unbridgeable difference."

[14] Translation: "The unconventional would reveal an admission of powerlessness, an impossibility to consider works or persons in terms of the criteria of appreciation, and would actually designate the undesirable."

[15] Translation: "the normal body is a fiction."

[16] Translation: "loneliness, grief, social appearances, Americanness, identity, etc."

immigrants, aînés, etc" ("Mandat- Joe Jack et John").[17] Atypique works as a progressive disability aesthetic that presents complex and intersectional ways of how disabled artists can appear onstage and be represented in society at large.

Rarely do theatre audiences "encounter disability as a valued and multidimensional human condition" (Abbas et al., 2004, p. 15). Instead, disability performance scholars Carrie Sandahl and Philip Auslander (2005) note, audiences in the West have long been met with such standard characterizations such as the "sweet innocent" (e.g., Tiny Tim); the "comic misadventure" whose impairments provide comedic relief; the "inspirational overcomer" who miraculously overcomes or is cured of his/her disability; and the "freak" who is the social outsider (p. 3). Disabled playwright Christopher Shinn (2014) argues that even more recent offerings of disabled characters in television, film, and theatre, do not confront audiences with "disability's deepest implications for human life."

One of the main reasons for this absence of confrontation is the lack of disabled actors playing disabled characters. Instead, able-bodied actors often are selected for these parts, and receive critical praise for their performances. Kuppers (2003) for example, contextualizes Dustin Hoffman's 1988 performance as an autistic savant man in *Rain Man:*

> In his role, the non-disabled Hoffman is still visible—his presence is the palimpsest that allows the audience to engage in the movements of make-believe. The "presence" of autism is held at arm's distance. To "be" autistic would be not to be able to be "a performer." (p. 54)

Likewise, Shinn (2014) compellingly describes:

> The actor walking onstage to receive an award for playing a man who can't walk, the physically robust PR photo-ops of the actor portraying a disabled character, the curtain call where the actor sheds her disability for our applause—they enable the lie of representation. The real freaks are somewhere else, still waiting for their show.

This chapter primarily focuses on the work of Les Muses and Les Productions des pieds des mains, in relationship with other Montréal-based artists and groups, as important pioneers of the atypique artist movement. Using performance descriptions of filmed moments from the set of *Eurêka*, I argue how Les Productions des pieds des mains is changing practices of theatre making through the ways they embrace diverse cognitive styles in their creative processes. I also

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[17] Translation: "actors with disabilities, immigrants, seniors, etc."

situate how Les Muses is creating legacies of professional performance training that moves against valuing *neutrality* whereby non-normative qualities such as physical quirks, shaky movement, and atypical cognitive styles are often deconditioned from a performer (Dokumaci, 2018; Sandahl, 2005). Instead, I argue how as a program they are revolutionizing models of professional performance training that position atypical ways of moving and cognitively being as a powerful aesthetic force. Both Les Muses and Les Productions des pieds des mains, along with other Montréal companies, are providing critical platforms for atypique artists to radicalize richer understandings of disability culture in Québec.

I situate their ways of creating accessible theatre making and disabled artist training under the term of the "atypique approach," a creative practice that extends the effort to include all artists in the fullest and most meaningful way possible, despite cognitive or physical differences.[18] I continue to inquire how the atypique approach is significant to Anglophone theatre groups working with disabled artists like Theatre Terrific. Using a dialogue from a *Stuffed* rehearsal on "inspiration porn"—the objectification of disabled people by nondisabled audiences—I theorize on how Theatre Terrific prioritizes representing the disabled experience in ways that challenge audiences own expectations of how disabled artists should move onstage. The main questions of this chapter are: How are Montreal-based disabled artists and allied choreographers and teachers producing new understandings of disability culture and theatre-making in Québec through the atypique movement? How does this speak to theatre practices and companies outside of Québec?

***Atypique* Artist Beginnings**

One of the first places to coin the term *atypique* in affiliation with disabled artists was Espace Tangente, Québec's first dance presenting organization. They presented the first professional mixed-ability performance in 2000, the duet *Etcetera* created and performed by France Geoffroy and Kuldip Singh-Barmi, the latter a dancer from the mixed-ability Candoco Dance Company in the UK. Tangente was co-founded by Dena Davida in 1980.[19] Tangente "supports innovative contemporary dance in all of its diverse, expanded and interdisciplinary

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[18] This definition is an extension of Sandahl's (2002) comment on the remarkability of the disability community reflected in its "intention and effort to include all of the people to the fullest extent possible, not just most of the people when convenient" (p. 26).

[19] In her interview with me, Davida describes herself as coming from a "generation that wanted to change the world." She had a feminist mother who was very liberal leaning. She is also known for being "the champion of

forms and aesthetic orientations" and believes "contemporary art is an essential progressive social force with the power and responsibility to challenge the status quo, to pose vital questions and so to advance social justice" ("Who We Are- L'Éspace Tangente"). As the artistic director of the organization, Davida originally met Nagrani and France Geoffroy, Québecoise disabled dancer and founder of Corpuscule Danse, Québec's first integrated professional dance company, when the two women submitted choreographic projects. At the time Tangente was situated in a small performance venue in the University of Québec's Dance Department building at 840 Cherrier and, as Davida described in her interview, was also programming forms of dance with Montréal-based dancers due to Davida's open-minded views about dance. Davida, who describes herself as a researcher, educator, curator, dancer and fledgling dance anthropologist, expressed:

> In dance, what I find most exciting about the post-modern moment [in the contemporary art world], is that there is such a plethora, such a variety, such an eclectic range of visions, and I felt that this is the most liberating characteristic of post-modern dance. *Just to be open to everything to everyone*" (emphasis mine, interview, July 2018).

Nagrani and Geoffroy offered a new aesthetic avenue in their applications for Tangente, and made her excited to open up Tangente's performance space to disabled dancers.

In 2007, Tangente hosted *Corps Atypiques,* the first of two events (in 2007 and 2011) "dedicated to artists who live with a physical or mental disability, and marks the will to showcase body diversity" ("Who We Are- L'Éspace Tangent"). Although it's hard to narrow down who came up with the word "atypique" for the series, Nagrani points to Davida as its originator, whereas Davida felt this was a group effort. Davida stated that the group leading the series, "debated a long time" over the name:

> I felt like a lot of us talked about what to call it [the series], and what kind of term would be not derogatory and yet, really useful for the public to understand what we're talking about. And in all the discussions I had, that seemed like the best word choice to everyone. I'm really not sure if I was the first person to mouth it. (interview, July 2018)

Emphasizing the importance of choosing the most appropriate term, Davida explained in what ways the word atypique gave the opportunity to offer a curatorial frame for the audience. I

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independent dance artists and has presented dance in Montréal since her arrival in 1977." She was a faculty member in the Dance Department at the *Universitè à Québec à Montréal* and founded Tangente in 1980. (Retrieved from http://www.ecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/dena-davida/).

shared with Davida why I felt how this word had shifted into an artistic movement in Montréal for artists with unconventional bodies, informing her how in English theatre (Toronto, Vancouver, Ottawa), I had not seen the same experimental aesthetic approach by disabled artists that I had witnessed by groups in Québec. I continued to ask Davida which artists she felt might identify as atypique. Referring to this contemporary moment, Davida described the social discrimination many dancers experience around body image: "[In the dance world] We have not really deeply come to terms with bodies that are not typical, 'perfect' bodies. Not even with ageing bodies." She expressed her frustration with the professional dance world being still so committed to young, exceptionally thin and highly trained bodies, that this body imaging had "its limits" and "walls." Thus, the series, *Corps Atypiques*, became a way to find new grounding for artists that were left in the margins who are members of the disability community.

Throughout the years, Tangente's programming has included, among others, *All in an Instant* by Corpuscule Danse (2005), and *Le Temps des Marguerites…à la folie ou pas de tout* by Les Productions des pieds des mains. *All in an Instant* (2005), was choreographed by Jermina Hoadley and performed by France Geoffroy.[20] As described in a trailer of the piece:

> « All in an Instant » s'inspire du retour de la chorégraphe [Geoffrey] à Londres après un séjour à Cornouailles, une campagne du sud-ouest de l'Angleterre. Cette pièce met en scène l'individualisme des grandes métropoles, la peur du regard de l'autre, la gaucherie et les gestes timides de bonté spontanée que l'on observe chez les gens au coin des rues. Repliés sur eux-mêmes puis forcés à entrer en interaction, les danseurs de Jemima Hoadley évoluent en transcendant leurs préjugés initiaux et leurs différences. En développant une certaine familiarité au contact de l'autre, ils se surprennent finalement à se faire mutuellement preuve de bienfaisance, de respect et d'égard. Plus les corps entrent en contact, plus les barrières initiales des préjugés, propres au rejet de la différence, sont repoussées. Un quatuor teinté d'émotions, d'humour et d'humanité. («All in an Instant,» 2014).[21]

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[20] Corpuscule Danse was founded by choreographer and danseuse tétraplégique France Geoffrey. The company is dedicated to "la création-production et de l'enseignement, en plus d'inclure un intérêt marqué pour l'intégration des personnes handicapées dans la société, via deux volets distincts qui s'alimentent de part et d'autre: Enseignement et Performance" ("Mandat- Corpuscule Danse").

[21] Translation: "*All in an Instant* is inspired by the choreographer's [Geoffrey] return to London after a stay in Cornwall, a countryside in South West England. This play depicts the individualism of the big cities, the fear of the gaze of the other, the awkwardness and shy gestures of spontaneous kindness that we observe in people on the street corners. Folded in on themselves and then forced to interact, Jemima Hoadley's dancers evolve by transcending their

According to Davida, the first time Tangente presented Geoffroy in the duet *Etcetera* in 2000, Montréal audiences left the piece feeling "a bit confused" as to what kind of relationship they might have with this kind of aesthetic that included a professional dancer who was a wheelchair user. I would isolate this under an atypique or disability aesthetic, and a moment of tenderness, whereby audiences were introduced to another way of being onstage unfamiliar to them. As Davida explained, prior to the presentation of this duet, most creative work by the disability community in Québec had been presented in recreational settings. In a review of *All in an Instant* by the online magazine, *Voir*, Geoffroy defined integrated dance as:

> une invitation à entrer en contact avec la nature intrinsèque du mouvement et à expérimenter ses grands paradoxes: on y confronte les caractéristiques de l'état mobile et de l'état statique, on apprivoise l'esthétique du corps brisé versus celle du corps libre, on apprend à redéfinir les différentes limites et les diverses possibilités. (Normand, 2005)[22]

The article echoes Geoffroy's words of redefining the ways audiences were used to experiencing bodies onstage at the time: "Cette pionnière en son genre nous offre donc maintenant une autre définition d'un corps en mouvement" (Normand, 2005).[23]

Le Temps des Marguerites…à la folie ou pas de tout, was presented during the first 2007 edition of the *Corps Atypiques* series, and included Jean François Hupé, Geneviève Morin Dupoint, and Michael Nimbley. *Le Temps des Marguerites…à la folie ou pas du tout*[24] is an adaptation of the opera *Faust.* The original opera, written by Charles Gounod in 1859, follows the character of Faust, an older and conceited man, who sells his soul to Méphistophélès in exchange for youthful looks and the love of Marguerite, a younger woman. By trying to have physical attractiveness and a forced romantic partnership, he loses everything. To update this opera, Les Productions des pieds des mains moved away from the "constraint of the vocal performance of opera singers" and instead focused on "movement as the basis to interpret the magnificent romantic music" ("Les Productions des pieds des mains"). This "part musical, part

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initial prejudices and their differences. By developing a certain familiarity in contact with the other, in the end they are surprised to show each other kindness, respect and thoughtfulness. The more the bodies come into contact, the more the initial barriers of prejudices, particular to the rejection of difference, are cast aside. A quartet tinged with emotions, humor and humanity."

[22] Translation: "an invitation to come into contact with the intrinsic nature of movement and to experience its great paradoxes: we confront the characteristics of the mobile state and the static state, we tame the aesthetics of the broken body versus that of the free body, we learn to redefine the different limits and the various possibilities."

[23] Translation: "In its own way, this pioneer now offers us another definition of a moving body."

[24] Translation: *Daisy Time: Loves Me, Loves Me Not.*

theatre, and mostly dance" piece follows Modern Marguerite, played by Veronica Melis, who is mourning the loss of her youth and once thriving career as a young dancer. Now too old to play the parts she really wants, Modern Marguerite only wants to regain her once young appearance, no matter what the cost. Nagrani, the choreographer and artistic director, and Gaulin, the writer/adapter and director, cast Geneviève Morin-Dupont, a young actress with Down's syndrome, to play the part of Opera Marguerite, the representation of Modern Marguerite's younger self. As the website of Les Productions des pieds des mains describes, "There is time for everything—the seasons come and go, and daisies don't last forever." Morin-Dupont as a visibly disabled woman and a less traditional casting choice for such a role becomes the ideal of beauty. In a promotional photo of the piece I describe below, Morin-Dupont is presented as sensual and confident:

> *This is the image that audiences are first introduced to and hopefully intrigued by. A regal and gold-decorative framed mirror sits against a black wall. Morin-Dupont has her back to the camera, and she gazes into the beautiful mirror with a soft open-mouth smile. Wearing little-to-no makeup, she stares at herself with such love. Her milky skin shows slight hints of redness and rosy cheeks. Her brown eyes caringly lock with the eyes in the mirror. Her brown hair is twisted back into a loose French bun, secured with a silver clip with flower-like designs on it. Small wispy pieces of her hair fall around her face, almost hugging her cheeks. She wears a chunky red beaded and pearl necklace, which compliments the decorative aesthetics of the golden mirror. The black strap of a black halter top runs along the front of her chest in a V-neck formation, and along the back of her neck, leaving her right shoulder naked to the viewer. Morin-Dupont projects her character with care, sensuality, and self-admiration.*

What does it mean to witness a performance by a woman with a visible disability portraying a character for which she would not be traditionally cast? How does this impact how an audience perceives performance, disability, and human relationships? Questions like these are central to the atypique movement that is constantly experimenting with representations of disability onstage and in casting. Video clips of *Le Temps des Marguerites…à la folie ou pas du tout* from Les Productions des pieds des mains' website highlight Morin-Dupont's re-articulation of the representation of disability and ageing onstage. In the following performance description, I outline some of the dramaturgical protocols of movement between the two Marguerites that create a new relationality between disabled and nondisabled bodies:

> *The stage is bare, except for five actors dressed in black laying down. All the audience can see is the barely lit tips of their toes (facing upstage) and the tops of their heads (facing downstage). They are non-sequentially clapping, similar to the style at the end of a grand ballet. The voice of actress Morin-Dupont can be heard shouting, "Bravo! Bravo! Bravo!" In the next clip, Modern Marguerite is shown with her brown hair tied back in a lose long braid that cascades down her back. She is balancing herself on a ballet barre, standing in a very prideful and upright posture. She confidently tells the audience, "Je suis une spectacle" and pauses for a moment to find an even more extravagant way of describing herself as "Un objet d'art."*[25] *In the next clip, beautiful opera music from the original opera Faust is playing in the background. Opera Marguerite stands at centre stage, her hair tied in a beautiful high ballerina bun with a big white sparkly flower adorning it. She is wearing a black dress with a sequence top and a billowy tutu with large golden flowers covering one side. A large spotlight focuses on her. In the background, Modern Marguerite looks at Opera Marguerite with nostalgia and pleasure, recalling the early years of her career. The two of them begin to dance. Opera Marguerite holds her hands to her cheek, and looks out to the audience as if they are silently applauding her in admiration. She gracefully extends her hands out in front of her and twirls with her hands behind her. Modern Marguerite begins to move with her. The opera music in the background becomes more impassioned. The lights lower and both women extend their arms in front of their chest, as if catching something mid-air, and then bring their clasped hands to their chests. They continue to extend their arms—Modern Marguerite to her face and Opera Marguerite, above her head, as if giving something away. Opera Marguerite brings her hands back to her mouth, and bows to the floor, making an almost curtsy to the audience. Modern Marguerite does the same, but instead of bowing, she bends over the barre that blocks her from moving closer to her idealized self. The lighting becomes darker, which highlights even more of the spotlight on the two women—Modern Marguerite remains centre upstage and Opera Marguerite is centre downstage. Small little flowers begin to descend from the sky on Opera*

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[25] Translation: "I am a show… an object of art."

> *Marguerite, and the opera singer in the background crescendos into a wondrous high note. Opera Marguerite opens her mouth, embodying the high notes of the opera vocalist. She lifts her arms in the air, as if taking in the applause of the audience. As she extends her arms, Modern Marguerite begins to do the same thing, but raises her arms higher and more vertical to her body. Unlike Opera Marguerite who is looking out to the audience, Modern Marguerite looks to the ceiling, to an invisible memory of her old self that she craves to be again. During the entire section of this piece, she slowly describes Opera Marguerite as an "objet d'art," "belle," and "jeune." While saying these words, Modern Marguerite stares longingly at Opera Marguerite. The body of Opera Marguerite, played by Morin, is idealized and loved.*

The March 2007 series that lasted three weeks also included *S'ancrer dans la suspension* by Marie-Hélène Bellavance and Stephanie Vignau, *Contrôleréactions* by Jean-Sébastien Lourdais, and *Hippodrome* by Nicola Cantin. The second series of the *Corps Atypique* in 2011 was no exception to this pioneering grounding of defining new aesthetics of how to experience disability onstage in Québec. It included Les productions des pieds des mains piece *Leçons, le making of , Les Gros* by Pascal Desparois and Émilie Poirier, *Tremor* (vidéo) by Marites Carino, and *Corps de ballet* by Dorothée Thébert and *Affair of the heart* by Jo Leslie. Although not all the pieces in the 2011 event included disabled artists, Nagrani recalls how the "esthétique gestuelle rejoignait la nôtre puisqu'il présentait des manières de bouger hors nombre, différentes des esthétiques habituelles en danse contemporaine" (personal communications, January 2016).[26] Along with other presenters, Davida instigated the second series in March 2011 by combining the programming of four Montréal venues into a two-week period (Tangente, L'USINE C, Gésù, Studio 303). The theme focused on different types of bodies, such as "nanisme, obésité, déficience intellectuelle, handicap physique."[27] Nagrani described the festival as:

> [...] un choix artistique de ne pas faire un festival uniquement sur les pratiques artistiques des personnes handicapées ou de parler de danse intégrée, on a choisi d'avoir une portée plus large et d'éviter que le public puisse confondre avec l'art-thérapie. Nous avons donc,

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[26] Translation: "aesthetic body movements joined ours as they presented ways of moving out of time, different from the usual aesthetics in contemporary dance."

[27] Translation: "dwarfism, obesity, intellectual disability, physical disability."

> après de longues discussions, privilégié encore une fois l'expression Corps atypique. (personal communications, January 2016)[28]

After this event, Nagrani explains how the Québec arts media became increasingly interested in the term “atypique.” *Cahiers de théâtre Jeu*, “la seule revue francophone Amerique du Nord qui soit consecrée exclusivement aux arts du spectacle vivant,” published a special issue on “Corps Atypiques” in 2014.[29] Articles from this issue have been used throughout this dissertation (Brassard, 2014; Caemerbeke, 2014; Cyr, 2014; Pizzinat, 2014). This is also a word many that many disabled artists in Québec use to artistically self-identify.

Artist Identities

The word “atypique” has become a powerful tool for the artist-disability community in Montréal, particularly in the way of how it offers different options for artists to self-identify beyond the label of “artiste handicapée.” When asking students from Les Muses about their feelings on the categories “atypique” and “artist(e) handicappé(e),” there were a mixture of responses on how to disclose their artistic identity. For Léger Moran, she asserted a pride in being called an “artiste handicapée”:

> Moi, honnêtement, c'est peut-être étrange, mais je suis fière d'avoir un handicap […]Oui, je pense que «handicap» ou «différence», c'est aussi des limites, des limitations. C'est ça que ça veut dire, que t'as des limitations. Eh ben, moi ce que j'en pense du mot «handicap», c'est que ben, je suis d'accord. Pour moi, là. Tsé, il y en a qui aiment pas ça se faire dire ça, mais moi ça me dérange pas du tout. Au contraire. (interview, February 2016)[30]

I recall thinking during her interview how strange it was that she thought her disability pride was “étrange.” Léger Moran’s response echoed a similar one from Theatre Terrific member, Lianne Crowe. After explaining to Crowe my discomfort of not outlining the diagnosis

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[28] Translation: “an artistic choice not to make a festival based solely on the artistic practices of disabled people or to talk about integrated dance, we chose to have a broader scope and to avoid the possibility that the public could confuse it with art therapy. We therefore, after long discussions, favoured once again the expression “Atypique Body.”

[29] Translation: “the only French-language magazine in North America devoted exclusively to the perform arts.”

[30] Translation: “Me, honestly, it is perhaps strange, but I am proud to have a handicap [...] Yes, I think that "handicap" or "difference," it is also about limits, about limitations. That's what having limitations means. And well, what I think of the word “handicap," is that well, I agree. For me, you know, there are some who do not like to hear that, but it does not bother me at all. On the contrary.”

of each of my participants, she actually expressed the opposite feeling, saying it was something important to her:

> Well for me, it's like, I'm not trying to say, Oh, look at me, I have cerebral palsy. But if I didn't have cerebral palsy, I don't think I would be sitting here talking to you. I would be getting home from work or watching my children, or gardening, or making dinner. I think my cerebral palsy defines who I am, in a way. (interview, August 2014)

Yet this level of comfort in disclosure was not always consistent in the students of Les Muses. Michael Nimbley, the oldest student of Les Muses in age, simply replied, "Je n'ai pas un handicap. Un artiste, oui, mais j'aime pas ça être un handicapé" (interview, February 2016).[31] For him, there was a huge discomfort with the word, "handicapé"- an almost discrediting of his artistic integrity. Tremblay, in comparison, preferred the word "différente" over "handicapée :" "mais je dirais que même "différent," c'est mieux que "déficience" parce que la déficience, il y en a qui l'ont, mais ça c'est plus... une plus grosse partie du cerveau qui manque à l'appel. Tandis que moi, j'aime mieux, pour moi, le mot " différence" (interview, February 2016).[32] Although the question was explicitly on the word, "handicapée," Tremblay equated this to the word "déficience," which I felt extended from the term "déficience intellectuelle"- a disability category many students from Les Muses are often placed in. Words like "déficience," which translates to deficient in English, once again reveals how culturally limited disability-related language is in the French-Canadian culture. In English, deficient is defined as "lacking in some necessary quality or element" and "not up to a *normal* standard or complement" (emphasis mine, "Deficient"). When hearing this word, it personally accounts to the feeling of being less than human for me, particularly with the words "not up to normal." However, for David, he described the word handicapé as being "heavy," and "c'est comme si on disait qu'on était en chaise roulante, les deux bras cloués" (interview, February 2016).[33] He continued to assert, "Le mot qui serait plus approprié pour dire, ça serait vraiment... Ça serait... Je dirais que ça serait plutôt... Ben "atypique, je dirais 'atypique' plus que 'handicapé' là" (interview, February 2016).[34] Here, it is important to note that by no means am I trying to indicate that one these responses is better than

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[31] Translation: "I do not have a disability. An artist, yes, but I do not like being a disabled person."

[32] Translation: "But I would say that even "difference" is better than "deficiency," because there are some who have a deficiency, but that's more ... a bigger part of the brain is missing. While I prefer, for me, the word 'difference'."

[33] Translation: "It's like saying we're in a wheelchair, with both arms nailed down."

[34] Translation: "The word that would be more appropriate to say, it would really ... It would be ... I would say that it would instead be... I would say "atypical" more than "handicapped" there."

the other. I feel it is important and crucial for all artists, whether disabled or not, to be able to creatively self-identify in ways they find most personally meaningful. My goal for this section is to highlight the complexities around certain words and my participants' personal interpretations of them.

Léger Moran defined "atypique" as being the opposite of "typique." As she explained:

> Typique, c'est quelqu'un, mettons, qui a deux yeux, un nez, une bouche, qui a des cheveux, qui a deux mains, deux jambes. Ça, c'est quelqu'un de typique. Mettons quelqu'un... ça c'est... quelqu'un qui va avoir, mettons, quatre doigts au lieu de cinq doigts, il va être atypique parce que typique, c'est cinq doigts. (interview, February 2016)[35]

Yet, what was most interesting in my interview with her was her use of the word, "neurotypique." When asserting the importance of groups like Les Muses, she argued, "Pour qu'on montre que c'est pas juste le monde qui sont neurotypiques qui peuvent faire de la scène" (interview, February 2016).[36] Léger Moran's statements highlights the feeling of ableism many neurodivergent artists face in the performing arts. Even David identified the feeling that the performance industry gives off to such artists, "Au lieu de cacher, ben ils essaient de montrer, mais en donnant... en faisant moins. On va en montrer, mais juste un petit peu, tsé. *C'est comme donner un quart de verre de lait à quelqu'un, tsé*" (emphasis mine, interview, February, 2016).[37] Tremblay extended this notion, mentioning in what ways there had been a lack of work available for neurodivergent artists since the film *Gabrielle*:

> Ben, moi je pense que qu'est-ce qu'on pourrait faire pour que les artistes différents qu'on les voit mieux, qu'on les voit plus, c'est des films comme *Gabrielle*, mais qu'est-ce que j'aime pas, c'est qu'après le film *Gabrielle*, ils ont arrêté de nous faire des projets comme ça. Je trouve ça vraiment important pour avoir de l'expérience même seulement des petits concerts en bas à la cafétéria ou… Mais en danse, on en fait plus, mais en théâtre, on n'en

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[35] Translation: Typical, it's someone, say, who has two eyes, a nose, a mouth, who has hair, who has two hands, two legs. That's someone typical. Let's say someone ... that's ... someone who's going to have, let's say, four fingers instead of five fingers, he's going to be atypique because typical is to have five fingers."

[36] Translation: "So that we show that it's not just neurotypical people who can be onstage."

[37] Translation: "Instead of hiding, well they try to show, but by giving ... by doing less. We'll show it, but just a little, you know. It's like giving a quarter of a glass of milk to someone, you know."

> fait pas vraiment. Puis, ça, c'est important quand même pour pouvoir s'améliorer de fois en fois. (interview, February 2016)[38]

Observations such as Tremblay's draws attention to the necessity to have more consistent work opportunities for disabled artists and also the work that is needed to improve representations of disability in film and theatre.

Disability Language in the Francophone Context

One of the biggest complexities of my doctoral project is the vast differences of disability culture between Anglophones and Francophones. Particular to this chapter, I was unsure how I, an Anglophone, temporarily able-bodied woman, would apply this notion of the "atypique approach" to Theatre Terrific, a primarily English-speaking theatre company on the west coast. It is important to note in what ways French disability studies is less critical in language around disability culture than in English scholarship. I learned this primarily through my Francophone colleagues in Montréal, Québec, most specifically from my friend and known Québécois disability activist, Laurence Parent. In 2017, the *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies* published a special issue on Francophone disability culture. In her article entitled, "Ableism/disablism, on dit ça comment en français?" Parent highlights how words like "ableism" and "disablism" are just starting to be used by French-Canadian speakers, but have yet to be fully embraced. Although French words like *capacitisme* and *handicapisme* are gaining momentum, a large gap remains in Francophone disability studies. As Parent (2017) says, "Les traductions des concepts d'ableism et de disablism dans la littérature francophone québécoise et canadienne sont rares" (p. 192).[39] Parent discusses how she has adopted the framework of *handicapisme* from her fellow activist and feminist friend, Maria Barile. Parent (2017) uses Barile's definition of *handicapisme* from her consultation website, Éco-Acès. Barile (2013) states the word is a:

> phénomène qui englobe les stéréotypes, les mythes, les attitudes négatives et les comportements inappropriés. Il est orienté vers les personnes handicapées. Comme le

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[38] Translation: "Well, I think what we could do so that we see the different artists better, so that we see them more, is to make movies like *Gabrielle*. But what I do not like, is that after the movie *Gabrielle*, they stopped doing projects like that. I find it really important to gain experience, even just small concerts down in the cafeteria or ... In dance, we do more; but in theatre, we don't really do much. And that's important though, to be able to improve from time to time."

[39] Translation: "Translations of the concepts of ableism and disablism in Quebecois and Canadian francophone literature are rare."

> racisme et le sexisme, le handicapisme est complexe. Il a des racines historiques anciennes et a touché tous les aspects de la société. (qtd by Parent, p. 192)[40]

Parent continues to expand on the term *capacitisme*, the closest French word to "ableism." Extending from an article called "Femmes et handicap," by Dominique Masson (2013), *capacitisme* is a way of structuring difference and social hierarchy that normalizes certain bodies and excludes ones that are non-conforming (qtd by Parent, 2017, p. 115). Although Parent highlights how different organizations such as Les Conseil des Canadiens avec Déficiences (CCD), Le Réseau d'action des femmes handicapées du Canada (DAWN-RAFH), and La Confédération des organisms de personnes handicapés du Québec (COPHAN) have used these words to give context to their political and activist platforms, *capacitisme* and *handicapisme* are still terms that are not found in the French dictionary. Due to the lack of official textual legitimacy of these words, along with how underused and unknown they are, Parent exposes the difficulty she and the greater French-Canadian disability community have had with finding words to describe their experiences of discrimination to others in their mother tongue. When recalling a discussion with her dear friend, Marie-Eve Veilleux,[41] Parent (2017) shares:

> Ensemble, nous avons souvent discuté de la difficulté d'exposer la discrimination que nous vivons, car il n'existe pas de mot pour la nommer. Le capacitisme demeure normal et naturel. Il passe souvent sous le radar des gens les plus éduqués de notre société. Il est difficile de dénoncer un phénomène qui n'est pas reconnu. Il est difficile de débattre avec un. e professeur. e, voire toute une discipline, lorsque nous n'avons pas à notre déposition des écrits en français expliquant le capacitisme comme un système d'oppression. (p. 201-202) [42]

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[40] Translation: "A phenomenon that encompasses stereotypes, myths, negative attitudes and inappropriate behavior. It is geared towards people with disabilities. Like racism and sexism, disablism is complex. It has deep historical roots and has touched all aspects of society."

[41] Veilleux is also a disability activist in Montréal, and helped me with the transcription of my French interviews with Les Muses. Beyond her work for this dissertation, Veilleux also helped me translate my first French article on Les Muses, some of which has been incorporate in this thesis. What struck me in my conversations with Veilleux was her dedication to capturing some of my performance descriptions of the dance classes with Nagrani. She would literally dance the moves described in these texts to better translate the sections. I thought this was beautiful.

[42] Translation: "Together, we have often discussed the difficulty of exposing the discrimination we experience, because there is no word to name it. Capacitism remains normal and natural. It often goes under the radar of the most educated people in our society. It is difficult to denounce a phenomenon that is not recognized. It is difficult to debate with one teacher, even a whole discipline, when we do not have a note of position of writing in French explaining capacitism as a system of oppression."

Even the word “handicappée” in the French-Canadian language is outdated compared to the more progressive use of the English words “disabled” and “disability.” Extending from Parent’s article and the overall physical inaccessibility of Montréal as a city, it is evident how the disability community and their everyday forms of discrimination are continually not taken seriously by the Québec government. I argue, for this reason, that the atypique movement is crucial to not only disabled artists and their allies, but also to the larger Québécois disability community.

New Approaches to Artist Training

Les Muses, as a performance training program, has been a major component in the artistic development of some of the leading disabled artists in the atypique movements discussed in this chapter. Students from Les Muses regularly perform in major pieces with companies such as Les Productions des pieds des mains, Joe Jack and John, and other major Québec films such as *Gabrielle*, of which I talk about later in this chapter. All of their performances with these companies have led to evolution of the atypique movement, and have received major recognitions for their work worldwide, whether through touring productions or awards (as listed in Chapter 1). At the center of most of these disabled artists’ formal artistic training is Les Muses.

Disabled students often become a point of discussion with “gatekeepers” (professors and administrators) of performance programs when choosing their new cohorts (Lewis 2009; McNish, 2013). Much of their decision is swayed over how “versatile and ‘marketable’” their prospective students are. In the case of disabled artists, emphasis is placed on whether individuals are capable of finding states of physical and emotional *neutrality*, where they can play “a variety of roles” (McNish, 2013, p. 13). Sandahl (2005) defines such neutrality as “the physical and emotional state from which any character can be built” (p. 256). This state can best be described as a body that is capable of maintaining a blank canvas—the perfect setting from which a painter can start. However, what if this canvas has a rip, ripple, scratch, or black streak on it? How does this alter the value of the canvas? Disabled artists, particularly those with physical and emotional idiosyncrasies, are resistant to neutrality (p. 256). Sandahl (2005) describes that disabled bodies:

> […] may tremor, wobble, or be asymmetrical. Implicitly in the various manifestations of the neutral is the assumption that a character cannot be built from a position of physical difference. The appropriate actor's body for any character, even a character that is literally disabled or symbolically struggling, is not only the *able body*, but also the *extraordinary able body* (p. 262, emphasis mine).

Les Muses works against such principles by leading the artistic training of their students to embrace atypical movement and cognitive styles. Teachers of Les Muses encourage their students to use their disability to explore aesthetics not usually embraced by the neutral body that Sandahl argues against above. Aesthetics, as Siebers (2010) describes, "is the process by which human beings attempt to modify themselves, by which they imagine their feelings, forms, and futures in radically different ways, and by which they bestow these new feelings, forms, and futures real appearances in the world" (p. 1). Disabled artists, such as those participating in this dissertation, "critique the assumption of idealist aesthetics […]" and "refuse to recognize the representation of the healthy body-and its definition of harmony, integrity and beauty- as the sole determination of the aesthetic" (Siebers 2010, p. 2-3). Disability "enlarges our vision of human variation and difference, and puts forward perspectives that test presuppositions dear to the history of aesthetics" (Siebers 2010, p. 3). This is central to the process of tenderness whereby new feelings of *towardness* are affectively produced to disabled artists and their atypical bodies. Students of Les Muses that work with Marie-Anik Deschamps, clowning, mime, and dance/movement teacher at Les Muses, energize quirky movements that provide new understandings of musicality. Deschamps, a professional clown herself, works with the students in the morning on traditional clowning practices and in the afternoons brings the students to the Centre Champagnat's gymnasium for movement training. At the end of class, Deschamps will often ask each student to perform an improvisational dance piece. The music itself varies, but does not derive from today's top 40. The following are performance descriptions I wrote from some of the improvised pieces the students choreographed with guidance from Deschamps:

> *Michael Nimbley, known for his natural comedic styling, dances to a minimal instrumental version of "Ode to Joy." As flutes and the chiming of what seems to be a triangle lightly play in the background, Nimbley takes a few steps forward and backward, continuing to slowly kick his leg backward and forward. He keeps his toes pointed, almost admiring his feet with every step. Adding a little bounce to his steps, Nimbley*

extends his right leg forward then backward to help him in making a small demi-turn. His light-footed marching turns into a tip-toeing. He continues to place his hands on his knees and shifts his weight back and forth from left to right. Standing back up, he moves his hands behind his head, and then extends his arms out fully, almost creating wings for flight. He uses this stance to create fuller and faster turns. Nimbley's choreography carries the quality of a robotic ballerina balancing on an L-shaped trapeze. His face remains relaxed the entire time, and each movement becomes a surprise—a balancing act.

Edon Descollines is always eager to take his turn for any movement exploration, often volunteering immediately when the class is asked "Qui est la prochaine?" Known for having a compelling physical presence, Descollines will often use the entire performance space for his improvisational dancing. For this specific exercise, Deschamps chooses slower-paced classical music that conveys a dark and eerie feeling. For the first 5 seconds, Descollines stands stationary, almost energizing himself. He jolts and extends his right arm and spins.His left arm follows in an outward and welcoming position. He then kneels on his left knee, and points his left arm out toward the audience. He continues to repeat these movements while moving backwards. His running shoes squeak as they hit the gym floor, emphasizing the athleticism of his fast-paced physical style. He moves forward in rapid small steps towards the audience, extending his arms fully out in a T-formation. He rotates his right arm over his shoulder, stretches his right leg out to the side of him, and jumps to repeat the same movement on his left side. Descollines runs over across the horizontal perimeter close to where we are siting, then moves to the back of the gym. Slowing down, he rotates his arms backwards, and moves his body to the floor. He begins to engage in a series of break dances. The entire time he is smiling and maintains his gaze to the audience. Descollines' movement explores different feelings of rhythm and time- ones that animate tensions of physical control and instability. His movement comes to tell a story, one that is both poetic and buoyant.

Deschamps sat down on the gym floor to critique the student's movement improvisations. She emphasizes the point of finding variety in their movement to avoid from being locked *in certain styles. Turning to Nimbley she explains, "Michael, oui, mais c'est de travaillé plus partous dans la space. C'était pas mal, c'était pas toujours dans coté jardin [far right space of the stage]. Les bras sont un peu figées. Varié les bras..etc." Mimicing his robotic hand gestures, a movement she did find interesting, Deschamps demonstrates other ways of approaching arm extensions: "[...]il ya d'autre variations. Aller chercher plus classique [she extends her right arm in front of her chest and her left arm towards the ceiling in a classic ballet posture], plus ronde comme ici [she places both arms in front of her chest creating soft circular arm extensions]." She continues to acknowledge his physical limitations, "Je sais que les jambes sont plus limité, mais les bras peuvent varié parce que tu as des belles, des belles lignes. Tu as des bonnes mouvements." She re-emphasizes his need to add more physical variation in his dancing. Moving to Descollines, Dechamps compliments, "Edon, belle hauteur, belle jouais dans qu'est que tu fais. Tu es trés alonger des lignes." However, in her critique she explains "Mais je trouve encore que tu utilizes plus de place, plus de présence." It is in her criticism that I notice in what ways teachers at Les Muses try to balance technical training with their students' artistic originality.*

In these moments, students articulate their own perception of rhythm and musicality. Students are encouraged to work with their cognitive style to compose visually diverse choreographies. Although professional techniques are taught and valued (ex. physical extension and stage presence), importance is still placed on students crafting their own authentic differential physicalities, whether in their slowness or tremoring.

Similar to any performance program, each student from Les Muses enters the classroom with a range of strengths and weaknesses. Teachers of Les Muses take this into account when designing group exercises, such as using the more advanced students to mentor the newer or less experienced students. In many ways the advanced students of Les Muses, some of which have been taking classes at Les Muses for 15 years, become the role models their junior classmates never had (considering the limited examples of successful developmentally disabled artists). Consequently, advanced students offer a generative energy in the classroom.

Nagrani, uses advanced students to set high artistic standards in her classroom. Although these students also make mistakes, their presence energizes newer students to explore their bodies in different ways and focus deeper on improving their artistic skills. Setting high standards in the classroom is a critical factor of Les Muses program. Teachers need to sense a special artistic presence in any potential student going through the 3-month audition process. Nagrani emphasizes that not any person with a disability can be a professional artist—a statement I also agree with. She will often use partner and group exercises to unhinge newer or lesser-experienced students' creative potentiality. In one exercise, she asks students to concentrate their dancing on one specific body part. In this performance description, I write about how Nagrani explores dance as a conversation for students with different parts of their body:

> *The class, which has only perhaps 10 students in attendance, stands in a big circle. Vaudeville style music plays in the background. "Genoux," Nagrani says to long time student Jean-François Hupé, is most known for his comedic styling. Entering the middle of the circle, he stands on his left leg and bends his right leg off the floor, shifting it from left to right. Switching feet, he lifts his left leg behind him and quickly bends his left knee. He moves to the ground and places his right leg behind him, bending it in the air.Pushing her students to try different variations Nagrani says "Change direction. Change ton corps." Hupé rolls his body to the right and sits on his bent right leg. Grabbing his left foot, he bends his left knee and rotates it forward and backwards on the left side of his body. "Change, change" Nagrani repeats. Rolling onto his back, he raises his legs in the air and moves them as if cycling an invisible bike. Moving to his back, he uses his arms to hold up his upper body. He then kicks his legs in the air. Nagrani encouragingly says, "C'est superbe Jean-François!" Hupé then rubs his left bent knee on the floor back and forth, sweeping the dance floor. Calling upon Nimbley to go next, Hupé drags his left knee on the ground and leaves the middle of the circle. The entire time, his other classmates cannot keep their eyes off Hupé. The variety of movement he initiates sets the tone for the other students.*
>
> *Slowly walking in the middle of the circle, Nagrani says to Nimbley "Coud, coud, coud." The same vaudeville song plays in the background. Using very little space, Nimbley bends both his arms to emphasize his pointed elbows. He moves his left elbow horizontally outward from his body, and then positions his arms vertically to bring his elbow closer to his body. He repeats the same movement on his right side. He begins to*

explore this movement even further and takes on a more rapid movement. His dancing begins to resemble a curious chicken. You can hear Stéfanie Colle laughing in the background. Nimbley smiles. Nagrani says, "Say something with your elbows. Tell us a story." Taking direction well, Nimbley bends down and brings both elbows to his knees. He then flaps his elbows at the side of his body as he begins to stand up. He stretches his left elbow above his shoulder, and continues the same motion on his right side. Once again he brings his elbows to his knees and flaps each elbow coming up from left to right, one elbow at a time. Nagrani directs, "Okay, tu peux sortir." Using his right elbow to exit the performance space, Nimbley returns to stand with his classmates to the outer circle.

"Pieds" Nagrani says to new student Colle. She has expressed a serious desire to be a professional dancer. Colle is known for having a bit of sassy style in her theatre and movement work. Stepping into the middle of the circle, she spins. Placing too much of her gaze at her feet, Nagrani corrects her, "Relève tes yeux, regarde nous." Lifting her head up, she extends her arms in a T-shape formation, and begins to tap her feet in front of her. Lifting her left foot from the floor, she uses it to spin her body around. She hops forward using her left foot, and then moves to the same one the right. Her movement resembles a game of imaginary hop-skotch, or better yet, hopping on stones to get across a river. She slides to the left and turns on her right foot to do a half turn. She slides on the left foot and extends both her arms upwards above her shoulders simultaneously. Colle starts to kick and shuffle her feet in front of her. "Pieds, pieds, pieds" Nagrani says encouragingly and reminds the new student to lift her head, "Regarde, regarde." Colle moves around the circle looking at her classmates. She stops and begins to subtly rotate her feet inward and outward, almost trying to clink her shoes together. "Et sortie" Nagrani directs. The young student skips sideways back to the outer circle.

Disability becomes a rhythm in and of itself. During such exercises, teachers will comment on what part of the students' movement ecologies need development (ex. overly repetitive dancing or focus on performing more to the audience). Such critiques balance artistic training and freedom, and fundamentally value the different learning styles of the students. In his 2002 book, *Making an Entrance: Theory and Practice for Disabled and Non-Disabled Dancers*, Adam Benjamin, co-founder of CandoCo Dance Company (1990-1998) and freelance choreographer and teacher, argues the need to change dance education particularly to better include disabled dancers:

> Assessment procedures in schools may need to be revised when we recognize that each student is playing a different instrument, and although this appears to create insurmountable objections from some dance schools, the assessment of difference is a requirement central to those who teach in the arts, and dance cannot hide from this issue if it wishes to attain the status of a mature status from alongside visual art and music (p. 8).

Due to the training many students from Les Muses receive, they have gone onto to collaborate on different projects with their teachers, like Deschamps and Nagrani.

***Gabrielle*, 2013**

Les Muses received international fame after the opening of Louise Archambault's film *Gabrielle.* The film was my introduction to Les Muses. I remember it was the beginnings of what was soon to be another cold Montreal winter in late 2013. My supervisor, Lorna Roth, had invited her other supervisee (and my dear colleague) Trish Audette and I to see the film. Sitting in the cold theatre, eating my buttery popcorn, I was completely shocked that I had never encountered this group in my previous searches of disability and theatre groups in Canada. At this point in time, it had only been a few months since I had returned from my first round of fieldwork with Theatre Terrific. I was excited to know that there was a program like this in the city I was living in.

Gabrielle projects a complex and honest representation of disability: a young woman with William syndrome trying to assert her agency and desire to live independently, while also exploring an intimate relationship with her also disabled boyfriend, Martin, played by nondisabled actor, Alexandre Landry. One of the more provocative elements of the film are the love scenes between Gabrielle and Martin: in one scene we see the two characters try and find a moment of privacy on a dance floor, full of other disabled people. Moving away from the crowd, the young couple begin to kiss passionately, touching each other all over their bodies. Gabrielle reaches for Martin's penis, and begins to arouse him. Scenes such as this push the often all-too-innocent and sexually limited representations of disabled people in film and popular culture.

After being caught in their sexual encounter, both Gabrielle's sister, Sophie, played by Mélissa Désormeaux-Poulin, and Martin's mother, played by Marie Gignac, are called into the Centre, a place where the lovers are both clients. The two women express opposing views of the situation: Sophie maintains the importance of the couple being able to explore their sexual desires, whereas Martin's mother completely opposes this notion, asserting Martin's innocence as a virgin and in what ways sex is "different" for disabled people. The sensual scenes of *Gabrielle* challenge the desexualized framing of the disabled body that Martin's mother expresses. Gabrielle and Martin's relationship undoes these tight cultural loops particularly in the last poetic shots of the characters making love in a private area just before a concert with their fellow choir members (whom features many students from Les Muses) and Robert Charlebois. Watching this liberating scene between the two lovers allows the film to end on a huge exhale, particularly knowing that both characters, Martin and Gabrielle, have sexual agency over their own bodies.

In an interview for *Indie Wire*, the director, Louise Achambault explains the working relationship between Marion-Rivard and Landry:

> When he [Landry] met Gabrielle, they were giggling, and it was something else. He was intimidated because he is not a singer. Yes, these are mentally challenged people, but they are good singers. But eventually Alexandre felt part of them, he asked a lot of questions and Gabrielle helped him. She gave him techniques. I think they developed like a brother/sister relationship, very strong. It was special because Gabrielle had never made love in her life, so how do you act that if you don't know? [Laughs] So it was special. (Levine, 2014)

Although touching on the "special" professional relationship between the two, Archambault still asserts the innocence of Marion-Rivard's identity when revealing the personal information of her being a virgin, and in return, intensifying this notion of disability and sexual purity. She even states the difficulty she had auditioning other "mentally challenged" actors for the part of Martin, stating that "the love chemistry didn't work out." For this reason, tension remains between watching this uncommon representation of a disabled woman engaging in a sensual performance, and Archambault's words of Marion-Rivard's personal sexual history. Questions emerge around her casting choices of not including another disabled actor for the male lead role. Although it is not to take away from Landry's compelling performance, I question, from afar, why Archambault did not find adequate onscreen chemistry between Marion-Rivard and another disabled actor. How would the perceptions of romantic chemistry have changed if she had cast a male disabled actor? Yet, having Marion-Rivard perform the lead role of the character Gabrielle alongside nondisabled Landry provokes viewers to think of these disability representations and casting choices. Although artistically Archambault did project the real complexities of Martin and Gabrielle's physical relationship, she was still limited in her directing choices on how far she could take the sex scenes between the two lovers. Beyond the real-life comfort level of Marion- Rivard, the director also had to consider her producers, her investors, and the film's audiences. The film remains an important cultural moment for Québécois disabled artists, and created a new space of productive film representation for the disability community. Marion-Rivard's compelling performance prompts audiences to think about the complexity of what it means to have a disabled person onscreen, and pushes the expected limits of how to imagine what kind of performances/roles such artists should and can perform. This is at the center of the atypique movement. Atypique artists, such as Marion-Rivard, prompt questions such as "[…] quels imaginaires rendent-elles visibles? Quels discours font-elles entendre? Quelles relations tissent- elles avec le spectateur? Que disent-elles de nous et de notre rapport à la norme?" (Cyr 2014, p. 13).[43]

Marion-Rivard's performance is groundbreaking and rare for someone with a cognitive disability in the professional performing arts industry. For many members of the disability community in Québec, particularly with cognitive disabilities, Marion-Rivard has become a person they can look at, and relate to onscreen. I attended a public event with members of Les Muses during *La Semaine Québecoise de la Déficience Intellectuelle*. Each winter Québec celebrates people with "intellectual disabilities" for one week, hosting an array of events around Montréal. In 2014, the theme was *Comme on se ressemble!* (Looks Like You!). That year, Marion-Rivard and another Québécois actor, Vincent-Guillaume Otis, were chosen as the spokespersons for the week. The Québec government aimed to promote "la contribution signicative et positive des personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle" and felt that both Marion-Rivard and Otis "incarnent ce message nécessaire afin de mettre fin aux préjugés qui subsistent." (Semaine Québécoise).[44] The event I attended with Les Muses was a public concert

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[43] Translation: "… what imaginary do they make visible? What discourses do they produce? What relationships do they form with the viewer? What do they say about us and our relationship to the norm?"

[44] Translation: "the meaningful and positive contribution of people with intellectual disabilities" and felt that both Marion-Rivard and Otis "embody the message necessary to put an end to the prejudices that remain."

featuring Martin Deschamps, a famous Québécois rock singer. Deschamps, who has congenital deformities--missing his left arm and right leg, and has only two fingers on his right hand--was in the midst of singing a set with 2 students from Les Muses and Marion-Rivard. The event, which was in a park near the University of Québec in Montréal (UQAM), hosted a huge crowd of cognitively disabled adults. As Marion-Rivard hit the stage, the entire crowd started chanting, "Gabrielle! Gabrielle! Gabrielle!" I recall even being a little star-struck myself when I first met the young actress. It was in this moment that I truly began to comprehend how much this film and Marion-Rivard meant to the Québécois disability community and atypique artists at large- a meaningful spot on the international stage. When asked in a 2014 interview with Carlos Aguilar what people would take from the film, Archambault replied:

> I want them to want to sing and hug the people they love when they come out of the theater [Laughs]. Be open to difference; don't give in to judgment or appearances. If you are on the bus and there is someone who talks to himself or herself and you feel uncomfortable, just give them a chance. You probably have as much weirdness in you but it doesn't show, because we are educated for it not to show in society. Be warm, we just want to love, and be loved.

Her answer indicates the affective power of Marion-Rivard's presence in the film. Although there is a concern here of situating Marion-Rivard into a role of inspiration porn, the young actress's performance did in fact rivet audiences, leading her to covet the Best Actress at the Canadian Screen Awards, along with the film garnering Best Motion Picture in 2014. In addition to these awards, *Gabrielle* also won the Audience Award at the Festival International du Francophone de Namur, Best Actor for Landry, Best Direction, and Best Screenplay at the Gijón International Film Festival, Best Supporting Actress for Mélissa Désormeux-Poulin, Best Editing and Best International Motion Picture from the Jutra Awards, the Audience Award from the Locarno International Film Festival, and Best Supporting Actor in a Canadian Film for Landry from the Vancouver Film Critics Circle.

Yet, similar to the confusion many audiences felt around the aesthetics presented in *All in an Instant* by Corpuscule Danse, many could not apprehend how Marion-Rivard was actually playing a character that shared some of her very own diagnoses. In response, Schwartz was quick to validate Marion-Rivard's artistic talent after some harsh comments by film critic Nathalie Petrowski of *La Presse*. While comparing Marion-Rivard's performance in *Gabrielle* to

Alexandre Landry's, the non-disabled actor who played her character's love interest Martin, Petrowski (2013) said, "Gabrielle Marion-Rivard, on le sait, n'est pas une actrice, mais une jeune fille avec une Oreille absolue qui vit avec le syndrome de William." Petrowski continued, "Alexandre continuera sa vie d'acteur tandis que Gabrielle retournera dans l'ombre."[45] Criticizing Petrowski, Schwartz and Bouchard (2014) suggested the following:

> Si Nathalie Petrowski avait fait ses devoirs, elle aurait découvert l'existence des Muses, elle aurait appris que Gabrielle a commencé sa vie artistique bien avant le film *Gabrielle*… Gabrielle est une danseuse, une chanteuse, et nous pouvons la considérer comme une actrice: dans le film *Gabrielle*, son rôle, s'il n'est pas un rôle de composition au même titre que celui d'Alexandre, n'est pas calqué sur sa vie. Elle a dû apprendre une texte, simuler une crise de diabète, faire croire qu'elle pleure véritablement qu'elle a une sœur, qu'elle vit en résidence, etc. (p. 65).[46]

Responses like Petrowski's critique of the film *Gabrielle* speak to the need for more films that complexly represent disability culture and present disabled actors as worthy of bigger leading roles.

***Eurêka*, 2014**

Eurêka, a film produced by Les Productions des pieds des mains, reclaims the identity of people with Down syndrome to have power. Directed by David Ricard and Nagrani, *Eurêka* was filmed in the summer of 2014 in the countryside of Ripon, Québec. The plot of *Eurêka* is centered on a "post-apocalyptic world where the sole survivors are people with Down syndrome who have built their village on the ruins of a former carnival fair" (Quartier Danses). The three principal dancers of the film, Geneviève Morin-Dupont, Jean François Hupé and Carl Hennebert Faulkner (all current and/or previous students from Les Muses), find a mechanical doll played by Québécois actor and dancer, Marylin Castonguay (also the only nondisabled performer of the film). The film is set to traditional Québécois music with a forraine (carnival) twist. Upon finding the doll in a middle of a field, the three dancers wind her up and monopolize their

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[45] Translation: "Gabrielle Marion-Rivard, we know, is not an actress, but a girl with perfect pitch who lives with William's syndrome" and "Alexandre will continue his life as an actor while Gabrielle will return to the shadow."

[46] Translation: "If Nathalie Petrowski had done her homework, she would have discovered the existence of Les Muses, she would have learned that Gabrielle started her artistic life well before the movie *Gabrielle* ... Gabrielle is a dancer, a singer, and we can consider her an actress: in the film, *Gabrielle*, her role, if it is not a role of composition in the same way as that of Alexander, is not modelled on her life. She had to learn a text, simulate a diabetes crisis, cry believably that she has a sister, that she lives in residence, etc."

opportunity to manipulate her to become a circus act ("Quartier Danses-Éureka"). Their audience is played by a large group of fellow survivors with Down syndrome. The piece, as described on the company website, moves "Beyond bringing attention to the unique movement and corporal aesthetics of artists with Down syndrome, this piece questions social norms and reverses relations in our society" ("Eurêka!"). Although set in an ambiguous future post-apocalyptic narrative, the characters played by Morin-Dupont, Hupé and Hennebert Faulkner directly attack the binary limits of the innocent stereotypes casting directors often give to performers with Down's syndrome.

> *We are in the midst of filming the scene where the dancers begin to devise their circus act of controlling the mechanical doll. Castonguay, playing the doll, wears a knee-length puffy and ruffled pink dress with billowy short sleeves. At this point, her character's face has been messily painted by the dancers to appear clownish. She is set center stage with Morin-Dupont and Hupé on her left and right. Hupé winds the key that is found on the back of the doll. Her head props up and her hands gracefully go over her head in a ballerina position. She begins step dancing, rhythmically clacking her feet against the wooden stage. Morin-Dupont and Hupé pensively look at her, planning how they will reposition their new act's movement. Morin-Dupont grabs the right arm of the doll, lowering it to her hips. Hupé continues this action on the left. The two dancers continue to confidently adjust the doll's arms: bending her arms behind her back, moving them above her head, straightening them, etc. Inevitably, during the final cut, their characters can be seen pushing the doll back and forth, laughing at her. They take on the role as ring leaders to this act.*

The central question that emerges to me as a witness of their work, "How can art set new conditions to the way we move and understand the world we *want to* love?". Our *beloved* world has recently become a little harder to find hopeful. There is a need for multiplicity, for imagination, for, what Schlesinger (2014) describes as, "beautiful solutions." Exploring the history of "extraordinary bodies," Rosemarie Garland-Thomson coined the valuable term "normate" to designate an imaginary identity position associated with and claimed by those whose bodies are not marked by stigmatized understanding of difference (ability, race, gender).[47] What emerges from this "constructed identity" built on non-disabled "bodily configurations and cultural capital" is a "narrowly defined profile that describes only a minority of actual people" (Garland-Thompson, 1997, 8). The "freak show" was a popular pastime in the Victorian era where people with non-normative or "unusual" bodies, most specifically disabled bodies, would be put on display and exploited for the benefit of a paying audience. The visibly deformed became objects of entertainment and exhibition, most commonly at amusement parks, circuses, dime museums, and vaudeville shows. For many members of the disability community, the freak show and circus became of their only places to find employment. Their bodies, unable to conform to the white colonial bodies of their paying gawkers, became a site for audiences to validate their own normalcy. However, with the emphasized emergence of the medical model of disability towards the end of the twentieth century, "freak show" performances began to fade away, becoming less and less popular.

Such performative framings of witnessing and representing disability continue to be carried particularly with performers with Down syndrome. In the field of disability and performance, individuals with Down syndrome, are often associated with emotions of likeability and humour. These traits are apparent in onscreen characterizations that suggest a childlike simplicity. An example of this kind of characterization is found in the critically acclaimed 2000 documentary *Up Syndrome,* wherein director Duane Graves follows his childhood friend, Rene Moreno, born with Down syndrome, and documents a year of Moreno's life. Although revered as "one of the most honest portrayals of Down Syndrome ever committed to film" (Graves, 2000), the film still situates Moreno as an innocent, child-like man who is unable to fulfill his dream of becoming a police officer because of his disability. Even disability scholar McGuire (2005) says in an article, "If People with Down Syndrome Ruled the World… [a]ffection, hugging and caring for others would make a big comeback… People would be refreshingly honest and genuine." Although it is not my intention to say these qualities do not exist in someone with Down's syndrome, these examples emphasize the popularity and problematics of these representations. The question I pose here is: How do such emotional framings affect actors with

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[47] Garland asserts in what ways the ideological context of the "normate" has been presented as being the ideal body for a "well-regulated nation": "a body that is a stable, neutral instrument of the individual will. It is the fantasy that the disabled figure troubles" (42).

Down syndrome in the professional theatre and film industry, specifically, the progression of their career and the kind of roles offered to them? Individuals with Down syndrome have potential for being *dangerously stuck* in the emotional framing of being loving and child-like. However, in an artistic movement such as that being led by atypique artists in Québec, such representations of disabled bodies are more complexly articulated and reconfigured.

The atypique movement, in many ways, is another iteration of "disability pride." Frazee (2005) describes disability pride as, "staring down every norm that ever pushed us around[…]The boundaries of identity begin to *give way*. As they give way, we discover that our identities are *not fixed* but *plural*, that we are *heterogeneous* selves" (emphasis mine, p. 12). These are words that parallel well with my theorization of tenderness. Tenderness transgresses away from isolating certain qualities with different communities, to encouraging feeling identities as constantly *in motion*, *in development*, and *in complex interactions* with other identities. For me, this would explain the difficulty I have always experienced of feeling fully comfortable in the world, particularly when I am in always in process of negotiating my identity while being in conversation with others, whose experiences of the world are vastly different than mine. It's only when we begin to acknowledge and witness the different stakes other communities are faced with and experience that we can begin to ignite the affective energies of tenderness. Salverson's notion of the aesthetic of injury applies well here, particularly when the performances of disabled artists are still given a medical lens, despite being a professional piece in actuality.

Work by disabled artists within a Canadian context are challenging these *injurious* representations. Post-modern art movements, such as ones led by atypique artists, are creating important legacies of art making and progressing disability rights at large. Frazee (2005) compellingly illustrates the Canadian scene as:

> […] art that engaged with the social realities of our time, our nation's disability arts movement seeks to upset the cultural apple cart. It does so by speaking back against dominant narrative that report our bodies as broken, our lives as tragic, our status as inferior and our humanity as diminished. It does so by giving language in which to talk about our lives and what we share. It does so at times by raising voices of unremitting reproach for the shabby conditions of disabled people's lives. It does so at times by

> offering a generous entry for rapprochement, as openhearted citizens on both sides of the border of disability seeks to establish relations of mutual respect and civility. (p. 10-11)

Many audiences leave performances with a different perspective of what would often be described as the "dancerly body" and/or Sandahl's notion of the neutral body. Kuppers (2000) explains, "The term 'dancerly body' refers here to the naturalized concepts of physicality appropriate to specific dance techniques. The disabled performer can disrupt the conventional expectation of bodies in dance, and can offer new ways of conceptualizing them" (p. 119). From this approach, the dancerly body can be disabled, short, overweight, a person of colour—an array of different bodies.

Stuffed: **Disrupting Binary Representations**

Although the atypique approach does emerge from a Québécois context, it also helps frame the way Anglophone companies such as Theatre Terrific function in complicating prior fixed perceptions of disability and theatre practices in Canada. *Stuffed* was Theatre Terrific's 2014 Fringe Festival production. For this piece, Uchatius co-directed with Adam Grant Warren, a Vancouver-based actor and filmmaker. Unlike past directors with whom many of the cast members had worked, Warren was a visibly disabled artist working in Vancouver. For many of the cast members, Warren was the first disabled director with which they had worked with. The team also included Naomi Brand, a choreographer who had just moved to Vancouver from Alberta, where she had worked with MoMo Mixed Ability Dance Theatre.[48]

For the original piece, each cast member chose a specific item and centered their individual monologues on why it held meaning for them. Each cast member performed their monologue to an audience sitting in a theatre-in-the-round. Some of these compelling performances included:

- Kemp drinking from a can of Mike's Hard Lemonade in memory of her first drink with her now deceased father
- Candace Larshied holding a precious necklace that was given to her from a past lover
- -Michelle Korelus showing her medium fish tank that she fills with toy fish in eplacement of being unable to have a real fish tank in her apartment.

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[48] MoMo Mixed Ability Dance Theatre, based in Calgary, Alberta, "brings together professional artists and perspective artists, with and without disability to explore movement, voice, theatre, dance, and improvisational disciplines" ("MoMo").

- Ian Brown recalling all the places he had visited and the people he had met with the help of his bus pass.

After each monologue, the cast members moved to the centre of the performance space to create an abstract human mound with their fellow ensemble members.

Although *Stuffed*, a devised work about personal identity and materialism, was not an explicitly disability-themed production, Theatre Terrific still gave attention to representing disability as a way of being in everyday life. While choosing the final blocking, Uchatius, Warren, and Brand expressed concern over their direction of cast member Katrina Costello. Costello, chosen to perform the final monologue, was directed to wheel herself around the cast without the guidance of her caregiver and fellow cast member Edna Randaje. Moving slowly with small wrist movements, the young actress circled her wheelchair around her fellow cast members, and simultaneously, each member began to cheer: “You can do it Katrina” and “Push, you’re almost there.” Costello held her precious item, a stuffed Winnie the Pooh bear, representing her home and family. Uchatius, Warren, and Brand progressively began to question this ending, in particular the cast’s cheering for Costello. I recall some of my own questions: What was the intention of the cheering? What kind of relationship was being projected between Costello and the other cast members? What was this cheering *doing* to perceptions of disability? Warren outlined his concerns about the cheering to the cast by introducing the topic of inspirational porn:

> There is a term, a phrase in the disability community now, and that phrase is *inspiration porn*. It is often something where you have situations in which a person who is more so disabled and you have a bunch of people who are less severely disabled […] cheering that person on to do something, to accomplish something, or saying “Hooray Katrina, yeah you can do it.” We at Theatre Terrific, or well me being new to Theatre Terrific, I believe […] that this is 25 years behind […].

Disabled actress Amelia Cavallo (2014) describes inspiration porn as this societal perception of disabled people needing to overcome “what seem like broken and substandard bodies, sensory and cognitive make ups” to make the nondisabled “feel good about their unbroken, able bodies, senses, and cognition.” Inspirational stories perpetuate the notion that each disabled person “should overcome their tragic and inferior embodiment” so to become “productive members of normative society” (Peers, 2015, p. 332–333).

Warren, who has an extensive background working in film and theatre, had never worked with a mixed-ability theatre company, and as was previously mentioned, he was the first disabled director for many of the cast. The dialogue opened our rehearsal space to many different perspectives. Echoing Warren, Uchatius explained "[…] what we are doing here is pioneering art […] you guys are all incredible artists with incredible stories." She emphasized that Theatre Terrific's creative work moved beyond legitimizing disabled artists to showing how all artists have something to share. Warren shared that he did not want the audience to applaud for their disabilities, but rather for the cast's "good work" and artistry.

Redirecting the scene, Warren told the cast to ensure their comments to Costello reflected an expectation of her working hard. Tyson Aubin asked, "What does that mean?" Warren replied that they should tell Costello to push "harder" and "better." Although this approach was not Warren's final artistic vision of the scene, he wanted the cast to move away from the original direction. Noticing the cast members shaking their heads, Uchatius asked them to interject their concerns. Korelus said, "No, it doesn't make sense at all." Patti Palm, a seasoned Vancouver performer, commented:

> I have worked long in the theatrical community. I had a friend that was a Wheelie and claimed himself as a Gimp and a Wheelie… he has passed away now. Am I to cheer on my fellow teammate and not cheer him on? Why, for fear that he would think I am cheering him on solely because he was in a chair? I would cheer him on because he is a human being like me. So for me, in a way, this goes contrary to my work in a number of different communities. It goes against what I believe as an actor. And we are actors! We are not anything else. We are actors. Why would I not put someone in this company at the same level as any other company? That's the question I have. I'm a little confused. It feels a little PC.

In response, Warren informed Palm that he felt they both had the same artistic expectation for Costello. Palm agreed that it was important to expect a lot from all the ensemble members.

Uchatius, Warren, and Palm reflected on the intentions behind encouraging Costello to wheel. Uchatius considered the varying emotional responses that audience members would have to the different voice levels used by the ensemble when encouraging Costello: a high-pitched tone would project the ensemble members as being condescending, whereas a more serious and calmer voice had the potential of demonstrating the cast's respect for Costello as an actor and simultaneously cue her to finish her task of circling them. Explaining her perspective on this complex dialogue, Larsheid said:

> […] We are all awesome people. We are a family of one. No one is separate. We're no different. When we are performing, we're creating a world out there that isn't in the physical reality. In the world out there. I'm not saying all people, but when people see people that are different, they have a challenge of relating. So we're the educated, and our work is about breaking down the barriers, and our role is breaking down the barriers and saying, "Hey, come and see our *art of being real*." (emphasis mine)

The room went silent. Larsheid's words, *the art of being real*, seemed to have resonated with the entire cast and creative team. Larsheid continued:

> It is not always pretty. It's not always happy go lucky. But it's real. When a lot of people see us… people expect "Oh, people are sweet" or whatever. But it's time to wake up the world. Wake up the nation and show that we are not separate. We are one. Show that the art is what gets out there and by our work, *we're educating the limitations of a locked mindset*. (emphasis mine)

Larsheid's comments acknowledged the *sticky* framings that have left audiences in many ways *locked* into certain emotional responses. Ahmed (2004) has described how:

> emotions work as a form of capital: affect does not reside positively in the sign of capital, but is produced only as effect of its circulation [...] emotions circulate and are distributed across a social as well as a psychic field. (p. 120)

The more a certain sign or object is circulated in a specific manner, the larger is its potential to "appear to 'contain' affect" (Ahmed, 2004, p. 120). However, as Larsheid bluntly said, some emotional responses need a "wake-up call." She calls this "the art of being real" whereby deeper realities of the disabled body offer different perspectives to challenge certain emotional responses to difference.

For the final scene of *Stuffed*, Warren, Uchatius, and the cast chose to counter the image of a disabled actor being merely a metaphoric tool. During the final scene, each cast member silently stood as Costello slowly navigated her wheelchair around them, veering off occasionally into the audience. During her smooth and peaceful movement, Costello paced her lines out, creating a performance tempo that caused the entire space to become quiet. This quiet was not just focused on listening to Costello finish her lines,[49] nor was it just centered on watching her manually push her wheelchair; instead, Costello's small, delicate movements energized an affectivity that stretched the performance space in a way that was not focused on her trying to prove herself against assumed incapabilities. Her slow movement opened up the participation of different modes of performance, those not usually acknowledged and valued in our capitalist, fast-paced society. Her performance became a site of new affective productivity.

New Temporality

Often, disabled bodies are accepted only when they overachieve or supersede the expectations of their assumed capabilities. Costello's slow-moving body complicated the common representations of the disabled body as being a source of inspiration. In this production, the time given to understanding how to represent her slowness was crucial to the dismantlement of inspiration porn. Time was set aside to understand what Costello's movement meant, and what it could offer/do to the theatre space. Her movement *stretched* this space to new depths that paid tribute particularly to atypical temporalities, such as those produced by slowness. In his review of *Stuffed,* Jim MacDonald (2014) of *Plank* magazine stated, "I felt like a welcome guest at an intimate and eclectic discovered space and appreciated the diversity and vulnerability present." MacDonald's words echo the flows of tenderness that emerge in such spaces that are intimate, eclectic, discovered, diverse, and vulnerable. Through this kind of art making, we come to recognize each other in new ways, and relearn the ways we talk, walk, breathe, smell, see, eat, dance, sing, and so on—the ways we *mobilize* with and for ourselves, and our fellow human beings. This is at the heart of the atypique movement.

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[49] In past productions, Costello has needed the guidance of cues to help her deliver lines and achieve certain blocking. Often, this was done by delivering directions through a small microphone linked to Costello's hearing device.

Chapter 5: Slowness

[…]calm, careful, receptive, still, intuitive, unhurried, patient, reflective, quality-over quantity. It is about making real and meaningful connections- with people, culture, work, food everything.- Honoré, 2004, p. 14-15

Introduction

When used as an adjective, *slow* is not usually well received. As a child, I can recall how classmates would say "You're slow" when trying to imply that someone is lacking intelligence, and how the slowest runner would often be chosen last for team activities. As Barber-Stetson (2014) has explained, *slow* is synonymous with *retard* or *delay*, of which "both suggest physical and cognitive movement that progress toward a specific goal more *slowly* than what our society considers normal" (p. 147; emphasis mine). In our fast-paced, capitalistic North America, a growing emphasis is placed on accelerated mobility and having instant access to information at the touch of a button. The expression 'time is money,' an aphorism coined by Benjamin Franklin in 1748 to show "the blessed marriage between profit and haste," is regularly used by all of us (Honoré, 2005, p. 24).

One of my first associations with slowness and fastness was through the story "The Tortoise and the Hare," which is a tale about a slow-moving Tortoise challenging a speedy and proud Hare to a race. One of Aesop's Fables (stories that often contain moral lessons),[50] the tale begins with the Hare feeling ever so confident with his soon-to-be win: "A race, indeed a race. Oh! What fun! My, my! A race, of course, Mr. Tortoise, we shall race" ("The Tortoise and the Hare"). When encountering this story, it is easy to assume why the Hare immediately concludes his impending victory: How does such a slow moving creature stand a chance against a quick and agile one? After achieving a big lead over the Tortoise, the Hare decides to take a break. Many variations exist as to what the Hare does during this period. For this version, let us assume he chooses to play in a nearby meadow. Believing he has more time on his hands, he decides to take a nap. Meanwhile, the Tortoise slowly and carefully continues the race. Upon waking up, the Hare dashes to the finish line still believing he has won the race. At this point, the story takes a turn when to the Hare's surprise, he is greeted by the champion—the patient Tortoise. As a

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[50] This is a collection by a Greek story teller named Aesop who also was a slave during ancient Greek times. Most of his characters are based on comparisons between animals and humans, and his animal characters personify human emotions and speech, yet simultaneously keep their animalistic qualities. Each fable provides a moral lesson. See http://www.storyit.com/Classics/Stories/aesop.htm.

child, I can recall my mother telling me this tale, emphasizing her words, “Remember Ashley, slow and steady wins the race.” Regrettably, few stories have been written in which slowness is projected as a victorious quality. I use this simple fable to bring attention to the importance of slowness, and how temporalities and bodies are set up to compete against one another, for example, as variations of “us vs. them” enter our dialogues—such as those of “the survival of the fittest”—and in which the faster and more athletic species often are represented as the assumed winners. What assumptions do we, as citizens/engagers/makers of North American values, make about disabled bodies and their artistic capabilities, particularly those with atypical mobilities? Similar to the Hare’s belief that he would win the race, perspectives exist as to what kind of mobilities and paces will shape a more productive and effective workforce. These viewpoints often do not include the bodies of disabled people.

Many forms of the Slow movement, a response to turbo-capitalistic ways of living, have emerged, emphasizing principles of “wellness, mediation, simplicity, creativity, mindfulness, and complexity” (Shaw et al., 2013, p. 320). It is a cultural shift, pushing us, as citizens of this world, to question how we can lead more equitable and ethically informed meaningful lives. The Slow Food movement is an ‘eno-gastronomic’ (wine and food) association founded by Carlos Petrini in Italy in 1986. Originally it was aimed at defending the pleasure of food, and a slow pace of life, but now promotes this notion of “new gastronomy,” “as freedom of choice, as education, as a multidisciplinary approach to food that enables us to live our lives as well as possible, using resources available to us” (“Slow Food Companion,” p. 2). Slow living branches off these principles of challenging the dominant narratives of how we co-habitat with others and claim ownership of land. “Slow is therefore a counter hegemonic concept, which strikes at the core of neoliberal relationality” (Breunig, 2016, p. 2). When looking closer at the role of slow art, for example, Lindner and Meissner (2015) explores, “what happens when photography strategically decelerates, disrupts, reroutes, or even stops movement, flow, and interaction in the global city in order to refocus attention on issues of place community, and belonging” (p. 4). Looking at a variety of photography projects throughout Amsterdam, the authors found “slowness can be strategically employed to interrupt the accelerated urbanism of globalization and open up new creative spaces” (Linder and Meissner, 2015, p. 23). There is even a “Slow Art

Day," inviting participants from around the world to re-engage in their practices of witnessing creative visual works:

> Then as the sun rises across the world more and more events come online in Africa, Europe, then North America and South America until finally more than 205 museums, galleries, sculpture parks, libraries and churches have together celebrated the power of slowly looking at – and loving – art. ("Slow Art Day")

As a global event, the organization's intention is to "help more people discover for themselves the joy of looking at and loving art ("Slow Art Day"). Participants are asked to visit their local museum (one of which is registered for the event), look at 5 pieces of art pre-assigned by the museum for 5-10 minutes each, and, if interested, meet up with other participants to discuss their experiences. "Whatever the design is- what all events share is the focus on slow looking and its transformative power" ("Slow Art Day"). In addition, Lisa Schlesinger (2013)—playwright and theatre activist—defines 'slow theatre' as a "way of making theatre and a way of living" that works "towards beautiful solutions" for our current less-than-fulfilling capitalistic lifestyles. To help situate her dialogue, Schlesinger (2013) poses questions that prompts a reflection on what passions we, as human beings, are leading our lives with:

> How do we give people time? How do we share wealth and experience? How do we support the new and unfamiliar? How do we break through old structures, borders, territories? How do we go beyond what we imagined for ourselves and for each other? How do we lift up those who can't go on any longer? How do we give what we most need?

Although none of the theatre groups included in my doctoral research use a self-identified slow practice, each group recognizes the value of slowness as a meaningful creative tool and a way of being in the classroom. Slowness provides the space for artists to feel valued and unrushed as they explore their creative abilities, and to feel unashamed of their ways of learning and moving. The practice of slowness situates their bodies as productive energies versus artistic obstacles and/or merely just bodies in space. Slowness gives these artists a kind of acknowledgement and a more emphasized presence that they rarely experience in everyday life. In addition, the recognition of their truths, ideas, and cognitive and movement styles stimulates the progression of tenderness and holistic ways of understanding the world.

My interest in *slowness* is articulated in the following questions: How can slowness be reframed as culturally and aesthetically valuable, particularly in a North American society that equates productivity with working speedily? How does slowness re-sensitize us to the world in which we move, work, breathe, and exist? How does slowness relate to the development of tenderness? This chapter is a *call to action* to consider *slowness* as a political tool to improve the equity of all artists as well as all citizens. It also explores the ways in which slowness invites tenderness through which artists can find new relations between one another. Throughout this chapter, I define slowness as an *important mode of perception of valuing human diversity*. I look at in what ways disability emerges in Theatre Terrific, Les Productions des pieds des mains, and Les Muses as a critical mode of inquiry of the world, and how slowness is an extension of this.

Contemplative Space Making

Slowness is a major creative practice and artistic value for theatre groups and programs working with disabled artists. Particularly when working collaboratively in creative spaces, slowness is essential for exploring ways of *touching*, *communicating,* and *connecting*. A need exists to ask people how they prefer to be spoken to and with, and touched (or not). Moreover, this concern about boundaries is not exclusive to disabled people, since it applies to all human beings. As previously mentioned, although this dissertation is about disability and theatre, in broader terms, it is about how human diversities are acknowledged and used creatively. Slowness gives us this rare opportunity to understand, ask, and reflect on how these differences affect our own and others' feelings about our place in the world. Although *slowness* often is defined as a particular physical pace, I also consider slowness as a way of acknowledging and being present in human being diversities. This alternative definition is an extension of atypical/atypique artists and approaches (as discussed in the previous chapter). Slowness invites us to reimagine how we can communicate and relate to one another in creative spaces and beyond. Slowness is a tool for an artistic inquiry of vulnerability, inclusivity, and care.

> And did you get what
> you wanted from this life, even so? I did.
> And what did you want?
> To call myself beloved, to feel myself beloved on the earth.
>
> "Late Fragment" by Raymond Carver

I remember the first time Uchatius asked us to read this poem out loud with each other during one of the first rehearsals for *Portraits*. We read it together—a group composed of individuals with different vocal tones. I can still hear the vocal vibrations of cast member Kieran Naugler: his voice always the last lingering sound on each word. Importantly, his vibrational tonality slowed down his fellow Terrific cast members and myself, so we became more mindful about not moving so quickly through the poem. This slowness made us more aware of the words we were trying to feel and understand: *feel, beloved,* and *to feel myself beloved*. Working together, we tried to find a pace for reciting the poem that brought meaning to how we could work together and simultaneously recognize each individual's style, medium, and rhythm of communication. Particularly when reading with Naugler, I recall my recitation became a combination of talking and singing—I wanted to carry the elongated conclusion of each thought. This slow recitation brought a new awareness to me about how I could articulate myself and bring meaning to certain words. However, for me, this way of speaking is a choice, whereas for Naugler, it is not, since his only communication style is slowness. What became apparent was the ways that each of our individual needs affected one another as we artistically explored new creative qualities within ourselves.

The Theatre Terrific rehearsal became a space to encounter diversity in atypical ways that we often do not have the opportunity to explore in our everyday lives. Reflecting on my first impressions of Vancouver, I remember the shock I felt when seeing the noticeable economic disparities between different sections of the city, particularly the downtown core. Within blocks of multimillion dollar condos, primarily located in Gas Town, a high density homeless population lives on East Hastings Street. This community is particularly known for its sex work, immense drug trade, poverty, and mental illness. Oddly enough, Theatre Terrific's main administrative office is located blocks away in the Woodwards Building on West Hastings. I often passed by this community on the city bus on my way to the Japanese United Church in East Vancouver to attend Theatre Terrific rehearsals. The Downtown Eastside of Vancouver has the potential to initially shock and prompt feelings of discomfort, not necessarily based on feelings of being unsafe but rather on feelings associated with how this community has been forgotten or abandoned by the city. This emotional revelation often prompted me to think about Theatre Terrific as a rare space that confronts and opens up discussions about difference. More importantly, my bus ride past East Hastings Street to the Japanese United Church made me reflect on companies like Les Muses, Les Productions des pieds des mains, and Theatre Terrific, which provide a place for disabled artists, an artistic community that historically has fought to find a space in Canada's performing arts.

Theatre Terrific provides the time for each member to communicate their experiences in the world, and embraces exercises for artists to feel comfortable enough to be vulnerable. Cast conversations are never rushed; they are slow and honest. This approach is of the upmost importance with respect to their Fringe productions, since unlike their other productions for which a written script may be adapted, Theatre Terrific writes an original script. Often created over an 8-week process, cast members engage in a series of very personal and collaborative workshop exercises that include movement, drawing, poetry, and question-and-response conversations. Each member is given an opportunity to communicate her/his ideas and personal experiences. Candice Larshield, a longstanding Theatre Terrific member, has gone on the record to describe the company as a site where disabled people can "share their rawness but in an artistic way" (Johnston, 2013, p. 81). Although Theatre Terrific produces theatre pieces, in many ways, it undoes the theatricality of theatre and presents artistic work that represents human nature and human beings in their purest forms—sometimes vulnerable, sometimes cruel, and sometimes kind. Time is set aside in rehearsal to discuss different ways of being human, always from the perspective of the company's diverse members.

The *Portraits* production was centered on the question of being human and understanding identity, which was articulated in the audition notice:

> Personal. Blunt. Honest. In a virtual space of white, all kinds of folks step into the "truth booth" to tackle great big questions. What is your place in life? Why does it matter? Sparks fly! Real life portraits are sketched. Camouflage is removed. The answers will touch your heart, blow your mind and leave you to ponder… who am I?

Similar to other companies that try to move beyond the category of disability theatre, Theatre Terrific remains extremely transparent about its members' lived experiences, which include issues of disability and ableism. Particularly during my time working on *Portraits*, the ways in which we spoke and acknowledged each other's experiences were most compelling. Although we were working with a specific life theme, time was set aside for self-reflection on how we could move through the world and encounter one another.

Exercises were consistently contemplative and meditative, and each of our questions about our own place in life was nuanced by the presence of one another, and importantly, our shifts in understanding were not generated by comparing our lives and bodies to one another. When the perception of the body of a disabled artist moves from that of a human being to a mere metaphor, a dangerous us/them power dynamic arises. Thus, slowness provided the space to enrich better understandings of each other, and reframe the perception of disability as an important source of knowledge production versus a medical diagnosis (Hickey-Moody, 2009, p. xi). The deep workshop conversations participated in by the members of Theatre Terrific—consisting of philosophical discussions about how we move through the world—promoted tenderness as a major source of affective knowledge. Being able to be vulnerable with one another was the core catalyst of this tenderness.

Uchatius: What are your big questions about life?

Ian Brown: Important questions are about flying airplanes to connect us to the outside world.

Tyson Aubin: To move out and have my own place. Independence is important because I am able to be whole on my own.

Jonah Killoran: How do I feel confidence in myself and know my place in the world?

Myself: Why is vulnerability seen as a weakness?

Other unidentified responses:

Why doesn't everyone get along with other people? How do I maintain and strengthen relationships?

Why does the world have so much, but some people are still left with so little and others with so much?

Why is there not enough love, and why do people fall in love? What is and is not family, and why is it so important?

Why do people belong in different groups, and why do different groups not blend together?

Why do we need this?

What does it mean to be alive in the world today?

What does it mean to be human?

Although disability is not at the core of their productions—as they explore a multitude of topics from materiality to issues of gender—Theatre Terrific provides space for understanding how we, as humans, can witness the testimonials of others' experiences of disablement and discrimination. Thus, slowness is an important element for creating this space of understanding how we encounter our relationships with others. Too often, divisions of "victims, villains and heroes" emerge in community fieldwork (Salverson, 2001, p.7–8). With respect to integrated groups, such process frameworks are essentially dangerous and isolating, since group disabled artists can feel less like artists and more like case studies.

During the process of creating *Portraits*, it became apparent that the ensemble member roles were becoming complicated because of their mutually vulnerable admissions. This is not to say that these admissions were easily done or always successful. Nevertheless, we witnessed one another's admissions, and exposed something about ourselves. Uchatius also was actively vulnerable in the work process, revealing her own fears and her stake in the project as artistic director of Theatre Terrific and *Portraits.* My own role became emotionally challenging throughout the process of *Portraits* as I became honest with my fellow ensemble members about my own social anxieties, and as I allowed my own stories to be witnessed instead of being merely a listener and watcher of Theatre Terrific's members. Only through openness and willingness to be vulnerable is tenderness actualized. As Salverson (2001) says, "Although performance as a pedagogical medium carries potential to *transform both images* and *understandings*, such a progression cannot be taken for granted. Change is a *slow*, *tender*, and *tenuous* process. It is not particularly linear" (p. 85; emphasis mine).

Fostering meaningful pedagogies allows for the emergence of "brave spaces" and provides the foundations to share stories, and be vulnerable. Pomarico (2016) situates her understanding of pedagogy as:

> a recollection of ideas that have been collectively produced and experienced through convivial gatherings, dialogues, inquiries, critical reflections, readings, and actions with many friends with whom I experimented in various processes of creating communities of learners. From each of their voices and presences, I learned the 'pedagogical process' can unfold and impact us intellectually, emotionally, bodily, both individually and as social political subjects, leading to the possibility of transformation. (p. 207)

Often in community-based work, efforts are put towards making “safe spaces” whereby focus is placed on “increasing the safety and visibility of marginalized or oppressed community members” (Ali, 2017, p. 3). Pomarico (2016), instead, calls for the creation of ‘brave spaces’ whereby the “illusion of safe spaces” is non-existent, and people can expose themselves “to strong emotions, ruptures, contradiction and conflicts as natural outcomes of” their “different views” (p. 214). Much like the call for *Portraits*, there is a literal unmasking in brave spaces, whereby humans can be fully honest about their experiences of this world, and share a genuine exchange of others’ ways of being. Unlike capitalistic models of performance (as a professional, a friend, a person, a public space), brave spaces value “broken” bodies and the way they generate other important ways of moving, breathing, and being opening in the world. Theatre Terrific offers such a model of how to reimagine how we encounter each other in such spaces.

Poetic Ways of Being

During the *Portraits* workshop process, poetry was used as a source to achieve affects. Initial improvisational poems were transformed into beautiful, contemplative 3-line pieces that we all presented to one another. I recall being very nervous about sharing my piece. Prior to going to Vancouver, I was unsure to what degree I would be permitted to participate in the artistic process of *Portraits* (it was my first time conducting fieldwork of this nature). Also, since I was not performing in the final piece, I wondered if my presence would deter cast members from feeling comfortable with being vulnerable during the workshop process. Beginning to participate in a variety of workshop exercises for *Portraits*, I shared my own vulnerabilities and personal stakes I felt at the time in my life. My role as researcher became complicated, and in many ways, I began to unlearn the traditional relationship proximities often set between researchers and participants. As I opened up, my participants became more comfortable with me. I became more comfortable with them. This was when I realized I was just as much a participant in my project as my participants. At the core of the project was what it meant to be human. Our short poems revealed the complexity of this.

> *Myself: Just like a colourful flower, I grow towards the light. I choose to grow on nourished soil.*
> *Selena Garcia: I am sad. Overworked. Busy.*
> *Michelle Korelus: I like to have fun. I enjoy having fun. I love theatre. I am strong. I am not weak. I’m confident.*

Candice Larscheid: Sharing in life. Dancing in bed. Walking in nature. Alex Edwards: I love horses. They run freely and happy. I like to trot.

Tyson Aubin: I am happy. I am fun. I am outgoing all the time. I am outgoing all the time.

Aubin would play this on repeat, and the poem would have this musical quality to it.

Daryl Dixon: I like to party. Church, church, church.

Daryl's mention of church was in reference to his time with Terrific inside the Japanese United Church.

Edna Randaje: My name is Edna. A friend from the Philippines. I flied above the sea to tell you some tales.

Katrina Costello: My life is Katrina. And I like to smile. I like bright colours. I like bright socks worn real high. And to watch the Golden Girls a long while.

Jonah Killoran: Power what makes me strong and energetic. It keeps me clear. Erica Kemp: I enjoy music. It gives me a great feeling. It helps me going on with life.

Larry Wong: I have been meaning to say since last year that my friend had passed away. Theatre Terrific is a good time. BIG BREATH. I enjoy all my friends.

"Adam": A few things you should know about me. I love to run, play sports, go for walks. And when I do these things, it makes me feel energetic, invigorated and strong.

Ian Brown: This is it. Apply to infested area. That's all I have.

There was a constant unfixing of how we understood ourselves, each other, and the world around us. These slow processes of exploring identities, individually and collectively, promoted a deeper respect for each other, and shifted our approach to our artistic practices, which became more flexible and more caring. By being more aware of each other's experiences, we learned different ways to engage with each other during exercises, which became a re-articulation and redistribution of how we shared energies. We were better able to understand how to approach each other's bodies, communicate, and be sensitive to one another's needs. We needed to think about "pedagogy relationally, promoting more generative, inclusive, and coalitional learning" (Pomarico, 2016, p. 212).

To continue conversations we had begun in our short poems, we produced self-portraits. It was interesting how these exercises made us all explore our faces. Rarely are we asked to touch ourselves in a way that invites us to explore our bodies. For example, I was 28 when, for the first time, I massaged my upper chest during a personal training session at the YMCA.

Handing me a tennis ball, my female trainer told me to briskly and firmly move it around my chest in a circular fashion. I remember its painful touch against my chest as I put pressure on it. I remember being surprised at discovering how much stress-induced tension I carried in my chest, and being in absolute shock that I was so unaware about what I was putting my body through. Not until someone invited me to slow down and touch myself in a certain way did I encounter myself on a deeper level. Uchatius invited the Theatre Terrific members and I to feel our faces in ways that transgressed beyond the physical contours. Moving slowly, we *felt* our face for different reasons, and through different lived experiences of the world. For the exercise, she explained:

> *Close your eyes… feel your face with your hands… look in the mirrors.*
>
> *We draw with no erasing… just a pencil, paper… leave all the mistakes… they are also part of the face…*
>
> *What are the features of your face: eyes, eyebrows, forehead, nose, cheeks, mouth, chin, ears, hair.*
>
> *What is strong?*
>
> *What does your face say?*
>
> *This is not about drawing correctly, it is about knowing your face with your hands and with those hands putting what you felt on the paper that is your face… it does not have to be a correct replica of your face… it is a drawing about what you feel your face is.*

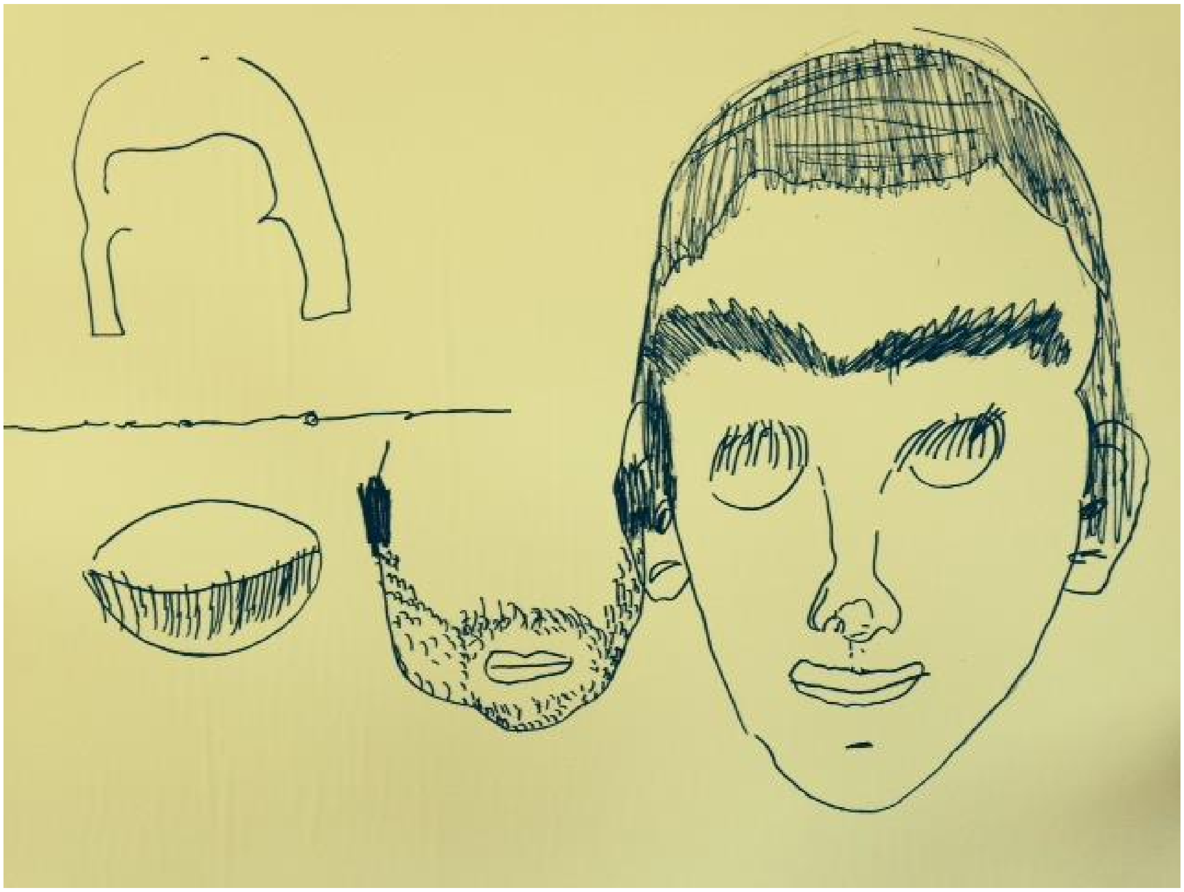
Sprawled out around the room, the cast and I found a small working space to call our own. Wheelchair users were invited to sit at a table located in the centre of the space, and the rest of us primarily sat on the floor, attempting to find some form of privacy for this intimate exercise. As Uchatius guided us to feel each part of our face, slowly and in detail, I felt the softness of my eyelashes, the roughness and bumpiness of my forehead, and the smoothness of my hands as they embraced my cheeks. During our facial self-exploration, the entire room became silent. The whole space embodied a feeling of time in which minutes seemed stretched into hours. The softness of our breaths echoed the way we were all slowly and gently feeling the contours of our faces: What were we all feeling? How would we translate these feelings onto the large pieces of white paper in front of us? The goal of the exercise was not to draw a traditional or correct replication of what we felt, but rather to focus on how the contours of our face said something about who were and how we moved. As our pencils began to mark the paper, I remember the mélange of sketch noises: some smooth, slow, and intentional, and others harder, quicker, and intense. With each of these noises, wonderment arose as to whose lines would come out darker and lighter, and how these qualities would translate the drawer's own relationship with their bodily rhythms:

Figure 1: Self-portrait of Alex Edwards

Edwards: I feel proud and then my relationship by talking to people and any kind of ladies. I wear a dragon necklace 'cause I like dragons. My face is soft like Frankie's [her cat's] fur.

Edwards' drawing highlighted her short dark hair, square framed glasses, and a smile that showed many individual teeth. In her drawing, her dragon necklace, similar to a Christian cross, highlighted the importance of this piece of jewelry to her.

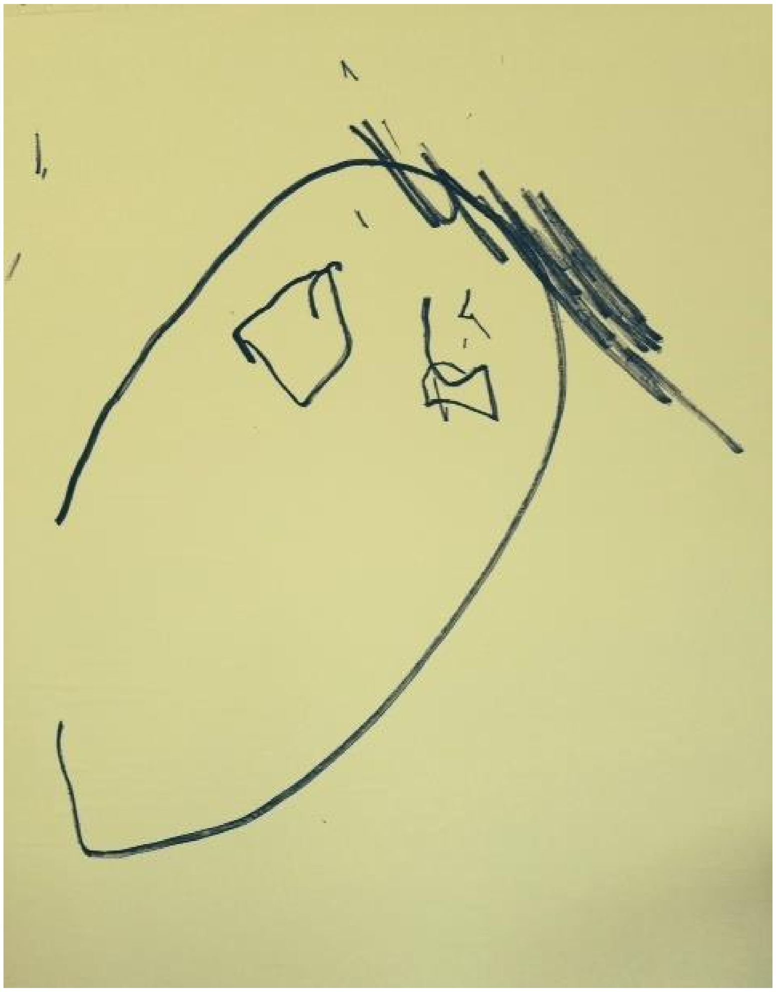
Figure 2: Self-portrait of Duran Cruikshank



Cruikshank: Different sections are based on the physical qualities of my face. I felt my hairline. The little bumps that I felt on my forehead. My eyelashes felt very long and my stubble.

Cruikshank drew attention to different parts of his face: the squareness of his hairline, an oval with short lines shooting from its mid-section to represent his lush and soft eye lashes, and his jawline that included quick small lines to indicate the sharp feeling of his facial hair. He also drew an overall front profile of his face as a map to navigate his small side drawings.

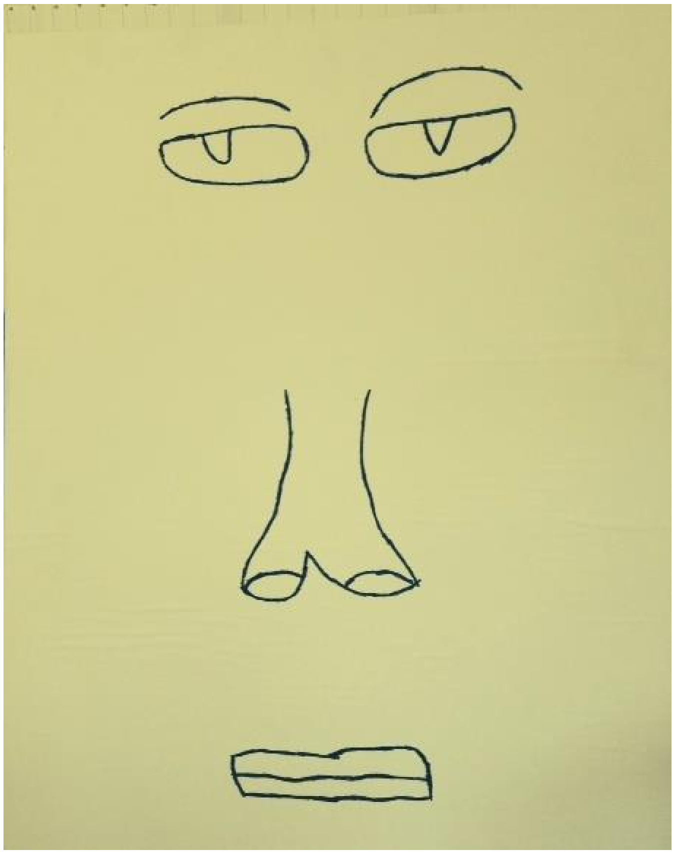
Figure 3:Self-portrait of Katrina Costello



Costello: This is me. Hair! Black hair! I don't have any glasses on.

Costello's drawing included a large oval drawn on a vertical with two almost-squares as eyes, and a few black lines drawn together in a scribble formation at the top. Although less detailed than some of the other drawings, Costello's lines had a visceral feeling to them. You could almost hear the quickness of her sketching marks.

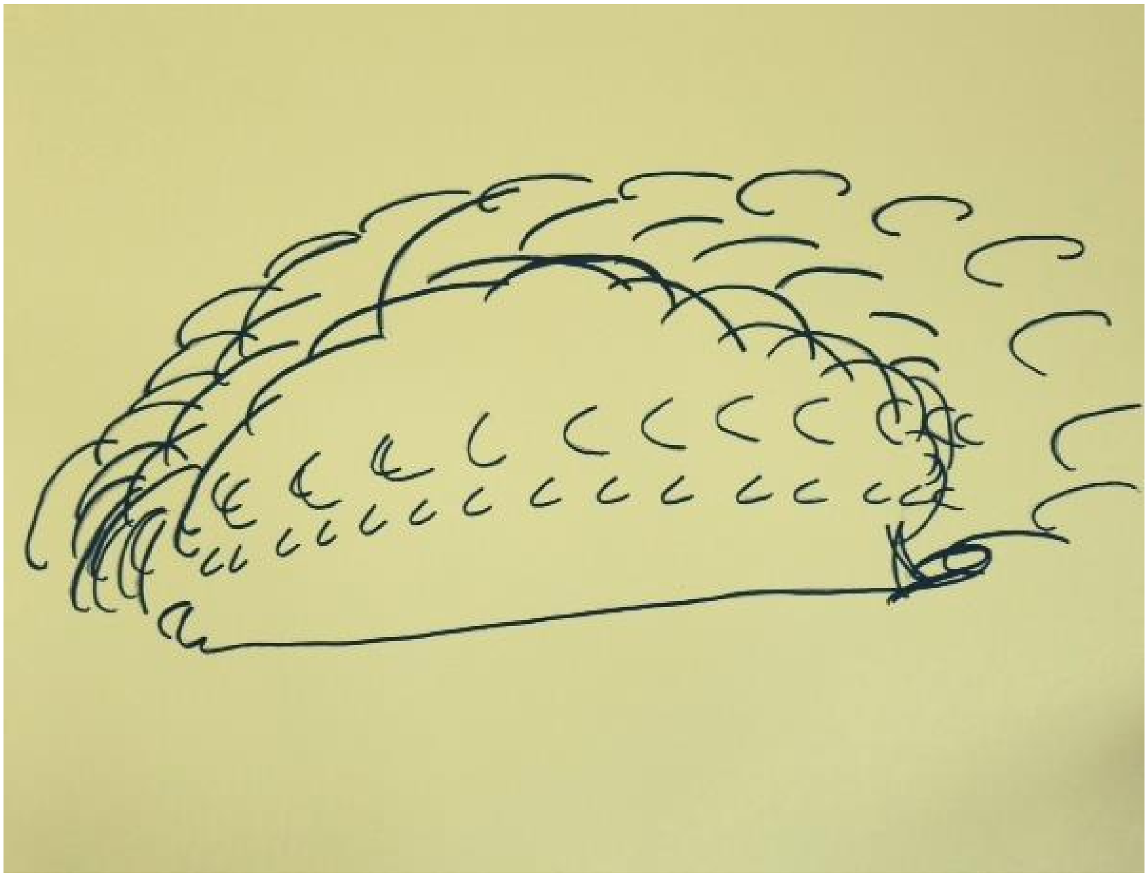
Figure 4: Self-portrait of Jonah Killoran



Killoran: Confident and energetic. My mouth is coming towards my dad's nose. My nose is sort of like my uncle's nose. I have long eyelashes for one thing.

Killoran related his drawing to his late father. Not using an outline to contain his highlighted facial features, Killoran approached his drawing vertically: at the top were thin c-shaped eye brows and large narrow ovals for eyes. His depiction of his nose was long and took up most of the center of the paper. Finally, he drew his mouth closed in a roundish rectangular shape. Oddly enough, he did not draw any eyelashes.

Figure 5: Self-portrait of Candice Larscheid



Larscheid: Well, my picture is oval shaped. I'm a pot head. I drew my face oval shape in memory of my mom.

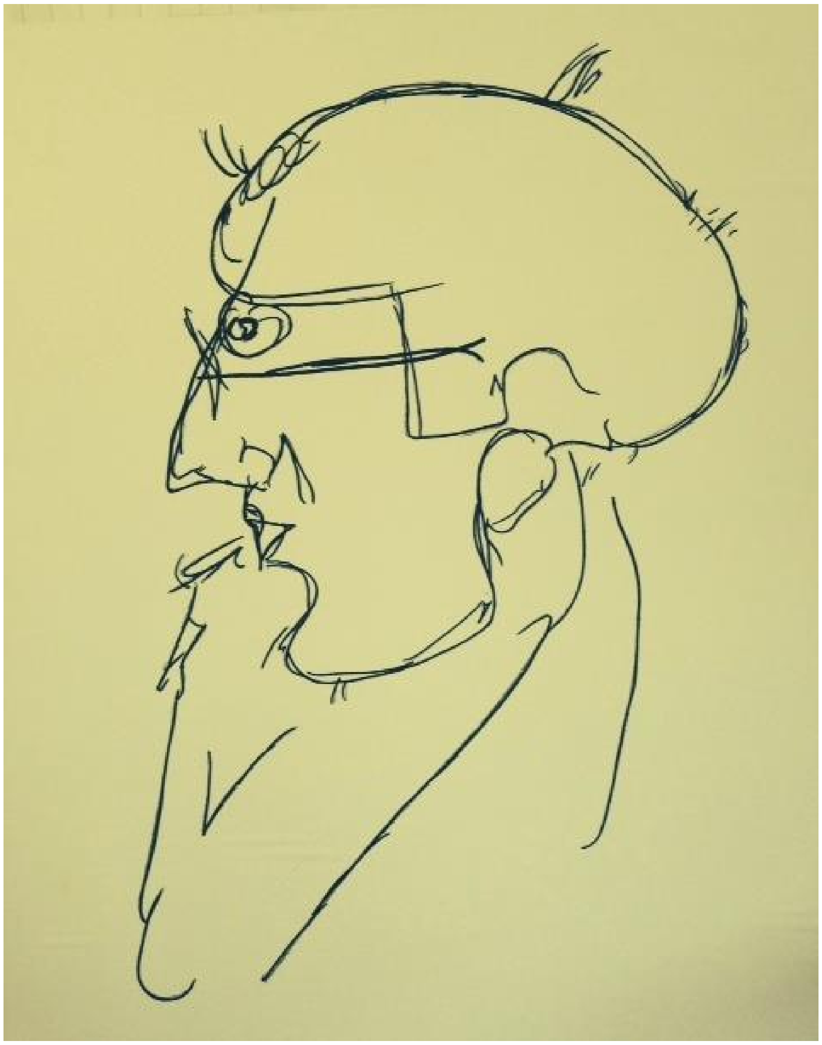
Larscheid's drawing looked like an abstract oval-shaped cloud with beautiful c shapes coming from the joint she is smoking. At the tip of the right side of the oval, she drew a small weed joint that was emitting the c's.

Figure 6: Self-portrait of Eric Kemp

Kemp: It's very faint. I can't see it. I don't know. Well, I guess I thought of my face like clouds in the water… like a stream… that's what I thought of my face.

Kemp's self-portrait encompassed the entire paper. Non-linear squiggly lines danced around the perimeter of the page, each one taking on a different form and pointing to a direction. Slightly off center of the page, she drew an enclosed circular shape with smaller twisted lines. Her paper represented a multitude of rhythms and speeds of drawing. Applying her nature-based inspirations, I felt the continuous movement of the stream flowing through her lines, and the lightness of her imagined clouds.

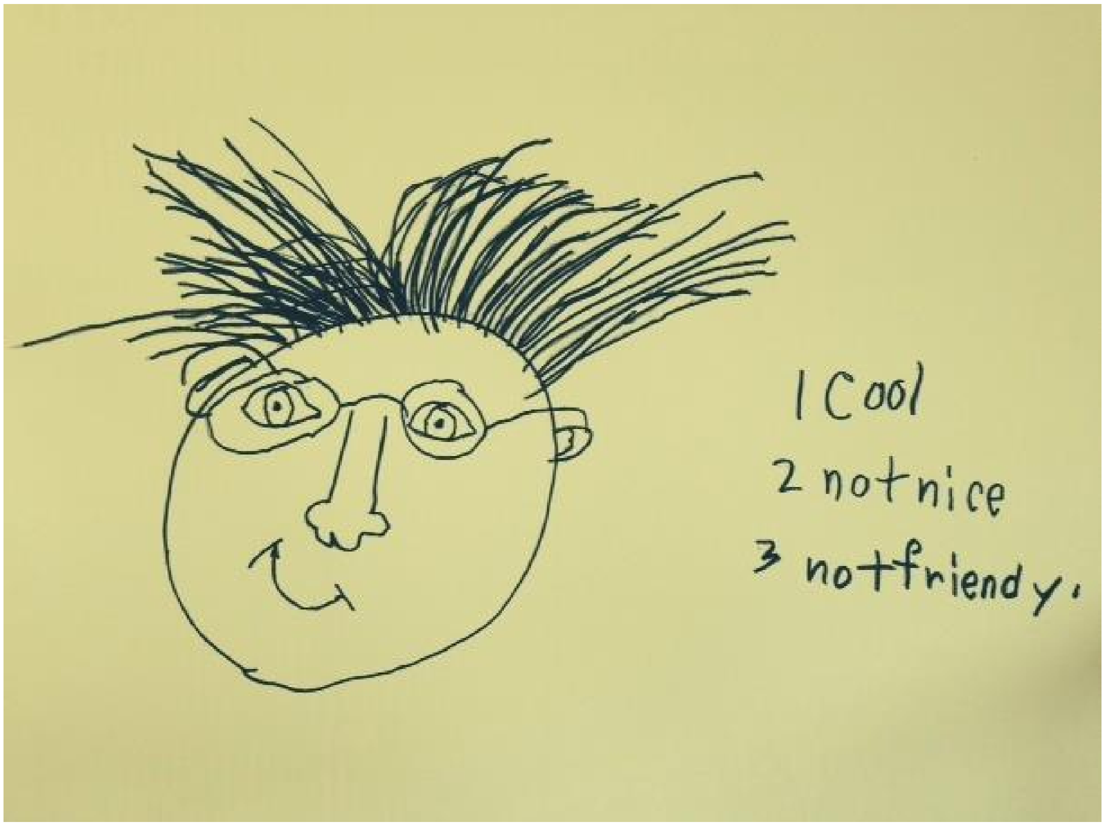
Figure 7: Self-portrait of Ian Brown



Brown: It's a self-portrait. It's smoking, but I don't. I drew it and I filmed it when I drew it frame by frame.

Brown's smoking reference later became a true comedic moment in the final *Portraits* script. His drawing showed his profile from the side. Multiple round lines outlined the shape of his large skull, and he drew a few lines of hair to represent his balding head. The blankness of his head intrigued me; I was mesmerized by his creative thinking process. He drew his dainty square- framed glasses, and the smallest cigarette emerging from his mouth. Looking at the drawing, I could almost hear and feel his quick hand strokes as his pencil touched the paper—the back and forth, back and forth scratching noise.

Figure 8: Self-portrait of Larry Wong



Wong: I drew my hair up because I was looking behind you... I saw one [photo] had its hair sticking up. I have glasses on. I think I'd like to say I'm "G" –"A" – "Y."

On the left hand side of his paper, Wong drew his self-portrait: a circular face with circular glasses, and a crooked smile. The happiness of the image is heightened by the long strands of hair sticking up from his face. Although the lines of hair do end, I felt as though they could continue past the borders of the page. Ironically, this image was countered with three words written on the right hand side of the page: listed from 1 to 3, "cool", "not nice" and "not friend y." The "G-A-Y" line was included in his final monologue for the show. Yet, over the course of the last week before the show, he began to say the word *gay* instead of spelling it; however, he also was selective in delivering this line to only some audiences during the final run of productions.

Moments such as Wong's would emerge and re-situate our understandings of bodies, the work process, and ourselves. Slowness gave space for each of us to witness each other's ways of being and understanding the world. A meeting of stories and bodies occurred, and our self-portraits ultimately embodied these encounters. These events of surprise were both confusing and enlightening, superseding our prior knowledge and perceptions about how to move through life. Our vulnerable admissions, in a rare space we held and supported for one another, affected how we came to witness our artistic experience together. This process, which emerged from our slow and personal workshop processes, increased the relational feeling of the art making of *Portraits*. It was simultaneously uncomfortable and freeing as it loosened our prior mandates for how we were living our lives.

Slowness has become a way to remodel, re-evaluate, and reconfigure the way we choose to live our lives and understand disability. Slowness becomes the *alternative*—the *beautiful solution* to the pressure of turbo-capitalism. Although slowness is not a perfect alternative, it provides a space to imagine what could be and what can be. There is room and time to find hope in what seems like a hopeless and inaccessible world. Slowness provides an opportunity for bodies and energies that are unpredictable, that do not fit into to the *assumed* predictable, heterosexualized, inaccessible spaces of what we often call "normal" or every day.

Mobilities and Crip Temporalities

The way we move is contingent on whether we have access to the space we want to move in, and what bodies that space privileges. Disability is emerging as an important new form of understanding mobilities that traditionally has been approached as "an attention to routes and paths, flows and connections" (Shelly and Urry, 2006). Different environments call for different ways of using our senses (smell, taste, touch, sight, and hearing), and "shape and re-shape our movement-abilities" (Sawchuk, 2013). As Sawchuk (2013) has pointed out:

> We all move. How we move is a distinct aspect of our personal and social identity. We may recognize each other because of the color of our hair and eyes or by the sound of our voices. But we are also identifiable through our comportment, the ways we physically navigate through space, and the technologies we use to assist our movements. (p. 379)

Witnessing different styles of individual mobilities and moving with them promotes the processes of mediation on how we exist and move in different environments. Slowness provides an opportunity to find an embodied relation amongst others around us. This relation is not about finding commonalities in our bodies, but instead can promote a deeper understanding about how our bodies affect one another, temporally and spatially.

Theatre Terrific provides time at the beginning of each rehearsal to find a collective presence amongst its cast members through discovering a common breath. Uchatius often asked cast members to stand in a circle and pass around a smooth stone that carried personal meaning for her. As the stone was passed from person to person, each cast member individually felt the smooth relaxing surface of the stone, and breathed in and out (in and out) deeply, while simultaneously gazing into the eyes of the other cast members. During the exercise, each cast member greeted other members' gazes and breath, often letting out a sigh on the final exhale, loosening the room from previously felt tensions. This sigh is significant. Our sighs beautifully harmonized the unhinging of elongated vibratos and deep vocal textures. We became aware of each other's different mobility styles and ways of sounding. We became attentive to our own and each other's bodies, and ways of being and feeling alive.

Theatre Terrific uses exercises that move away from setting up their members to compete against one another, particularly with respect to how artists relate to one another. There are no competing temporalities, only a felt embodiment of eclectic rhythms. Movement exercises—through which artists are invited to move with, beside, and for each other—are used to achieve this end. One exercise directed members to quickly walk the parameter of the performance space while keeping their gaze up and only turning at 90 degree angles. Eighteen people were participating in this exercise—four wheelchair users, one cast member working with a care worker, and a range of ages between 15 to early 60s. As the exercise began, different rhythms engaged the space. I began to walk turning corners abruptly, and a few close encounters with others made me more aware of my own movement. Occasionally, cast members bumped into each other, and some toes were run over, but as a collective, we moved with each other. The presence of fast motorized chairs and slower moving cast members made for a diverse awareness of the kinds of bodies and movement temporalities being engaged in the space.

> *I took a series of photos during these warmup exercises. Some parts of the photos are blurry showing different cast members' bodies blending with each other, and colours merging together. Bodies in motion, in connection, in commotion, and in devotion to one another, working and creating in many directions. The movement is framed against the beige backdrop of the tall, painted walls of the Japanese United Church recreational*

> *space, and medium-brown stained wood floors. Oddly enough there is white tape on the floor that divides the main space into larger squares, yet they are completely disregarded by the wandering feet, wheels, and chaotic movement. There is also a distant clock mounted on the back wall, high above the cast, yet its numbers and pointers are too blurry to make out the approximate time (a very timely observation for a chapter on slowness). Although time is hovering over the Stuffed cast members, they are engaging in their own feelings about time that include all of their mobile styles, none more valuable than another. Crowe, who has muscular dystrophy, pushes Costello in her pink wheel chair. Crowe moves slowly, using the wheelchair to find balance for her wobbling body. In the far right background of the photos, you can see the back of Aubin's motorized chair, a backpack hanging from it, and the illumination of the screen of his communication assistive device. Wong's body shyly moves around his fellow cast members, and at one point, he holds onto one of the hand supports of Costello's chair. Wong's hands remain in front of him throughout the photos, almost protecting himself from a potential encounter with another cast mate. His nervous body language makes me recall the sound of Aubin's fast moving chair, and its contrast to some of the more silent footsteps around me. Other cast members' movements swerve between the inside and outside perimeter of the white tape squares, all paying attention to the diverse rhythms surrounding them.*

The length of each exercise was dependent on how we cared and supported each other's and our own ways of communicating, which was determined by a slow practice. The process of tenderness was opened by the manner in which we related to one another through our different ways of moving, which shifted the aesthetic qualities of the space. Groups such as Theatre Terrific—in which cast members express a diversity of mobile and movement styles—prompt us as human beings to become attentive to the diverse ways of moving in the world, and the inaccessibility of many spaces. The exercises in this space lean toward a slow way of thinking and attention focusing that situate disability as relational and position each person as "'intersubjective' terms: as members of society where all are accountable to each other" (Levinas, 1985; as cited in Sawchuk, 2013, p. 414). Positioning disability in this light—as a relational way of being versus medical—better introduces the term that Sawchuk (2013) distinguishes as *differential mobilities* that "addresses the relations of power that hinder or enable movement, a system of preferential access to space that discriminates against those who have an 'impairment'" (Levinas, 1985; as cited in Sawchuk, 2013, p. 414). Such a realization opens the process of tenderness and inspires important ally relationships to form due to the insight that such bodies, whether disabled or not, can support one another. Gray (2018) describes how collaborative theatre work opens up an aesthetic of relationality, an "aesthetic space within which embodied interpretive work of artist-researchers is extended into spatial, relational contexts[…]" (p. 8). Although referring to the work of artist-researchers—academics who immerse themselves in creative practises as a mode of research inquiry—Gray's concept speaks to my experience working with members of Theatre Terrific. She further explains how theatre practises promote an aesthetic of relationality in how it offers "an interrelationship between bodies, actions and surrounding spaces" (Gray, 2018, p. 9). In these relational aesthetics there are moments of disorientations or what she deems "wonky moments:" artist-researchers "disrupt their own bodily horizon, they extend into space differently, as they re-orient themselves towards the experiences of other people[…]" (Gray, 2011, p. 11).

Imperative Slowness

> *I live life in slow motion. The world I live in is one where my thoughts are as quick as anyone's, my movements are weak and erratic, and my talk is slower than a snail in quicksand. I have cerebral palsy, I can't walk or talk, I use an alphabet board, and I communicate at the rate of 450 words an hour compared to your 150 words in a minute— 20 times as slow. A slow world would be my heaven. I am forced to live in your world, a fast hard one. If slow rays flew from me I would be able to live in this world. I need to speed up, or you need to slow down.* (McDonald, n.a.)

Slowness cannot be situated as an alternative, since, for many, it's a living imperative and the only way possible of moving through the world. For some, slowness can be moved in and out of—a temporary mobility and frame of mind—for example, by those who identify as TAB (temporary able-bodied). For others, particularly members of the disability community, slowness is permanent and necessary. Some Theatre Terrific members have limited motor skills, differential speech patterns, and hearing impairments. Others use assistive communication devices and speech enhancers. Particularly when working with artists with such assistive technologies, more time is needed for them to type their thoughts. In the case of Theatre Terrific artist Tyson Aubin, more time was set aside for his communication process. All too often, people try and guess what individuals like Aubin are trying to say, and attempt to “save them the burden” of typing everything. Eyes glued to the screen, it becomes a contest of who can predict what the person is trying to say. Reflecting on her own experiences as a disabled woman using similar communication devices, McDonald (n.a) describes:

> *People will not enter my time to talk to me. Slow the conversation down to my speed, and everybody else wanders away; carry on talking while I finish my sentence, and the conversation has moved on. Too long sentences 20 times slowed try the patience and require better memories than my listeners possess.*

In the case of disabled actors (whether visible or invisible), their bodies are perceived as not being able to “keep up” with other normative (or non-disabled) bodies, and for this reason, historically, these bodies have been devalued aesthetically. In the creative spaces of Theatre Terrific rehearsals, Aubin was given full authority to take the time he needed to communicate his thoughts. The room became quiet as his body jolted with each letter he typed. Other Terrific members such as Costello use a hearing assistive device; Dickson often uses a personally adapted form of sign language; and others have their own care workers. Slow time always must be incorporated and remain flexible to ensure the needs of disabled artists are respected.

These temporalities are felt by all members of Les Muses, Theatre Terrific, and Les Production des pieds des mains. They are absolutely real. They are orientations of and to time that I would situate in slowness. Groups supporting disabled artists always are reorienting to different lived temporalities that take more or less time for each individual and their physical, emotional, and cognitive needs. Such orientations are conceptualized as *crip time* by many disability scholars and activists (Kuppers, 2014; Kafer, 2013; McDonald, 2015). Kafer (2013) describes *crip time* as a “wry reference to the disability-related events that always seem to start late or to the disabled people who never seem to arrive anywhere on time” (p. 26). Many of disability-related events in which I have participated often started later in the morning versus at 8:30 am sharp. This provided extra time in the morning for those that needed adapted transportation, and/or who were reliant on caregivers to help them dress and bathe, and overall more time to mentally prepare for their day. Kuppers (2014) describes: “There is the day we lie in bed, the time of pain blooming in our bones, the end of the street impossibly far for limping legs, the meeting and its noise assault against the reassuring tick of the wall clock at home” (p.

29). Crip time provides a platform for groups working with disabled artists to collectively prevent members from feeling temporally excluded and neglected. Crip time is "not only about slower speed of movement but also about ableist barriers over which one has little to no control" (Kafer, 2013, p. 26). Crip time is about producing a flexibility in how we understand time and recognizing the needs of others around us. Kafer (2013) proposes:

> Crip time is a flex time not just expanded but exploded; it requires reimagining our notions of what can and should happen in time, or recognizing how expectations of "how long things take" are based on very particular minds and bodies. We can then understand the flexibility of crip time as being not only an accommodation to those who need "more" time but also, and perhaps especially, a challenge to normative and normalizing expectations of pace and scheduling. Rather than bend disabled bodies and minds to meet the o'clock, crip time bends the clock to meet disabled bodies and minds. (p. 27)

This brings me back to my original proposition about slowness as a critical mode of recognizing and understanding human diversities. For many in the disability community, crip time is a reclaiming of time that all too often has been contextualized *for them* and *not by them*. Crip time helps to prevent people from feeling like their needs are an afterthought, rather than a creativity generator. There is something absolutely beautiful about being in a space in which many can enter, and most importantly, feel welcomed and be invited. Just as the aesthetics of a space become altered, the way we move in the space and encounter each other alters. This tenderness effect, as a result of slowness, prompts a deeper desire to understand and encounter other bodies that moves us beyond a place of pity to an exploration of new human connections. Since all bodies do not move in exactly the same way, slowness privileges such a curiosity about mobile styles.

Berg and Seeber (2016) have proposed some ways in which slowness is a "counter identity" to the culture of speed, or in their context, to the identity of "the beleaguered, managed, frantic, stressed, and demoralized professor" (p. ix). The notion of *timelessness* has been defined by Charalampos Miainemelis as the "experience of transcending time and one's self by becoming immersed in a captivating present-moment activity or event" (as cited in Berg and Seeber, 2016, p. 26). When experiencing timelessness, an arguable extension of slowness, "we are creative, and creativity is experienced as timelessness" (as cited in Berg and Seeber, 2016, p.

27). Timelessness can potentially foster "creativity, original thinking and different modes of pleasure" (p. 27).

Slow Pedagogies

Groups like Theatre Terrific, Les Productions des pieds des mains, and Les Muses also offer alternative ways we, as educators, can imagine classroom settings that value slowness. Educators, particularly in higher education, struggle with "how to balance best practices in learner-centered pedagogy with simultaneous pressure posed by information-dense curricula" (Goldschmidt et al., 2016, p. 1). Using Holt, the author of the 2002 manifesto "Slow Schooling," Honoré (2004) quotes, "At a stroke, the notion of the slow school destroys the idea that schooling is about cramming, testing, and standardizing" (p. 255). Extending this, Shaw et al. (2013) argue "Slow, mindful learning is oriented away from rapid results or competitive feature and toward inquiry, dialogue, and learner autonomy" (p. 321). When situating discussions between slow educational system models, emphasis is most focused on the needs of the students, and the role of the educator as a learning facilitator. There is more time for processing ideas, to understanding where they came from, and creating personal connection. "A slow pedagogy, or eco-pedagogy, allows us to pause or dwell in spaces for more than a fleeting moment and, therefore, encourages us to attach and receive meaning of that place" (Payne et al., 2009, p. 16). Slow pedagogies unsettle the working conditions that can burn out many of us by creating a space for potential reinvigoration and the assurance of being supported by colleagues. Through slowness, creativity can be rebuilt, reshaped, and cherished—we can enjoy the learning process more this way. Particularly when working with the disability community in which bodies are always shifting and needs always changing, it's important to provide space for creative spontaneity and adaptability.

Richard Gaulin, the main theatre teacher at Les Muses, has been working with the group since 2001. His work with the students is primarily concentrated on dramatic texts, diction, character concentration and development, and listening, or as he would say, "anything surrounding acting." Prior to Les Muses, Gaulin began working in the disability community with Théâtre Aphasique, "a non-profit organization focused on rehabilitating and socially integrating people with aphasia through dramatic art" ("Our Mission- Théâtre Aphasique"). According to the Aphasia Institute of Canada, aphasia is "a language problem that masks a person's inherent competence, and most dramatically affects conversational interaction (talking and understanding), as well as the ability to read and write" ("What is Aphasia?- Aphasia Institute"). These language problems are often a result of a stroke or brain injury, and/or by "other neurological conditions such as dementia or brain tumours" ("What is Aphasia?- Aphasia Institute"). Members of Théâtre Aphasique participate in "creating and presenting plays for the general public, and putting on dramatic art workshops" ("Our Mission- Théâtre Aphasique"). The methods that Gaulin uses with the group are not easily applicable to students of Les Muses. For artists of Théâtre Aphasique, many of them do not need to learn the same acting skills that students from Les Muses are trained for. One of the biggest reasons for this is Gaulin's different artistic expectations of both groups- for student's of Les Muses, Gaulin expects a greater creative rigour and artistic talent, whereas for members of Théâtre Aphasique, he is more invested in modes of rehabilitation and therapy. This is not to say that there are not members from Théâtre Aphasique that will not continue on to seek further theatre training, rather, my intention is to better highlight the ways in which many artistic educators working with disabled artists use their educational background to work with many communities for a variety of reasons.

During my class time with Gaulin, I would often be witness to his approach for teaching the students on how to read dramatic texts. Since he is a long-time teacher of the program and has worked with many of the students closely for many years, Gaulin has gained a deep understanding of their personal and learning needs. Prior to Les Muses, however, Gaulin had never worked with artists with cognitive disabilities. In his interview with me, he described working with students from Les Muses as experiencing "a different way of seeing theatre." He explained:

> It makes you see theatre as something totally different. It makes you reconsider your work or in a new way, gives you a new perspective on what theatre does to people. And you have to be more creative because to find a way to, to give access to what you have in your mind to people, does not get the same way you get your thoughts (sic). (interview, March 2016)

Like many teachers from Les Muses, Gaulin expressed his enjoyment for the students' "no-filter" perspective on life, and readiness to try anything new in class: "They don't question the intellectual part of qu'est tu veux faire. They give themselves totally into what you want to create. And that is something precious because as an artist sometimes you want to explore without question." "With regular actors," as Gaulin asserted, "will question, question, question, they won't go because they won't believe it." For Gaulin, the only way to ensure the success of each student in his classroom is to set up a way of learning that instills confidence in them, individually and as a collective.

Unlike other traditional theatre programs that will work at one standard assumed learning pace for students, Gaulin embraces slowness and diversity of learning styles to respect the many different levels and speeds of his students' cognitive styles. Whereas other programs will read one play a week, students of Les Muses might take more time. Depending on the student, Gaulin explains, "Si ça prend 6 mois avant qu'on peux réussir un morceau, ça va prendre du temps. Les autres, si c'est trois mois…As long as there is work to do on what part, we are working on it."[51] For Gaulin, it does not matter if it takes a year or more for a student to conquer reading a text: "I try to follow their *vitesse d'apprentissage*…it doesn't'matter how long it takes."[52] During one interview, student Léger Moran explained Gaulin's approach in detail:

> En fait, il écrit un texte au tableau. Comme il y a un livre de théâtre, puis il écrit les phrases au tableau. Ça, c'est mon prof de théâtre[…]Y'avait une élève qui était... qui avait plus de difficulté à lire. Puis, qu'est-ce que Richard faisait, c'est qu'il prenait la règle puis il pointait chaque mot pour qu'elle lise une phrase. (interview, February 2016)[53]

David, known for being one of the stronger theatre performers from Les Muses, highlighted the attentiveness of Gaulin's slow and caring practice:

> Il va écrire au tableau, mais il va dire "Ah, ok, vous avez compris", mais euh... J'veux dire aux Muses, c'est différent. Tsé, ils prennent le temps de parler, de voir chaque personne, tsé, si elle a compris ou pas, si elle a des questions ou non. (interview, February 2016) [54]

Throughout my interviews with the students, many expressed an appreciation for the slower approach teachers like Gaulin use. Charest-Landry explained:

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[51] Translation: "If it takes 6 months to get a piece right, it's a long time. For others, it may be three months…

[52] Translation: "learning speed."

[53] Translation: "Actually, he writes a text on the board. So he has a book for a play, then he writes the sentences on the board. That's my drama teacher [...] There was a student who was ... who had difficulty reading. Then, what Richard was doing was that he would take the ruler and he would point out every word so she could read a sentence."

[54] Translation: "He will write on the board, then he'll say: "Ah, OK, you understand." But uh ... I mean, with Les Muses, it's different. They take the time to talk, to look at each person, you know, to see whether she understood or not, whether she has questions or not."

> uh... Ben, si euh... ya du monde qui lit plus lentement que d'autres, c'est un peu normal parce que tsé en même temps, ils veulent pas... y veulent bien dire la phrase ou le mot... Fak ils veulent être sûrs de pas se mélanger pis dire un autre mot, fak ils veulent rester concentrés pour dire "Faut je dise ce mot-là ou cette phrase-là pis je vais rester concentré. Si je le dis lentement, je vais mieux dire ce que j'ai à dire."[55]

Tremblay touched on how slowness is used in the classroom:

> …ils demandent si on a compris. Puis, il y en a qui répondent pas vraiment pis pas clairement, mais les profs ils sont là depuis assez longtemps pour pouvoir leur demander pis prendre de l'avance pour leur dire qu'est-ce qu'il faut faire plus lentement, plus clair pour le monde. Puis, ben, c'est pas mal… c'est pas mal ça.[56]

For text-based exercises, Gaulin selects a dialogue between two to three characters and writes it on the classroom blackboard. Each student takes a turn reading the text without any emotional motivation. During the second round, Gaulin converses with the students about what is going on in the scene. After this, he directs each of them to read the text with a certain motivation. As each student moves through the text, a variety of different reading comprehensions open up the space to the potentialities of how texts can be performed and read.

> *The current play under study is A Doll's House by Henrik Ibsen. Gaulin asks each student to read a part of the text with a certain emotion, while walking from the back of the class to the blackboard at the front of the class. Gaulin says: "Plus tu va advancer, plus tu va être faché. Et quand tu va arrive à lire, tu va être dègeulasse." This is a direction for his student Marc Barakat who is known for being a compelling performer due to an ongoing slight tremor in his body that often makes his hands and head shake, and his voice carries a natural vibrato that often lingers at the end of words and sentences. Gaulin cues Barakat to begin: "C'est parti." The room becomes silent, and Barakat slowly walks to the front of the classroom. "Ahhhhh mère," Barakat begins, dragging out the "ère." "Quand auront beaucoup d'argent et quand nous pourrons*

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[55] Translation: "Well, if… uh... there are people who read more slowly than others, it's a bit normal because, you know, at the same time, they don't want to ... well, they want to say the sentence or the word... So they want to be sure not to mix it up, and say another word, so they want to stay focused to say "I have to say that word or that sentence, so I'll stay focused. If I say it slowly, I will say what I have to say better."

[56] Translation: "… they ask if we understood. Then, there are some who say not really or not clearly, but the teachers have been there long enough to know to ask them, so they can get ahead of that and tell them what to do more slowly, more clearly for everyone. Well, well, it's not bad ... it's not bad."

> *quitter…" he continues, reaching a crescendo on "quitter." His voice raises in volume, emphasizing his teacher's directions. Gaulin pushes his actors, "Plus faché," and Barakat clenches his fists and raises his voice. However, he continues with a slower tempo, articulating his words, and drawing out the word that falls at the end of each sentence. Each vibrato of his voice creates a presence that echoes in the silence of his classmates. The vibrations of his voice and the tremors of his body add a physical nuance to his captivating performance. When Barakat is done with his lines, he takes a moment to calm his energy, and slowly turns and sits down with the rest of the class.*
>
> *Gaulin asks me to read the lines next. A little nervous, I stand up and move to the back of the class. As an Anglophone, I am nervous to read a French text for which I do not know all the correct pronunciations, and because I do not have a deep understanding of what is going on in this specific scene. However, I read the text, stuttering through some words, and often finishing my sentences as if they are questions. I constantly look at Gaulin in hopes I am saying everything properly. In this moment, I realize how I am also a part of my project and in what ways my presence as an Anglophone researcher adds to the already diverse Francophone classroom. I have been given space, and my differences have been acknowledged in this moment. Beyond the technical training, this exercise is important because we are learning about and recognizing cognitive diversity. All of our presences are meaningful and important to energizing the creative space.*

What many acting teachers would try to diminish, Gaulin does not attempt to take away; for example, Barakat's tremoring, which cannot be taken away because it is part of him. This shaky nuance informs Barakat's artistic practice and emphasizes the ways that disability opens up different ways of reading and approaching character work. By adjusting the rhythms and paces of movement and perception making, new understandings can be negotiated with respect to how time can be used productively in a theatre classroom or rehearsal space. Even more important, what makes a good actor is being reframed to include, for example, a shaky voice and a wobbly body. Carrie Sandahl (2002) has argued that when we consider industrial society, it's important to understand that its values and "notions of efficiency, standardization, and productivity" ignore "the subjective experiences of disabled people" (p. 61). However, Les Muses prioritizes such experiences as artistically important.

From Gaulin's perspective, each student enters the rehearsal space with different levels of reading skills that affect how much time each one may need to read through the text. It is important that each student has an opportunity to read what is in front of them in front of the class. As Gaulin explains, "If it's hard for them, we take the time, and if it's easy, then it's good. But I won't let one student be left behind because they are unable to speak […] if it takes more than one hour, then it will take more than one hour." This time is precious for students to develop their craft. Students of Les Muses, who usually study full-time for 5 years, are provided with many opportunities to learn at a pace that is conducive to their learning needs, which is particularly important for artists with cognitive disabilities for which memory and speech can be challenging.

Needless to say, the slow practice that Gaulin values still has limits. Like all teachers of Les Muses, Gaulin only is able to work with his students once a week from 8:30am to 3:30pm. During my fieldwork with Les Muses, Gaulin's class met every Wednesday. The mornings were set up for engaging in long warm ups and improvised work, and the afternoons were used for text readings and scene work. Often, time limitations were most evident during scene work in which students would work on the same piece for multiple months. These pieces often would take students many months to memorize due to their difficulties in memorizing texts, or because they did not make the piece a priority in comparison to their other classes. The limited time Gaulin had with his students each week constrained his ability to be fully aware of their progress and to encourage them to memorize the texts. In addition, at various points, different students needed Gaulin's and other teachers' attention more than others. This need for additional attention was dependent on the student's needs, for example, the length of time they had been in the program or their learning needs at emotional and intellectual levels. Thus, in many classes, Gaulin was not able to witness all of his students performing their individual scenes and monologues. In addition, some students have to leave rehearsals earlier than others due to their own transportation arrangements with transport adapté, Montréal's public transportation for the disability community. Transportation accommodation have a huge effect on performance communities that work with disabled artists who have to be ready for their transportation when it arrives; in many situations, if they miss their bus, they are without safe transportation home and have to wait an hour or more for the next one, or call a taxi, catch a ride with a fellow colleague/artist, and/or walk home, depending on whether this option even exists. Thus, fixing rehearsal schedules in advance is important and necessary.

Relationship and Supporting Processes

One of the most important elements of Les Muses is the ways the training program has invested time in nurturing meaningful teacher-student and student-student relationships. Although most students complete the program within 5 years, they often return to continue taking classes to evolve their artistic potential and because they feel a familiarity and closeness with their teachers. Some students, as outlined in the previous chapter, have worked with Les Muses for over 10 years. Due to their many years of working together with students, Les Muses teachers have an immense understanding of what a student needs from them to foster a productive and valuable learning environment. Also, Les Muses is the only training program for artists with developmental disabilities in Montreal. Nevertheless, this lack of other training programs has made the Les Muses community and its external partner theatre companies—such as Les Production des pieds des mains, Maïgwenn and les orteilles, and Joe Jack and John—grow that much closer and has energized a deep desire for working together and creating better work opportunities for Les Muses students. Time, conversation, collaboration, and friendship has invigorated this. Particularly for the cognitive disability community, allies are crucially important with respect to the advancement and sustainability of acting careers. Such support systems advocate for the complex needs of the cognitive disability community to industry professionals, and educate these artists as to what is expected from the industry with respect to their acting performances. However, these allies should be people with whom the artists have built trusting and genuine relationships. Teachers and staff from Les Muses serve as such supports, helping students navigate the high demands and expectations of potential casting directors. Thus, these crucially important relationships can only be built over time.

One of the biggest working influences to the artistic shaping of *Eurêka* was Nagrani's long-standing working relationships with the principal dancers. Having worked with them for over 13 years at the time, Nagrani had a deep knowledge of their choreographic skills, and emotional and physical limits. During a televised interview on the program, *La Frabrique Culturelle*, Nagrani explains, "For this project, Geneviève, Jean-François, and Carl, seeing as its been such a long time, I created, with David, the director, scenarios in which I knew exactly where to place them, what their strengths would be. *It's a scenario that is completely created for* *them*. Seeing as I am very familiar with their palette, their repertoire, I know what they are capable of doing" (translated, "capsule fabrique eureka avec sous-titres"). She continues to explain her use of "guided improvisation," that involved Nagrani choreographically leading the dancers shot by shot, and then altering the sounds and music of *Eurêka* to match their movements. This eliminated the stress of the dancers being obligated to remember specific cues and complex pre-choreographed pieces prior to production. Although Morin-Dupont, Hupé and Hennebert Faulkner are absolutely able to memorize such kind of choreography, for the purposes of the film Nagrani felt the guided improvisation approach would be most practical based on the tight timeline of the project. Through this approach the artists were able to explore their own movement.

> *Nagrani prepares the dancers for the next shot in which they march into the green field where they find the mechanical doll and three-man orchestra. Lining up, Hennebert Faulkner is first followed by Hupé and Morin-Dupont. Nagrani offers different movement inspirations, and gives Hennebert Faulker the freedom to explore his improvisations. The direction is for Hupé and Morin-Dupont to copy him. He begins by placing his hands behind him on his waist, and kicks his legs out almost in a duck-like waddle. He quick jolts up from his bent over his position, and brings his right arm to his forehead, blocking the sun in a surveyor movement. He changes his rhythm, moving slower, with one large step at a time. He then moves forward to a straight upright position, and marches, raising his knees high. He then changes his movement to large outward kicks in front of his body, and returns to his previous duck-like waddle. As he explores these various movements, Hupé and Morin-Dupont follow him, nuancing the movement according to their bodies and paces. Their movements are not succinct but move with each other. Nagrani finds pauses to push their movement exploration, encouraging them to discover new physical diversities.*

Many casting directors value dancers that memorize choreography quickly, and artists that can accommodate their artistic and scheduling needs. In the case of artists working with Les Productions des pieds des mains, there is a huge rejection and critique of such capitalistic organizational models. The unique quirks, stutters, jagged walks, unaligned bodies, slow moving, less physically flexible, and less neurotypical ways of being in this world are what creatively tickle Nagrani as a choreographer. Nagrani shapes her work around her artists' atypical experiences of the world, and leads her choreography around how they move and learn as individuals.

Artistic directors like Nagrani begin their productions by ensuring that each artist has the appropriate emotional, artistic, and financial supports in place. Equitable professional environments are often not available for disabled performers who need built-in supports such as caregivers, interpreters, and social worker assistance. Owing to the lack of funding for such resources, artists "without independent means are blocked in the pursuit of a career in the arts by the so-called 'work disincentives'" (Lewis, qtd. in McNish, 49). Owing to the lack of resources available for disability supports in mainstream theatre, Nagrani ensures all of her artists and staff are paid for their services and artistic work. Schlesinger describes the importance of asking artists, "How do you live?" as a way to open up deeper conversations about art-making in "an economy that supports commerce." This question lays a foundation for better understanding the personal sacrifices and risks involved for different communities. A support worker, Magali Chazel, was provided on set for the three principal dancers of *Eurêka!* to help them with daily preparations, and she also stayed with them at a local hostel (where I also roomed with them). Chazel built a familiarity with, and had a good understanding of, the dancers' individual physical and emotional needs. Her presence enabled the dancers to feel comfortable on set, particularly when they were overwhelmed with all of their tasks. Chazel also was an immense resource for me, often serving as an interpreter between the cast members and me. These supports opened up better ways of understanding and communicating with each other.

> *Hennebert Faulkner, Chazel, and I sit together in the soft green grass as the production team prepares themselves for the next scene. Hennebert Faulkner points at me, now behind the camera, and asks Chazel and me what our favourite moment of the production has been. Chazel helps translate for me. I let him know that it is hard to make a decision, since there has been so much happening on this day. Chazel expresses her love for the dancers' surprised responses upon discovering the three musicians. She then asks me more about my work, and how she can help me clarify my presence to the principal dancers. In my broken and nervous French, I explain my interest in wanting to know more about the disabled dancers' experiences on set. Hennebert Faulkner looks at me attentively and quickly corrects my pronunciation of each word. Nagrani then comes over to prepare us for the next scene. During this moment, I am able to better connect with*

Hennebert Faulkner because of Chazel's presence. It is also in this conversation that I realize Hennebert Faulkner will be my French tutor for the week of production.

Such supports enabled the meaningful creative participation and equitable performances of Morin-Dupont, Hupé, and Hennebert Faulkner. *Eurêka!* serves as a model, both behind the scenes and with respect to the actual film, of how we can reimagine the societal conditions that set the frameworks for how we make art and move through the world.

Reimagining New Conditions of Living

Schlesinger (2013) proposes principles inspired by theatre collaboratives, slow movements, and artistic ways of living to found principles of the slow theatre movement. All of these sources are dedicated to the principles of equity, inclusivity, authenticity, and collaboration for all human beings. How we can live our lives in a way that does not comply to the constraints of "the commercial world" in which "time equals money"? Creating a poetic proposition, she outlines the foundations of as she sees the impact of slowness on the human community:

Work towards beautiful solutions. Model what you want to be.
Fuck uniformity. Let's have our dirt and our taste back. Audience as company.
Share recipes. Share the knowledge. Pass it on. The world is made sacred again.
How do you live?

Slowness is crucial right now, particularly in performance and disability. When she asks us about *how* we live our lives, there is an ignition of tenderness and reflection on our values. It is difficult to reposition ourselves in slowness when we are forced to move too quickly. Yet, what groups working with disabled artists offer is how this is imperative, whether out of survival or a re-framing of capitalism.

Chapter 6: Tenderness

Introduction

Disability encourages new understandings of performance, and undoes assumed discourses around bodies. Disability art can challenge and shift prior ways of understanding the social world. Abbas et al. (2004) have described a "moment of tenderness" when witnessing the work of disabled artists, and have listed the questions audiences often ask themselves:

> I'm not sure of the purpose.... I wasn't sure that this fit ...... I don't know how I felt about it.... I do not understand what it had to do with disability ....I don't know whether this was liberating.... What was his angle?... Why should it matter ?[….] (p. 39)

The process of tenderness is founded in a constant flux of re-understanding worldviews on ethics, community, and relationality. Lewis (1998) suggests that ethical theatre practices are integral to finding new ways to introduce disability "with honesty and authenticity" into the theatre, rather than focusing on how nondisabled audiences can accept disability culture. Also, as Butler (2005) has pointed out, ethics emerges not from having set values, but rather is "an ongoing, reflexive deliberation on one's own actions" (as cited in Leighton, 2009, p. 99). My interest in, and conception of, tenderness emerges from how disabled artists encourage this ethical deliberation.

Tenderness, a reverberating process, deformalizes the world we know, whereby the borders of our knowledge of ourselves and bodies shift and soften. I describe the process as reverberating to illustrate how tenderness is in constant motion, providing multiple sites of self-reflection. Tenderness has an almost vibrational quality. We may experience a scent, a movement, an image, or a conversation whose energies and affects ethically echo, shifting worldviews and ways of encountering other communities and ourselves. The vibrational feelings have a potential to be both visceral and spiritual as they work aesthetically through the senses, moment by moment. Similar to the "moment of tenderness," Abbas et al. (2004) describes, these reverberations are confusing and ethically rich. Grounded in Levinas' (1981) notion of the "face-to-face" encounter that is "uncontainable, leading you beyond thought and knowledge" (p. 87), tenderness loosens the fixed mandates of artistic practices and understandings of others. As Salverson (2001) suggests, "[t]his encounter with and call by the other is a surprise, a *deformalization*… a compelling invitation" (emphasis mine, p. 34–35). Performance-engaged works "allow us to dissolve inflexible ideas of the way things 'are'" (Hickey-Moody, 2009, p. 170). This is not to say that during performative work, differences between communities dissolve, but rather that performative work offers new ways of "moving beyond category" (Hickey-Moody, 2009, p. 170). One of the ways to *move beyond categorization* is by re-conceiving the makeup of a human body by situating it as a part of a larger worldly relation, which is the core of tenderness.

This chapter focuses on tenderness as an important aesthetic and ethical process in relationship to disabled artists. However, at no point will I assert that the ignition of tenderness is reliant on disabled artists. I situate tenderness as a site whereby fixed understandings and discourses of disability and other communities can be complicated and shifted. This chapter also examines the ways performance and theatre are important to this process. Tenderness also serves as a way for me to situate my own experience as a researcher in this project.

Working Group Connections

One the biggest influences on my conception of *tenderness* and developing an understanding of disability and performance has been the working groups I have participated in since 2014. Research associations like the International Federation of Theatre Research, the Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics (Encuentro and Convergence events), and the Canadian Association of Theatre Research have enabled me to network and meet internationally-based disabled theatre makers and allied researchers. In September 2014, I also had the opportunity to be a founding member of Concordia University's Critical Disability Studies Working Group (CDSWG) and later on, I served as the group's coordinator from June 2017 to December 2018. The CDSWG is "an interdisciplinary team of scholars and creators that engage in an ongoing transformation of disability studies paradigm" (CDSWG). CDSWG is rooted primarily in *critical* disability studies, which is a model that moves away from reducing disability to an "impairment" by opening up "the complex interconnection between medicine, society and bodies" (CDSWG).

The need for the CDSWG became apparent after the 2014 Encuentro, a bi-annual conference/ performance festival hosted by the Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics at Concordia University. Many of the CDSWG current and founding members, including myself, participated in the 2014 Encuentro disability and performance working group. Convened by Kim Sawchuk of Concordia's Department of Communication Studies and Arseli Dokumaci, a McGill post-doctoral fellow at the time, our group engaged in a series of artistic actions in response to the inaccessibility of some of the Encuentro events. These actions included group members dragging pieces of their wheelchairs up the Sala Rosa stairs (the venue chosen for the nightly cabarets), creating a working group statement on accessibility, distributing cue cards to Encuentro participants asking for responses to our actions, and convening a long table discussion on accessibility and inclusivity. Although prior to this event the CDSWG already was in the process of forming, Encuentro provided a platform to attract Montreal-based disability researchers, artists, and activists to the group.

I am discussing the CDSWG and my other affiliated working groups to expand on how such groups are meaningfully contributing to the new disability theatre movement. Yvonne Schmidt, a faculty member of the Zurich University of the Arts and co-founder of the Disability and Performance Working Group at the International Federation for Theatre Research, has been one of these group members. Schmidt, who also was a member of the 2014 Encuentro working group, has focused a significant amount of her profound academic work on Theater Hora. Founded in 1993 by theatre-pedagogue Michael Elber, Hora's artists are described on the company's website as having "unfiltered perceptions" that reveal "the hidden worlds which the observer can understand intuitively" (Theater Hora). *Disabled Theater*, a production they have internationally toured, was created by French choreographer Jerôme Bel. At the core of this provocative production is the cast's self-reflexive revelations about being disabled. Audience members often find the style of these disclosures challenging, as articulated by disability performance theorist Scott Wallin (2015): "The show achieves its force and audience interest by tacitly targeting the uncomfortable feelings many of us have about disability and then offering a sense of emancipation from these *disabling* perceptions and emotions" (p. 64, emphasis mine). The production is a re-staging of Jerôme Bel's "first meeting with the performers, where his questions and their presence reveal dynamics of exclusion and the limits of political correctness" ("Disabled Theater"). Actors present themselves and disclose personal parts of their lives, particularly in relation to what it means to live with a disability. The cast also showcase their own talents and provide reflections on working with Bel and Theater Hora.

***Montréal and* Disabled Theater**

Although Theater Hora is not one of my participants in this dissertation, I incorporate

Disabled Theater as an integral piece to contextualize *tenderness*. I also include it to show the international scope of the new disability theatre, particularly in Europe, and its effect on Canada. In late March, 2015, Theater Hora came to Canada to perform *Disabled Theater* in Toronto, Ontario and at Concordia University in Montreal, Quebec. The Montreal performances were hosted by the CDSWG. By the fall of 2014, Theater Hora had contacted the CDSWG, in large part thanks to Schmidt. The CDSWG was quick to find internal and external funding to support the group, and also a venue for the performances. Owen Chapman, Communication Studies faculty member and chair of the CDSWG at the time, emphasized the ways the event would mobilize different perspectives on disability: "We tend to deal with disability by thinking about it as a diminishment from some form of normal. Hora explores what we call disability *as a capacity*, *as potential*" ("Theater Challenges Norms"). Dokumaci, as a CDSWG member and co-founder, suggested that Theater Hora's performers would prompt Montrealers to ask: "Who gets to perform and represent others, or who gets to be represented?" ("Theater Challenges Norms"). She also stated: "I believe that one of the major achievements of Theater Hora lies in their extremely skillful and innovative way of making us think about these questions" ("Theater Challenges Norms"). Theater Hora's work has aligned well with the CDSWG's intent to give recognition to critical disability studies in Montreal and Canada at large.

As one of the main CDSWG researchers of disability and theatre, I was asked to promote the event in an interview with CBC Montreal. I recall being concerned about how Morgan Dunlop, my interviewer, would frame her questions, and how my responses would be edited. The televised segment appeared on the six o'clock news as "Theatre Hora Shines Spotlight on People with Disabilities." The CDSWG was contextualized as hosting the performance in the hopes "of changing the way people perceive people with disabilities." Dunlop described *Disabled Theater* as having "a lot of high energy dance" and "touching personal stories" ("Shine the Spotlight").

The segment also included clips from *Disabled Theater*: first of cast member Remo Beuggert's head banging to heavy drum contemporary music, and Julia Haüsermann coming to a microphone centre stage and stating, "I have Down Syndrome, and I am sorry." During these clips, Dunlop described the production as both "entertaining" and "heartbreaking." Presented as a CDSWG member, I explained to Dunlop how disabled people "are often seen as being less than human because perhaps their understanding of things is different than ours or their processes are different than ours." More clips of *Disabled Theater* were shown while Dunlop introduced cast member Matthias Brucker. First, a shirtless Brucker was shown pelvic thrusting to hard rock music, and following this clip, he shared with the audience his sister's initial reaction to the production, stating that she felt that he and the cast were presented "like animals in the circus." After, Theater Hora's general manager, Giancarlo Marinucci, emphasized the company's creative work as "something not to hide." The segment continued with Brucker noting that dancing was his favourite part of the production, and expressing his hopes that audiences would leave "watching, thinking" and being "astonished." He concluded by giving a shout out to his girlfriend Tiziana Pagliaro (another cast member) declaring "I love you Tiziana." The televised segment then concluded with a clip of me asserting the importance of seeing disabled artists as *legitimate artists*, rather than the clientele of drama therapy.

The televised segment left me with mixed feelings. On the one hand, Theater Hora's work was being represented as inspirational, and yet on the other, it was clear Theater Hora offered a valuably different perspective of disability. Much of this tension emerged from the editing and juxtaposition of the different clips that were shown, particularly of Haüsermann and Brucker. Whereas Haüsermann apologized for her Down Syndrome, Brucker was presented as celebrating his developmental disability. Down Syndrome, a more visible developmental disability, often is framed with like and/or lovability, honesty, and humour. Within these contexts, people with Down Syndrome are highlighted as affectively powerful subjects. These affectionate emotions "*do things*" and "align individuals with communities [. . .] through the very intensity of their attachments" (Ahmed, "Affective Economies" 119). However, when comparing this framing to Haüsermann's apology and Brucker's sister's response to *Disabled Theater*, a direct tension arises against these easy feelings of love. Thus, the *Disabled Theater* production intervenes in the traditional emotional circuits that frame Down Syndrome.

Disabled Theater consistently creates affective tensions by challenging audiences' emotional responses to watching disabled artists onstage. The production is divided into four sections, each consisting of cast members giving individual performances. Without sets or elaborate costumes, the production eschews overt *theatricality* and plays at the borders of the real and the represented. The production begins with each cast member, one by one, silently standing in front of the audience. This repetitive action has the potential to produce discomfort in an audience. During the Montreal performance, I recall feeling awkward. As an audience, we sat in the dark, silently surveying the body of each actor. At the same time, each cast member also was staring back, but could they really see us in the sea of darkness in front of them? My discomfort was intensified when the ensemble members introduced themselves and disclosed information about their disability—some in detail, some more generally. A translator, positioned stage right facing the audience, translated the ensemble's German-Swedish words as well as Bel's original questions to the actors. When speaking of the actors' effect on audiences, Marinucci told the *Toronto Star*, "When you see the show, it's really new—the radical way people are presented on stage. Some people are uncomfortable, others are sad or happy, shouting out, even crying. We've seen everything. It's very emotional." Bel wrote the *Star* via email: "The subject [disability] is extremely complicated—socially and politically. Political correctness prevents people from correctly understanding their own situations." Their arguments suggest that the production offers a site of important affective re-evaluations and reflections.

During *Disabled Theater*, each cast member performs a self-choreographed dance-solo. Haüsermann places a white glove on her hand and dances to a Michael Jackson song. During the Montréal performance, Haüsermann fell to the ground and did not immediately get up. I can recall worrying, alongside a colleague sitting with me, whether she had injured herself. After a brief pause and check-in from the interpreter, the young actress continued her dance piece. Then, Pagliaro takes stage, gracefully twirling like a ballerina to beautiful soft music. Beuggert amps up the rock music and does original choreography with the use of a prop chair. Brucker, in contrast, moves to dance club music, fist pumping his way into the audience. Although each has performed *Disabled Theater* many times, some of these solos are choreographed in the moment. During the Montreal performances, the audience clapped along, cheering as the actors increased their energy. However, recalling my own reaction, I was unsure whether people were clapping for the live artistry or because of the tradition of "inspiration porn." Once more, I felt uncomfortable with my emotional response, and I began to question my own sensitivity to representations of disability onstage, which is a prime example of what incites the process of tenderness.

Disabled Theater has offered its audiences new ways to re-orient their emotional responses to disability and performance, and it has challenged our social norms around some expected audience responses. These reactions represent different affective relations to the norms we think we hold (Ahmed, 2004, p. 196). My own emotional reaction to the *Disabled Theatre* performance reveals how emotions "open up futures, in the ways it involves different orientations" (p. 202). Naomi Skwarna of *Toronto Life* has described *Disabled Theater* as "risky entertainment" and "at its core, a disabling of theatre" in a manner she has never seen before. Skwarna also has explained how the live production "can feel starkly, claustrophobically intimate," how it *forces* audiences to reflect on how they are working through difference. She describes: "In the most primal way, a show like this creates anxiety that claws at everyone who sees it." She also has emphasized how the performance capitalizes on its use of a "bare stage, turbulent technique, and spontaneous emotion" to move away from a more decorated and theatrical production. In this spontaneity of emotion, audiences experience new affective relations to disability, and theatre serves as a site for these important re-articulations.

Affective and Social Framing

Salverson (1999) describes the pattern Canadians have of being in-need of power dynamics of rescuers and victims as an "aesthetic of injury," the dangerous trap of assumed power identity relations. By assigning and idealizing roles, the human communities that exist through these representations are limited to how the world understands them through these roles, rather than through their multiple ways of being. Salverson (1999) provides context for this problem through a recounting of an experience facilitating a theatre exercise. The participants in this exercise, all activists working with refugees, were asked to create images with their bodies that illustrated situations in their line of work. Salverson's (1999) interest, at the time, was focused on how they would explore the theme of victimization:

> I noticed one group made an image of a group of people working, in which no individual seemed to differ in status. I was glad to have my theory proved wrong, and made the comment, "this is kind of nice, I can't tell who the refugee is." Immediately the group appeared upset, and rearranged the image to create a victim in the centre who looked lost and had people around him reach out with helping hands. The group looked at me and smiled, as if to say, "isn't that better?"

Salverson's key concern was the participants' quick reaction to re-represent the image of the refugee as a victim (i.e., the "helping hands"). A parallel to this victim representation exits with respect to how disabled people are represented as being in need or victims of their own bodies.

The assumed inherent emotional lens used to perceive human communities like refugees and disabled people is injurious. Describing her own challenges as a theatre facilitator, Salverson (1999) writes:

> My assumption about what must be testified to by refugees, and what Canadians ought to hear, can drive my theatre process perhaps more in the direction of what refugees suffer than of how they survive, or of exposing difficulty before accounts for accomplishment (paragraph 4).

Salverson's words are a call to unlearn how we imagine the world as Canadians, and the roles we give to others (such as *those that need fixing* and *those that are fixers*). She poses the following questions: "[…] what is this script, where does it come from, and what does it have to do with theatre and pedagogy?" (paragraph 3). How does one move beyond these static images of heroes, victims, saints, and criminals?

Different emotions become *seemingly* stuck to different communities. I use the word *seemingly* to emphasize that emotions are never static, but rather are in constant movement. Ahmed (2004) explains that emotions "*shape* the very surfaces of bodies," which occurs through "the repetition of actions" (p. 4). Some of these actions include the orientations we have to bodies—whether *towards* or *away* from others (p. 4). In addition, "[…] emotions become attributes of bodies as a way of transforming what is 'lower' or 'higher' in bodily traits" (Ahmed, 2004, p. 4). This process is the foundation for the orientations of *awayness* and *towardness,* inspired by feelings of affection/disgust, comfort/discomfort, safety/unsafety, love/hate, happiness/sadness, safe/abandonment, etc.

Ahmed (2004) argues that emotions "move through movement" and "circulate objects" in such a way that they become *sticky* and "saturated with affect" (p. 11). This stickiness shapes the surfaces of bodies, and builds tensions over time, particularly when bodies are *repeatedly* treated in a certain way for years (i.e., "the repetition of actions"). Imagine wrapping tape around your hand with the adhesive side facing outwards. Imagine pressing that tape on another person's body over a period of time, and the residue of the tape sticking to their bodies—their arms, legs, thighs, chest. Something visceral with a sense of violation arises when envisioning this. Ahmed's (2004) conception shifts the "inside out" and psychological model of emotions to become more "outside in" and cultural (p. 11). The relationships of towardness and awayness make humans "objects of feelings" and fix certain bodies as "'having' certain characteristics" (p. 11). The affectivities that are produced by the circulation of emotions consequently relate to how human communities are socially perceived and treated.

Some of these social consequences emerge in the stigmatization of certain communities. According to Goffman (1990), *stigma* is an attribute that positions an individual as different from others, whereby they are "reduced in our minds from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one" (p. 3). When these attributes are in full force, the stigma is perceived as a "failing, a shortcoming, a handicap" and "*not quite human*" (pp. 3, 5, emphasis mine). This kind of stigmatization prompts emotions of *awayness* from some human communities. These emotional responses are complicated by the degree to which the stigma(s) is/are visible and known. For example, Goffman has described three categories of stigma:

1. Abominations of the body (e.g., physical deformities);
2. Blemishes of individual character (e.g., homosexuality); and
3. Tribal stigmas (e.g., race and religion).

Goffman (1990) refers to those who do not belong or are unaffected by these categories as "normal" (p. 5). Yet, there is also the contention of those that pass as normal. In the case of an artist with a less visible or invisible disability, the issue of disclosure may arise, and if so "to whom, how, when, and where" (Goffman, 1990, p. 42). If a disabled artist decides not to disclose, they are at risk of constantly normalizing themselves in relationship to their surroundings. These practices of passing reinforce awayness to disabled bodies and identities. Passing also fixes aesthetic standards with respect to what kind of bodies are more "normal or desired" than others (Siebers, 2006, p. 101). Furthermore, someone may choose to correct or repair their body so to be, or seem to be, more normal. Siebers (2006) raises the question: "How can these individuals imagine themselves in the world without feeling ashamed?" (p. 69). As an extension of Ahmed's (2004) theory, I ask: How can human relationality move beyond assumed inherent towardness and awayness of different bodies and human communities? Sandahl (2002) describes how disabled people are realizing that their "subject experiences of impairment are an untapped resource" and that not sharing their stories is another form of oppressing those differences (p. 22).

Emotions are not fixed; "emotions also open up futures, in the ways they involve different orientations" (202). However, before re-establishing a new relationship to these norms, we must really understand how they emerge. Ahmed offers the feeling of "comfort" as a useful way to understand the social construct of normativity. The feeling of comfort is often associated to that experience of “sinking into a comfortable chair” (Ahmed, 2004, p. 148). There is a relationship between how you encounter this object- the squishy feeling of the lived-in pillows, the softness of the chair’s fabric, the relaxed feeling as your head hits the back of the chair, etc. Your body relaxes and you *sink* your muscles and physicality entirely into this object that fits you and your needs. For Ahmed (2004), the process of “sinking” is what is important here:

> One fits, and by fitting, the surfaces of the bodies disappear from view. The disappearance of the body is instructive: in feelings of comfort, bodies extend into spaces, and spaces extend into bodies. The sinking feeling involves a seamless space, or a space where you can’t see the “stitches” between bodies. (p. 148)

But what if the chair did not fit some bodies? What if the chair was set in a space where many could not even enter? This sinking feeling is not available to such bodies; to disabled bodies. This is the feeling of discomfort, which, as Ahmed describes, queer bodies feel in our heterosexualized world: “Discomfort is a feeling of disorientation: one’s body feels out of place, awkward, unsettled” (Ahmed, 2004, p. 148). When comparing this argument against Sandahl’s notion of neutrality, a strong framing is revealed in what ways the disability community is socially and culturally excluded. Spaces are not fitted for certain bodies, the same way bodies are not fitted for certain spaces.

The arts activism of disabled artists has ignited new affective orientations to bodies and communities. Salverson (1999) prompts her readers to reflect on the kind of assumptions they make about the communities with which they are working: “Within what kind of obligation do I examine them?” (paragraph 5). As researchers and theatre facilitators, how can we re-represent these conversations and problematic pedagogies built on assumptions? In addition, Salverson (1999) has reconsidered what “artistic forms and pedagogical practices” can *change the script.* This change can begin with asking the questions, which Ahmed (2004) has so eloquently posed: “Why is social transformation so difficult to achieve? Why are the relations of power so intractable and enduring, even in the face of resistance?” (p.11–12). Artists play a huge role in creating strategies, in particular in the way they re-represent the world in their creative work. The work of my study participants is a constant attempt to challenge/counter/complicate the emotional framings of disabled artists. However, the task of finding a legitimate cultural space for disabled artists in Canadian theatre has not been easy. Their work challenges binary representations of disability, and open up disabled bodies and artmaking to multiple perspectives.

Disability and New Dramaturgies

Historically, dominant theatrical depictions of disability have been framed through medical and moral models: as impaired bodies compared to the normality of other characters, as inspirational to other nondisabled characters, and/or as representing evilness (Lewis, 1998; Sandahl, 2008). Narratively, disabled characters have "overcome" storylines, such as coping through the hardships of disability or enduring the challenges of rehabilitation (e.g., learning how to walk again). However, most commonly, these productions were written by nondisabled playwrights, and the disabled characters were played by nondisabled actors. Sandahl (2008) describes the practice of nondisabled actors playing disabled characters as "cripping up," which echoes the "outdated practice of white actors 'blacking up' to play African American characters […]," or in more general terms, the practice when "an actor is cast to play a character from a less dominant social position" (p. 235). Consequently, as Lewis (1998) suggestes, nondisabled playwrights and theatre practitioners feel that they are the experts about disability and staging over actual members of the disability community:

> The nondisabled theatrical practitioner often feels he or she knows better than the disabled artist about what is the correct approach to this uncomfortable but irresistible subject—the dramaturgical equivalent of the well-meaning bystander who insists on helping the blind subway traveler by pulling him or her by the cane toward an unwanted destination.

Rosemarie Garland Thompson (1997) argues, "Those of us with disabilities are supplicants and minstrels, striving to create valued representations of ourselves in our relations with the nondisabled majority" (p. 23; also cited in Lewis, 1998). Moreover, in their striving to create relations with nondisabled audiences, Lewis (1998) remarks that some disabled playwrights still fall in the "trap" of writing works that celebrate, "Hey, I'm a human being too." This kind of positioning of disability diminishes disability culture, and often encourages people to understand disability as some sort of hardship or human condition that everyone has. Recently, the new dramaturgical approaches that disabled artists have taken onstage have enriched the ways to witness and encounter disability culture. New disability theatre, as Sandahl (2008) argues, "aims to explore the lived experience of disability, rather than the usual dramaturgical use of disability as a metaphor for nondisabled people's sense of outsiderness" (p. 226). Disability, in this framing, is generative and valued versus limited to a tool to better represent the privilege of other communities and characters. New generations of disabled artists—whether as theatre makers, playwrights, or actors—have shifted disability culture onstage from the tragedy of the individual to the cultural problem of a society "that makes participation impossible due to architectural and attitudinal barriers" (Lewis, 1998). A constant effort is ongoing to deconstruct the social constructions of disability, "which includes a self- conscious claiming and fostering of community" (Lewis, 1998). One strategy is the acknowledgement of the intersectionality of identities and the complexity of disabled people with respect to gender, sexuality, race, and/or religion.

Lewis (1998) and Sandahl (2008) reference the work of John Belluso as a model for deconstructing the social constructions of disability. An American playwright, Belluso, completed an MA in Dramatic Writing at the New York University Tisch School of the Arts. Lewis (1998) outlines the ways that Belluso employs "double and triple identities" to ensure audiences have a "difficult time reducing the story to the dominant narrative of disability-triumph over tragedy." Sandahl (2008) extendeds this point by arguing that Belluso's work represents disability and impairment as "a *generative* source of knowledge that reveals unjust social systems of power at work" (p. 228). Belluso's play *Pyretown*, for example, follows the complex lives and relationships of Louise, a divorced and depressed mother of three living on welfare cheques, and Harry, an attractive and intelligent young man and wheelchair user as a result of a childhood accident. The two characters form an intimate but not romantic relationship after crossing paths in an emergency room when Louise was there to support her sick daughter. The two connect and help to care for/console one another "for a brief and intense interlude before their paths diverge."[57] Sandahl (2008) describes how *Pyretown* reminds audiences that:

> […] disability is a constant set of negotiations. Like the characters in Pyretown who must make sacrifices in this imperfect world, the production made sacrifices that ultimately clarified for us, added to our knowledge of, the always complex process of living life with a disability. (p. 236)[58]

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[57] See http://www.dramatists.com/cgi-bin/db/single.asp?key=3649.

[58] This quote also extends from Sandahl's own working through of seeing a nondisabled actor play a disabled character. In this section she describes her frustration, but also dialogue with the director whom shared with her the difficulty of finding a disabled actor that could play the part.

Disabled playwrights and actors instigate new understandings of disability onstage, and complicate the binary representations of the disabled community.

These re-oriented dramaturgical approaches loosen the prior sticky affectivities of disabled bodies, and provide new frameworks of identification. From a feminist theoretical perspective, the new disability theatre embodies two tendencies: a) a strategic constructionist approach whereby stigma is removed and differences are attacked and de-hierarchized and b) a strategic essentialist approach whereby differences and experiences are emphasized, and calls are made for a community "based on claimed difference" (Thompson as cited in Lewis, 1998). With respect to this embracing of identity politics and differences, Sandahl (2008) argues that the new disability theatre provides audiences with an opportunity to make "imaginative identifications" across the differences between themselves and the characters. Henz (2000) indicates the importance of this critical approach:

> […] we should not work toward *imaginary* identifications of ourselves with others, in which we make claims about our "sameness" without regard for the real differences in our experiences and lives, rather we should work toward *imaginative* identifications of ourselves with others, in which we interrogate our own experience, seeking points where common ground or empathy might be actively constructed between us while remaining conscious of the real differences between experiences and lives (p. 248; also cited in Sandahl, 2008, p. 234).

The danger of valuing sameness over differences is that we may attempt to embody the position of someone else with an entirely different experience of the world. Sameness privileges neutrality, and erodes the diversity of human beings. The objectification of this neutrality is based only on "*my* knowledge, experience always *my* experience; the object is encountered only in so far as it exists *for me*" (Davies, 1996, p. 41, emphasis mine).

The work of disabled artists challenges this *neutrality*, and crystalizes how the world is shared and *co*-experienced. I have learned that the performance of any human body is not neutral, implicitly or explicitly, and so disabled artists always will be needed politically and absolutely to dispel the discrimination against their communities. Theatre is a necessary medium to counter injurious aesthetics, and it encourages self-reflexivity about our stance in the world. Dramaturgies emerging from the new disability theatre movement ignite processes of tenderness. Encounters (i.e., face-to-face), as contextualized by Levinas, prompt the realization that "I share the world, that it is not my unique possession and I do not like this realization. My power and freedom are put into question. Such a situation is ethical because a lot depends upon how I respond" (Davies, 1996, p. 48).

Innovating New Collaborations

Tenderness emerges in how the presence of disabled artists enhance theatre making, and in the innovative ways that they productively collaborate with other disabled and nondisabled artists. New affectivities emerge in the interactions that prompt re-evaluations of what it means to meaningfully work with disabled artists. Theatre Terrific is a company rigorously dedicated to exploring how diverse artists can collaborate and how this collaboration can impact theatre making in Canada. In 2006, Theatre Terrific and Realwheels—another Vancouver-based company that is dedicated to creating and producing "performance that deepens the audiences' understanding of the disability experience"—collaborated on the Classical Project ("Realwheels—Our Mission and History"). The two companies, along with the Pound of Flesh Theatre, "a professional theatre company" dedicated to "producing alternative interpretations of classical stories" ("Pound of Flesh—About Us"), shared funding for this project, which focused on how to adapt and create new work based on the classics, for what they called a "mixed ability cast." Unfortunately, the project did not reach a final fruition as Johnston (2012) notes:

> […] an initiative that ultimately fractured at least partially due to different visions for disability theatre. Sanders has suggested that the collapse of the shared project demonstrated that the city could support different kinds of disability theatre practice. (p. 37)

Footage from some of the sessions between the partners was posted in 2007 on the Theatre Terrific YouTube page. This video was one of my first introductions to the company after learning about them. The video features Roy Perron, Alex Edwards, and Lianne Crowe from Theatre Terrific and members of the Pound of Flesh Theatre reading abbreviated parts from William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. During the short video, disabled artists and nondisabled artists sit closely together, playing the roles of the iconic tragic lovers, Romeo and Juliet. Below is my own performance description of this video, highlighting the sensual relationalities emerging between the two actors:

> *Crowe, an actress with cerebral palsy, sits upright in a chair. She faces another young male actor playing the Romeo to her Juliet. Other participants of the Classical Project sit*

around the two actors, seemingly leaning into the scene, eager to learn something from this pair's reading. The camera moves in a semicircle as Crowe slowly recites lines. Behind Crowe, we are able to get a glimpse of Uchatius who is holding Crowe's lines for her. Crowe's hands rest calmly on her thighs. "Romeo," she takes a deep breath in through her nose, "Romeo," another breath. As she breathes in, we see her shoulders simultaneously raise and lower as she breaths out. There is a stillness to the space, and full concentration on Crowe's performance. She continues, "Where for art thou," breathes in, and on her breath out, softly says, "Romeo." Her breaths in between her lines brings a delicacy to her performance, and an added intimacy to her chemistry with her scene partner.

A white actress with long brown hair tied up in a ponytail kneels beside the wheelchair of Perron who is playing Romeo. Our Juliet looks tenderly at Perron, and places her right hand lovingly around his cheek, and the tips of her fingers touch his wispy white hair. "Wilt thou be gone," pause, "It is not yet day." The entire time Perron's scene partner looks at him with an infatuated gaze. Before reciting his lines, Perron takes a moment—the pause allows the two actors to look at their individual scripts. Uchatius is holding Perron's lines. Perron's body leans towards the left side of his wheelchair. Although it's hard to know if this move is due to how his body weight is sitting in his chair, or whether it was intentional on his own accord, his head is softly supported by his scene partner's hand. He begins his lines, "I must be gone," and brings his left arm to Juliet's left cheek. The camera moves behind Juliet to give a better view of Perron's performance. He continues, "I must be gone, and live, or stay, and die." He takes his time with the lines. Juliet's body almost hugs Perron's wheelchair, which projects a compelling visual—the two actors connected by their hands against each other's cheeks. The subtle and still physicality of their exchange heightens the affectionate words of their characters.

Throughout the video, the participants comment on the challenges of the new territory of working together. At the beginning of the video, Crowe describes her own feelings around the project's progress: "I feel with the project that when anyone starts a new project they take baby steps, baby steps. I feel like we are not even walking, we're just crawling. We're in new territory." When initially reading this quote, a reader might sense disappointment in Crowe, but when she said this in the video, she almost seemed intrigued and artistically curious, particularly when she described the project as *new territory*. She smiled with accomplishment. During another segment, Uchatius described her own interest in watching the pairs:

> What's great is the actors, you know the two sets of actors, if that's what we need to call them; I think they could be as one, but they each, each of them had to learn a different language with each other. They had to build bridges so that they could communicate. They had to do that, so that's what they were doing this week. We're building bridges.
>
> Perron expresses his desire for the project to lead to a final production that would present Shakespeare's work "in a way that nobody else has ever seen it.

Although this was an initial introduction to the work of Theatre Terrific, I recall feeling absolutely fascinated by how the company used disability as a means to open up ways to explore new forms of theatrical expression. For example, the deep breaths that invited new affectivities into Crowe's voice, and the intimate ways that Perron's wheelchair became a tool for affection highlighted how the members of Theatre Terrific were creating important new methods of theatre making in Canada that did not privilege one kind of performance style. This *new territory* was exploring how actors could learn from the training of disabled artists from Theatre Terrific, which was situating disability as a powerful way to improve the standards of Canadian theatre.

The involvement of disabled artists invites new ways to experiment with how to imagine characters and their aesthetic opportunity. Johnston (2016) describes the affective and the effect disabled artists have on the performing arts industry:

> With the active and self-governing involvement of people with physical and mental differences in the performing arts, there is a chance that the more truly representative visions of the world will more effectively lead the world to a greater maturity, tolerance and safekeeping. Disabled performers, like other minority artists, are creating their impact, either as independent operators within the mainstream or by provoking consciousness-raising through organized disability theatre. (p. 58)

In this respect, performance ultimately is perceived as a means to create new relationships to bodies previously held to limiting emotional frames, which can engage the potential of tenderness. Moreover, the process of tenderness has social implications with respect to the affective re-articulations of minority communities. Particularly through performance, tenderness is political and personal.

Performance and Ethics

According to Boal (1979):

> […]theatre is a weapon. A very efficient weapon. For this reason one must fight for it. For this reason the ruling classes strive to take permanent hold of the theatre and utilize it as a tool for dominion. In doing so, they change the very concept of what 'theater' is. But the theater can also be a weapon for liberation. For that, it is necessary to create appropriate theatrical forms. Change is imperative. (p. ix)

As Boal (1985) argues, the theatre is not the place to represent the "correct path" for "genuine political solutions"; rather, it is "a laboratory for social experimentation" (as cited in Auslander, 1993, p. 130). The theatre is an "aesthetic space" where knowledge is gained not through reason, but through the senses (Feldhendler, 1994, p. 94). In this aesthetic space, actors and audiences are different people, but they also "coincide in the same person" (Boal, 1995, p. 19). Participants in the theater (actors and spectators) can engage in a space that is produced by the same plasticity as dreams—both fiction and reality at the same time (Boal, 1995; Feldhendler, 1994). Although performing in the "here and now," actors embody themselves in a "concrete dream" (Boal, 1995, p. 21). Rather than focusing on final presentations or certain outcomes, Boal puts emphasis on play-building and liberation in process-based work (Cohen-Cruz, 1994, p. 112). From a post-Foucauldian perspective, the body has never escaped an ideological encoding or from being "structured" by discourse (Auslander, 1994, p. 130). Nevertheless, disabled artists produce images and aesthetics that shift perspectives on theatre making and what being an artist means. By using their disabled bodies in the performance arts, disabled artists can create a new vocabulary of aesthetic language.

Community performance and theatrical explorations can open new pathways for understanding disabled bodies and lead to a relearning of what it means aesthetically to experience these bodies. Disabled performers are aware how audiences perceive them, and so they use performance as a way of allocating "new quarters" around disability (Kuppers, 2003, p. 3). Kuppers (2003) asserts how performance is a place for disabled bodies:

> My condition isn't fixed… Sharing the reality of pain with one another, finding a language for it, is highly problematic, something that the medical regime is finally recognizing. Struggling to find and place pain allowed many disabled performers to develop a complex relation to language and bodily fantasies (p. 7).

This performance space cannot be only about the explorations of disabled artists, but is relevant for other communities as well. A need exists for a space in which all communities can explore the tensions between them, and thus articulate new knowledges and experiment with their social positionings (Conroy, 2009, pp. 5, 12).

Boal (1995) refers to this space as a *metaxis*, "the state of belonging completely and simultaneously to two different worlds: the image of reality and the reality of the image" (p. 43). Although Boal is considering this idea within the context of an applied theatre practice (such as Image Theatre),[59] the concept of metaxis is very applicable to any form of performance. Performance, particularly by disabled artists, can be a site of ethical deliberation about human relationality and community. A metaxis is an aesthetic dimension and site where tenderness is ignited. Linds (2006) describes metaxis as an in-between state whereby knowledge is attained in each moment rather than as a pre-existing event (p. 114–115), which suggests that knowledge is an experience in constant motion. This way of meaning-making offers "new possibilities for action and knowing" in a "shifting terrain of in-between-ness" (Linds, 2006, p. 115). The livelihood of this space comes from an "ethical encounter" that is reliant on how open we make ourselves to it (Salverson, 2001, p. 77). Levinas (1961) situates this ongoing, dynamic form of knowledge in the ethical "face-to- face" encounter. In this encounter, ideas are not fixed—they always are open to transcendence. Levinas (1961) suggests that: "The transcendent is the sole *ideatum* of which there can be only an idea in us; it is infinitely removed from its idea, that is, exterior, because it is infinite" (p. 49). Through this process of aesthetic relations and "face-to-face" encounters, participants move beyond the objectification of the Other. Buber (1958) explains this process as the transformation of the notion of "It" into the "Thou." Paralleling Levinas' "face-to-face" encounter, "Thou" cannot be experienced nor can it be isolated as an entity, yet the way individuals come to know "Thou" is through "everything" (Buber, 1958, p. 11). The present becomes "continually present, and enduring" (Buber, 1958, p. 13) much like the aesthetic plasticity of Boal's metaxis. "Face-to-face" encounters prompt individuals to be

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[59] At the beginning of my doctoral research, I was unaware of how many theatre groups included disabled artists, particularly in Quebec. So, initially, I had planned to create an integrated theatre collaborative that included disabled and nondisabled artists, and I wanted to use Boalian applied theatre practices to explore the complexities around oppression and empowerment. One of the most influential exercises for my original doctoral project idea came from Image Theatre. This exercise focuses on the valuing of physical expression over the spoken word, whereby participants use their bodies to reflect their feelings and experiences about a theme. They enact a series of frozen images with their bodies: a *real image* (the current state of a situation), a *transitional image* (transitional state of how to resolve the situation), and an *ideal image* (the ideal state of the situation) (Feldhendler, 1994, p. 98).

reflective of their own stance in the world in accordance with others who are different from them.

Frazee (2005) discusses the ways in which Deaf and disability arts can be a site of aesthetic displacement for many audiences:

> It provokes and stimulates us with the roller-coaster force of the unsettled, the unfamiliar, the uncomfortable—opening audiences to the thrill of discovery, revelation and awe and, perhaps most importantly, the *displacement* of fear that can hold us captive in small and restrictive categories. (p. 11)

This process of *defamiliarization* centers and ignites the process of *tenderness*. These processes are not always comfortable and positive, and they can emerge and feel differently to each person. Often, the process of tenderness can be jarring and surprising, and often, it continues to reverberate, like an *ethical poking*, that constantly shifts our framing of the world, a process of undoing and unlearning how we previously moved through the world.

Deformalizing Aesthetics

Cast member Aubin's work during *Portraits* was one of these ethical pokings. During one exercise, Uchatius asked each cast member to fall to the floor on a count of eight. She asked those members working from a wheelchair to merely fall as low as they could. While doing this exercise, Aubin unbuckled himself from his chair and began to roll around on the floor. When this first happened, many of us were concerned about whether this was a safe position for Aubin. However, after Aubin and his caregiver reassured us it was safe, we continued the exercise. Aubin continued to surprise us during a group dialogue—in one instance, he spontaneously left the circle and positioned himself near Naugler to help him answer some of the questions being posed to him. He typed to Naugler, "I can read your mind." I was surprised by my own reactions to these moments, so afterwards, I asked myself, "Why was I so surprised watching Aubin move out of his chair? What am I not acknowledging about myself right now, or more importantly, about Aubin?" For Aubin, these moments of knowing were possible because he was in a space in which he could explore the limitations of his body and challenge the working environment of the physical space and his colleagues' expectations of his physicality. Aubin's interaction with Naugler ultimately led to a beautiful moment in the final *Portraits* script:

Erica enters CS (spell ou the first time; then use CS thereafter) ***very slowly*** *pushing Kieran Naugler. They stand in front of the empty portrait CS. Erica sees that it is blank. All the performers on the sidelines repeat what Erica said.*

Everyone: That's not right!

Alex looks up from her drawing and stands up.

Alex: I can fix that!

Everyone: Fix it!

Alex takes the painting to her easel and begins to draw Kieran Naugler's face.

Alex: Give me a few minutes.

Everyone: A few minutes.

Pause

Tyson enters SR and positions himself beside Kieran Naugler.

Tyson: I'll wait with you. Want to help. That OK?

Kieran Naugler: Yeah.

As Edwards drew Naugler's portrait, Aubin stayed beside Naugler. During this period, Kempf describes her self-portrait (which I explained in Chapter 4: Slowness). *In this description, she describes her face as being similar to water.*

Duran: Something like this?

SOUND

Duran leads the entire offstage cast who stand and make a water soundscape with background water sounds playing.

Tyson talks to Kieran Naugler.

Tyson: I am a mind reader. I can read your mind.

Kieran: No!

Tyson: Yes I can. You are Kieran Peter Aaron Naugler You were born December 14, 1990 in New Westminster, BC. You graduated from Riverside Secondary Highschool in 2008.

Your grad date was a gorgeous girl. Her name was Cassy Beaudet.

Kieran laughs.

Entire cast: Wow!

Tyson: Kieran played the recorder and the piano really good. Kieran did cartwheels and karate moves like in the Olympics. Kieran did a fantastic presentation after his cartwheels. Let's do it!

Duran: Yeah. One, two, three! *Everyone does a loud presentation.* **Everyone:** Tadaaaaaaaaa!

Kieran laughs.

Tyson: Kieran loves, loves, loves music and gory movies. He has seen every gory movie ever made.

Kieran: No!

Tyson: Now for the big secret.

Everyone: Shhhhhhhhhhhhhh.

Tyson: Kieran Peter Aaron Naugler went to a Beyonce concert. He likes sexy girls. He's wearing his favorite Playboy shirt.

Kieran laughs and tries to kick Tyson. **Everyone:** Oh oh! Sexy. You wicked boy! **Alex:** Hey! What about Kieran's portrait?

Alex enters carrying Kieran's portrait and places it on CS shelf. Daryl enters/signs and hugs Alex.[60]

During this scene, Aubin's role of playing the physical voice for Naugler sets up interesting dramaturgical protocols of support and accessibility. However, the physical voice of Aubin is also represented through the use of his assistive communication device. There is also the action of Edwards painting the self-portrait for Naugler to ensure his inclusion. Aubin leads the action of the scene, offering a different perspective of the representation of vocality and physicality onstage.According to Sandahl (2002), "If disabled bodies were to participate fully in our theatres, we would not only alter the ideology of our performing space, but we would serve a model for change to the larger social order" (p. 24).

In *Disability Theatre and Modern Drama: Recasting Drama*, Johnston (2016) explored the role of disability in advancing the understandings of modern drama. Invigorated by the work of Tobin Siebers, Johnston (2016) describes the ways in which accessibility is not an accommodation but a generative invitation to create new aesthetic values:

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[60] This section of *Portraits* is from the final script, which Uchiatius shared with me.

> Aesthetic value may be felt in terms of who gets to attend the theatre or not, whose sensory experiences are privileged in the theatre or not, who has been able to receive theatre training to take on professional roles or not, who is cast or not, who finds their bodily experiences shared onstage or not, who finds such stage offerings resonant with their own bodily experience or not, and who finds beauty in the theatre or not. (p. 2)

Sandahl (2002) describes when she first understood the phenomenological dimensions of disability after returning from a backpacking trip in Europe. As she was describing her journey, and showing pictures of it, to her family, she felt disappointed when she realized they were bored. However, her father began to see her photos in a different way:

> Without looking up, he said he saw something odd in my photos […] He looked and looked and turned my rendition of the Eiffel tower around in his rough farmer hands […] He said he was seeing Europe through my eyes. He rifled the stack, laying the photos side by side. He pointed out that my photographs of people and things were all angled upwards. Since he is 6'3", and I am 4'10" (on a "good day…with my shoes on), he was not used to seeing people's chins instead of the tops of their heads. He pointed out that some buildings and monuments seemed to tower and tilt in ways he had not seen before. He suggested that because I walk with a swinging gait and often lean when I stand, my photos were shot from this low, off-center vantage point […] My dad simply said, "This is how Carrie sees the world." (Sandahl, 2002, pp. 17–18).[61]

Although not intentional, Sandahl's style of photography illustrates how disabled artists can bring a new form to artistic practices, which is not only about the stories they tell onstage, but also the *way* they share these stories and perform them. Johnston's (2016) page 2 quote as cited above also raises the issue that aesthetics are not simply about the appearance of something, and from a disability theatre perspective, aesthetics also are about the relationships between artists and audiences, and the accessibility and inaccessibility of performances and artistic processes. Thinking of practices of support and care in the aesthetics of disability theatre offers new ways of thinking about how bodies can appear and interact onstage, such as those moments of Aubin serving as Naugler's physical in the above scene. There are important reflections on how ayoung woman bending down to the level of a man in a wheelchair explores

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[61] Although this is a fairly long quote, I chose not to paraphrase Sandahl's words, since I felt it was a very personal moment in her life, and so to phrase it in my own words would not do it justice.

how to perform intimacy. These are example of how a disabled body innovates theatre and experiments with opening aesthetic forms in ways many of us have not imagined. Disability offers a "*reconfiguration* of theatrical space" (Sandahl, 2002, p. 22). Moreover, these reconfigurations animate tenderness and new understandings of theatre making and disability in Canada.

Finale

Your soul bursts through in moments of true tenderness
When the empathy just kind of swells
Up from nowhere.
You are there
— Gaelynn Lea, Breathe, You are Alive, 2018

Introduction

This dissertation has examined the affective and representational complexities of the creative work of disabled artists, particularly in the Canadian theatre. The main research question I posed for my doctoral research—How are disabled artists in Vancouver and Montréal creating new legacies of theatre-making that mobilize against ableism and accommodation culture in Canada?—was grounded in my fieldwork with my research participants: Theatre Terrific, Les Muses, and Les Production des pieds des mains. As an extension of this main research question, my conceptual terminologies—*atypique approach, slowness*, and *tenderness*—offer new ways of theorizing about the artistic legacies of disability theatre.

Atypique approach**: a creative approach that tries to include all artists in the fullest and most meaningful ways possible.** *Atypique*, which means *atypical*, in English is a word many Québec artists with unconventional bodies use to identify their creative work. This approach provides an important terminology and site for rethinking how to create more accessible and loving spaces that go beyond the theatre.

Slowness**: an important mode of perception that values human diversity.** *Slowness*, as a mobility and a concept, is a way to challenge turbo-capitalistic models that are both ablest and ageist. Slowness enables a reimagining of how we can re-engage with our senses and other humans. Slowness resists valuing only one kind of cognitive and mobility style, and welcomes multiple ways of moving and being in spaces.

Tenderness**: an ethical confrontation whereby fixed understandings of the world are loosened and complicated.** The experience or process of tenderness disrupts how we approach differences and human diversities by *unsticking* prior assumed affectivities of bodies. Tenderness is personal, political, and philosophical. Theatre, as a medium, extends an invitation to begin this process.

These concepts, which have emerged and extend from other cultural movements and histories, are philosophical ways of speaking of, and affective modes of understanding, what disabled artists are creating and fighting for. This dissertation research examines the conversations that artistic directors like Uchatius, Nagrani, and Schwartz have been engaged in since the beginning of their leadership positions—the fight for the cultural legitimacy of disabled artists, particularly in Canada's professional performance industry. In the following sections, I describe the legacies my participants are provoking and the ways they are undoing binary understandings of disability and ablest approaches to theatre-making.

Legacy 1: New Wave of Professional Theatre

During the early years of the disability arts movement, particularly in the US and Canada, art groups supporting disabled people were primarily built either from a therapeutic platform and/or managed from an activity and/or recreational centre. As outlined in Chapter 3: Setting the Scene, the focus of these groups was to build and promote a sense of solidarity among the disability community after the de-institutionalization movement. After years of being confined and treated as less than human in asylums, such as Québec's Beauport Lunatic Asylum, the rehabilitation movement in the 1970s brought the emergence of new recreational groups, some of these being associated with the performing arts. Since many disabled people, particularly with cognitive disabilities, were looking for places of community and support, these groups offered an environment where they could develop their interests and perhaps find vocational training for developing professional skills. In the case of disabled artists, many of the art programs offered, however, were in the context of "art therapy." This is not to diminish the importance of such groups, since for many disabled artists (even today), these therapeutic programs were their first encounter with any form of artistic training.

Arts Centers, such as those established by the Katzs in the US in the mid 1970s, began to shift the approach of some of the art therapy programs. Art was and continues to be used as a means for disabled people to find self-expression and to communicate ideas, for example, the members of the Québec Folie/Culture group use arts as a means to re-represent mental health or"madness." The Art Centers more social approach to rehabilitation models has shifted the traditional medical understandings of disability to look more critically at societal barriers (e.g., inaccessible buildings). In addition, artistic activities at these centres do not condone any sense of competitiveness between their members due to their concern that it could risk rupturing the sense of community they are ethically invested in honouring. Although extremely important for providing the beginnings of some artistic training for disabled people, these centers do not foster a professional arts vocation program for disabled people who want to have full-time performance training careers. This was, and still is, the artistic void that inspired the creation of Les Muses, Theatre Terrific, and Les Productions des pieds des mains.

Schwartz, of Les Muses, pioneered an important professional performance training program unique in Canada for artists with cognitive disabilities. Students of Les Muses are artistically trained in accordance to the expectations of performance industry professionals and are held to a high level of performance quality. However, this high level is not necessarily determined by how they can fit into the professional performance arts, but more so, with respect to how they can use their original aesthetic ways of moving, speaking, and interpreting to engage casting directors and/or choreographers to see them differently. Although I would not say Les Muses creates a competitive environment for their students, teachers make them aware of the competitive nature of the industry. Students of Les Muses are provided with an accessible space to hone their skills with the support of their teachers, who also are experienced professional artists. Despite being at the Centre Champagnat, Les Muses' program does not work in an arts therapy context, nor rehabilitation or community programming. The core goal is to produce disabled artists who want to work and be recognized specifically for their performance talents. The program has proven to be highly successful with its students being cast in films like *Gabrielle*. Les Muses stands alone in the Canadian landscape as the only full-time professional performance training program for artists with cognitive disabilities.

The work of Les Production des pieds des mains and Theatre Terrific challenges binary ways of casting disabled artists. Although it is absolutely important to ensure that more disabled artists have opportunities to perform on Canadian stages, an even bigger need is to be critical of the ways this happens, particularly with respect to casting. As previously described in Chapter 4: *Atypique* Approach, it is rare for audiences to *genuinely* encounter disability onstage. In particular, wheelchair-user characters often emerge from a tragic story that causes them to be paralyzed, and this narrative follows them throughout the entire production. Also, there is the issue of nondisabled actors being cast as disabled characters, and garnering critical acclaim for their performances. These factors have led many disabled actors to feel unable to lead successful and artistically fulfilling careers in the performing arts. Nicolas Linnehan, artistic director of Identity Theatre Company in Astoria, New York recalls his own experience:

> Let's face it; working in theatre is hard, if not impossible at times. But to an actor with a disability the odds are even more stacked against you. A disabled actor often finds himself being considered for a number very small roles. Unfortunately, many directors don't want to take a risk by hiring an actor who is more different than the rest. How do I know this? Well I'm a disabled artist trying to break stereotypes. (Identity Theater)

Directors and choreographers like Nagrani and Uchatius, along with Adam Warren (co-director of *Stuffed)*, and atypique artists also are engaged with this labour. Les Productions des pieds des mains has made an ongoing effort to place disabled artists in roles that confront power relations between nondisabled people and disabled people. These confrontations are visceral and unsettling—as in the process of tenderness.

The principal dancers of *Eurêka,* Geneviève Morin-Dupont, Jean François Hupé, and Carl Hennebert-Faulkner—three artists with Down syndrome—portray film characters who end up being the ones with the power, as they manipulate a mechanical doll played by a nondisabled woman. Although not explicitly in Nagrani's artistic direction, when I watch the short contemporary dance film *Eurêka*, I see an impactful statement about taking back the power that, for so many years, was (and is still is in many parts of Canada) taken away from the disability community through institutional confinement. In the world of *Eurêka*, which Nagrani so compellingly creates, disabled people have the power and are the all-knowing. When confronted with this power reversal, audiences are asked to see the world from a different perspective and with new conditions. Also, having Morin-Dupont cast in the role of the young Marguerite in *Le Temps des Marguerites…à la folie ou pas du tout* creates an encounter with what it means to age and what it means to re-imagine representations of ageing in relationship to disability.

In comparison, Theatre Terrific casts from a multitude of disabled actors from diverse Deaf and disability communities. This company has no limit as to what kind of bodies are and are not creatively inclined. Uchatius, as current and most longstanding artistic director of the company, uses a multi-communicative approach in workshop processes to discover, with other company members, where a cast member will be best represented and dramaturgically be able to use their way of moving or communication to bring something to the piece, particularly in original Fringe Festival productions. Whether vocal or not, mobile or not, or able to memorize lines or not, Theatre Terrific puts forward work that artistically speaks to the needs of their members. This is particularly modeled in Chapter 6: Tenderness when one of their earlier partnerships, *The Shakespeare Project,* is described. Theatre Terrific always is exploring new modes of how to represent disabled artists onstage that move away from having disability as the core of the characters their artists are playing.

Echoing the words of Sandahl and Lewis, a new wave of professional disability theatre is creating new roles for disabled artists, roles they never had the opportunity to play before. In Québec, there is a real feeling of pushing the boundaries of representation and expectation of how to perceive artists with cognitive disabilities. For example, Theatre Terrific has engaged in provocative projects and workshops that make room for a conversation around visible disability diversity and differential mobilities onstage. An intersectionality of subjecthood exists in the ways these companies cast their members and embrace risks that do not comply with audience expectations: a woman with cerebral palsy playing Shakespeare's beloved Juliet; a woman with William syndrome engaging in sexual intimate scenes with her male lead; a man that uses a communicative assistance device playing a lead without needing to give the context of his device; a vision of the ideal of beauty portrayed by a young woman with Down syndrome. This is the vision of a new professional wave of theatre-making that is not just isolated to "disability theatre" alone.

Legacy 2: Atypique Aesthetics

At the core of this doctoral research is the continual challenge to counter neutrality. Dokumaci's (2018) notion of a *habitus of ableism*—"the seemingly *neutral* world" that only supports "the normate body, while putting others out of place"—creates the habit of affective *stickiness* that Ahmed situates in our orientations to different human communities. Orientations towards different bodies, such as the disabled body, become too comfortable in our everyday lives. We become too comfortable in the privileges of being able to mobilize our bodies in all spaces. We become too comfortable with encountering disability as inspirational, less than human, or an inconvenience. Dokumaci (2018) challenges the ways our movement in our environments and responses to bodies have become regulated and are in desperate need to be critiqued . This regulation , which I situate as neutrality as well, needs to be interrupted.

My dissertation, along with my participants, cite the theatre as an important place to do this kind of interrupting. Lewis (2006) notes that "For all time people have used theater as the first tool in articulating a community's life stories and making them a part of the universal experience" (p. x). Particularly for the disability community, the theatre is a site for what Johnston (2012) describes as a space to "talk back":

> Theatre is a particularly rich art form for study because of its capacity to generate focused, convivial, and sometimes inspirational forums in which bodies gather to perform and receive artistic expressions rooted in disability experience. In such settings, opportunities for bodies to "talk back" abound and it becomes difficult to disavow any particular body's materiality in aesthetic responses or discussions. These features are some of the most generative for challenging traditional aesthetics and stereotypes. (p. 12–13)

For members of the Québec disability artist community, this form of *talk back* has been mobilized by the atypique movement. This word *atypique* has generated a feeling of confidence among the disabled artist community as described in their responses to it in Chapter 4. Echoing Parent (2017) suggests that very little language exists in Québécois French that informs or ethically describes the discrimination disabled people face. Thus, from an initial linguistic perspective, the word *atypique* offers an alternative for French artists to identify beyond the phrase *artiste handicapée*.

Aesthetically, the atypique artistic movement has crystalized a multitude of ways of imagining unconventional bodies and experimental approaches to theatre-making. This form of experimentation is at the core of the creative work of groups like Les Productions des pieds des mains who have taken aesthetic risks in a mainstream theatre industry that often has been fearful of going against political correctness. Many industry theatre professionals remain fearful of even casting a disabled artist due to their lack of knowledge of how to place her/him in the artistic direction, or due to their inability to understand how to work with him/her. Artistic directors like Nagrani align their directional approaches to the atypical cognitive styles of the disabled artists with whom she works. The entire creative processes of Les Productions des pieds des mains relies on the non-normativity of their members, whether disabled or not, to create interesting productions that create newly imagined relationships to social issues.

The physical qualities and rhythms of disabled artists who work with Les Productions des pieds des mains are valued and used to improve the aesthetic originality of the company's choreography. This acceptance of difference also is an important social commentary on disability aesthetics—for example, the physical movements that disabled artists usually try to conceal, such as a tremor or lack of balance, become the basis for a provocative and inquisitive physical exploration to find relationality between actors and dancers onstage. What happens when a nondisabled artist embodies a disability aesthetic in a collective creation that is not situated in a disability simulation context? What happens when the physicality of movement is energized by a body that does not comply to traditional standards of a "dancerly body"? What is the impact on an audience that is unfamiliar with witnessing disability and theatre in such aesthetically experimental ways? This is environment in which the process of tenderness ignites, and shifts understandings onstage. Disability is invited to participate as an inventive tool to realize how bodies can re-encounter one another in ways less possible outside the theatre, not because these ways of encountering are impossible, but because they are difficult to imagine prior to witnessing them onstage. Atypique aesthetics offer a reimaging of how we can be in the world and understand subjectivity without the constraints of feeling as if we need to conform to some societal standard of intellectual or physical being. Atypique aesthetics are the crucial components we need to disorient our unethical affective relations to different human communities. Being uncomfortable is part of what is necessary to learn from and witness atypique aesthetics.

Legacy 3: Slow Pedagogies

Although none of my participants explicitly identified as having a slow practice in their work, it emerged during my participant-observations with them. Slowness emerges in the way space is used to create conversations in a multiplicity of communication styles: personalized sign language, poetry, self-portraits, movement exercises, assistive communication devices, improvised choreographies, and quiet moments sitting together. Unlike other companies that often value working in one assumed mutual shared pace, Les Muses, Theatre Terrific, and Les Productions des pieds des mains work with a diversity of temporalities—imperatively (with respect to crip time) and inclusively. Affiliated disabled artists creatively flourish in working conditions that thrive on cognitive diversity and differential mobilities. An understanding and acceptance exists that all bodies have temporal needs and ways of learning. Slowness is a platform on which to consider the complexity of diversity, space, and time.

The pedagogical models of slowness that my participants honour counter the fast-paced working conditions many of us endure every day. We have become self-regarded "workaholics." As Honoré (2005) recalls:

> My whole life has turned into an exercise in hurry, in packing more and more into every hour. I am Scrooge with a stop watch, obsessed with saving every last scrap of time, a minute here, a few seconds there. And I am not alone. Everyone around me—colleagues, friends, family—is caught in the same vortex. (p. 3)

This is "the human cost of turbo-capitalism"—existing "to serve the economy, rather than the other way around" (Honoré, 2005, p. 5). Long work hours, the cost of fastness, have affected our mental and physical health: "As we hurry through life, cramming into every hour, we are stretching *ourselves* to the *breaking point*" (Honoré, 2005, p. 5; emphasis mine). Particularly, those who work in academia are caught between "corporate time and the time conductive for academic work" (Berg & Seeber, 2015, p. 25). In the pursuit of working quickly and labour-intensively, we lose ourselves and our perception of our limits. We are less likely to meaningfully recognize our needs, let alone the needs of others. We lose sleep. We become sick. We miss the opportunities to find connections. Our ever-increasing speedy lifestyles have decreased our opportunities to understand the world and the diverse human communities around us. As Koepnick (2014) has pointed out, "we end up with ever less—less substance, less depth, less meaning, less freedom, less spontaneity" (p. 1). Our need and desire for speed diverts us from being responsive to the energies of the moment:

> *Our bodies need rest. Our bodies need calm spaces. Our bodies need care. Our bodies need other bodies for support. Our bodies need a hug. Our bodies need human intimacy. Our bodies need love. Our bodies need slowness. Our bodies need understanding. From ourselves. From others. Our bodies need us. Did I say our bodies need love? Our bodies need love. Our bodies* ***<u>need</u>*** *love.*

Although it is difficult to conclude that slowness is the solution to this problem, slow practices in theatre spaces re-engage our relationships to our senses. The collaborative breathing exercise that Theatre Terrific uses, as described in Chapter 5: Slowness, models an reinvigoration of new conditions of how to use our senses in relationship to others. We rarely teach the simple practice of breathing in our classrooms, how to breathe deeply and wholly with others, and to witness the many ways others breathe. Something I will never forget regarding my time with Theatre Terrific members is the lesson of "passing the rock"—breathing deeply, letting out a long sigh, and honouring the breaths of others. During the workshop processes of *Portraits* and *Stuffed* time was taken to *be in relation* with one another: through touch; through vocal explorations that created vibrational qualities throughout the space; through the visceral sound of pencils hitting paper while drawing our self-portraits of what our faces felt like to us. Tenderness ignites in these moments of relationality, of being present and valuing the collective breath, of disorienting understandings of difference.

Moving with Tenderness

This dissertation has been written with love, in community, and with tenderness for my participants. Our world is in need of the important legacies being created by disabled artists who work in groups like Les Muses, Theatre Terrific, and Les Productions des pieds des mains. The theatre is a place where disabled artists can offer new modalities of how to counter the troubling neutrality that hinders us from witnessing the diverse ways of being human. The affective disorientations encountered in disability aesthetics provide crucial sites for shifting the worldviews that many feel they have become culturally fixed in. Atypique aesthetics that experiment with subjecthood, relationality, and cultural production offer valuable and complex representations of disability culture. Atypique aesthetics open ways of moving in relationality together, with slowness, with tenderness, and with care for one another.

Remember to breathe, Love.
You are alive.
— Gaelynn Lea, Breathe, You are Alive, 2018

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Appendix 1 - Letter to Theatre Terrific

Dear Cast/Crew of PORTRAITS and family members/ caregivers,

My name is Ashley McAskill and I am a third year PhD student in the Communication Studies program at Concordia University in Montreal, Quebec. This summer I will be working with Theatre Terrific as an artistic associate for their Fringe Festival production “Portraits”. Susanna and I made contact over this past winter when I heard about the company and the exciting work they are doing. For my own doctoral work, I will be creating a similar group in Montreal, Quebec and will be using a lot of the exercises and workshop methods I am currently learning from the Theatre Terrific cast and crew. I am interested in bringing mixed-ability theatre to the forefront in Canadian theatre dialogues and scholarship. I am also interested in knowing the perspectives and experiences of all the cast and crew of this production.

Throughout the rehearsal/workshop process, I have been taking note on how my fellow ensemble members and I work together and the ways we overcome challenges together. You will also notice that I have given each cast/crew member a journal so that they may express their own feelings and ideas after each rehearsal (whether through drawing, writing, etc). With permission from themselves and other appropriate parties (parents or legal guardians), I would like to collect these journals just before I leave on September 7th. With the different entries and rehearsal experiences, I would like to present Terrific’s compelling work at different conferences and also add this material to my final doctoral work. My intention is to share the beautiful work Theatre Terrific has been producing and the profound affect it has on diversifying Canadian theatre at large.

Please find a letter of consent attached below outlining my research. If you agree to participate, please sign the consent forms and return it to the next rehearsal.
There are three forms: a) one for participants that have caregivers or legal guardians, b) one for caregivers or legal guardians, c) forms for participants without legal guardians.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and please, if you have any questions, feel free to email me @ mcaskia003@gmail.com or call my cell @ 514-924-4780.

Sincerely Yours, Ashley McAskill
Doctoral Student, Communication Studies Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec

Appendix 2 - Consent Form for *Portraits*

Consent form for Participants with Mixed Abilities:
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN *Participating in Mixed Ability Theatre Companies in Canada: Theatre Terrific*

Dear Cast/Crew of PORTRAITS and family members/ caregivers,

My name is Ashley McAskill and I am a third year PhD student in the Communication Studies program at Concordia University in Montreal, Quebec. This summer I will be working with Theatre Terrific as an artistic associate for their Fringe Festival production "Portraits". Susanna and I made contact over this past winter when I heard about the company and the exciting work they are doing. For my own doctoral work, I will be creating a similar group in Montreal, Quebec and will be using a lot of the exercises and workshop methods I am currently learning from the Theatre Terrific cast and crew. I am interested in bringing mixed-ability theatre to the forefront in Canadian theatre dialogues and scholarship. I am also interested in knowing the perspectives and experiences of all the cast and crew of this production.

Throughout the rehearsal/workshop process, I have been taking note on how my fellow ensemble members and I work together to overcome challenges. You will also notice that I have given each cast/crew member a journal so that they may express their own feelings and ideas after each rehearsal (whether through drawing, writing, etc). With permission from themselves and other appropriate parties (parents or legal guardians), I would like to collect these journals just before I leave on September 7th. With the different entries and rehearsal experiences, I would like to present Terrific's compelling work at different conferences and also add this material to my final doctoral work. My intention is to share the beautiful work Theatre Terrific has been producing and the profound affect it has on diversifying Canadian theatre at large.

Please find a letter of consent attached below outlining my research. If you agree to participate, please sign the consent forms and return it to the next rehearsal.

Why is Ashley asking me to participate?
Ashley is asking me questions because I am a valuable member of Theatre Terrific.

I understand Ashley is/will be:
-asking to journal my experiences and feelings after rehearsal in a book she will give me. I can draw, write, or express my thoughts in any way I want to. I will have to return my journal to Ashley before our first show on September 5th, 2013.
-working with my Theatre Terrific over the next month. She will write down moments during rehearsal when something special happens, like when we laugh, cry, talk, or have fun together. If there is something I do not want Ashley to write down, she will not.
-Once the rehearsals are done, Ashley may email me questions about my time with Theatre Terrific. This is called an "exit interview." She will ask me about my feelings during rehearsal: moments that I cried, laughed, made friends with my cast members, etc. If I do not want to answer a question, I do not have to. I can answer these questions any way I want to-over the phone, computer, or in person with Ashley.

-She will use my answers and journal entries in her school work and public papers/presentations. This means people that I do not know will see what I wrote.
-If I do not want Ashley to use my name, I can make up a pretend one for her to use.
-before any final papers or presenting at a conference, Ashley will send her work to me and I will have two weeks to give any changes to how she has quoted me. She will also erase anything I want.

If I use my real name:
I understand some people may not like my answers and they may say something about it. But I also understand that some people may like my answers and be very proud of what I have to say.

By signing my name I understand:
…that I do not have to answer any questions if I do not want to.
…Ashley is writing down what I am doing at rehearsal for her school work.
…that Ashley will keep my journal and review what I have said.
…that I can use a pretend name if I do not want to use my real name.
…that I can use my real name and people may like or not like my answers.
…that Ashley will use my answers in her school work and public papers.

I have read this paper and agree to the things I read above. NAME (please print)

SIGNATURE:

For all legal guardians- I have read the above conditions and give my consent for the individual I am responsible for to participate:
NAME (please print)

SIGNATURE:

If you have any questions please contact me at:
Name: Ashley McAskill
Department/School: Communication Studies of Concordia University Phone:1-514-924-4780 (long distance)
Email: mcaskia003@gmail.com

Appendix 3 - Consent Form for *Stuffed*

Consent form for Participants with Mixed Abilities:
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN *Participating in Mixed Ability Theatre Companies in Canada: Theatre Terrific*

Dear Cast/Crew of STUFFED and family members/ caregivers,

My name is Ashley McAskill and I am a third year PhD student in the Communication Studies program at Concordia University in Montreal, Quebec. This summer I will be working with Theatre Terrific as an artistic associate for their Fringe Festival production “STUFFED”. Last summer I also participated in Terrific’s 2013 Fringe Festival production “Portraits”. My work with last year’s crew and cast led to a publication in a Canadian theatre journal called *alt* and different conference papers. I am interested in bringing mixed-ability theatre to the forefront in Canadian theatre dialogues and scholarship. I am also interested in knowing the perspectives and experiences of all the cast and crew of this production.

Throughout the rehearsal/workshop process, I will take notes on the diverse and compelling work of the cast and crew. I will take notes on some of the more difficult and fun times in rehearsals and moments in the final shows I am able to see. I may also take pictures during the final rehearsals, however, will only use images of individuals with their consent. With the different entries and rehearsal experiences, I would like to present Terrific’s compelling work at different conferences and also add this material to my final doctoral work. My intention is to share the beautiful work Theatre Terrific has been producing and the profound affect it has on diversifying Canadian theatre at large.

Please find a letter of consent attached below outlining my research. If you agree to participate, please sign the consent forms and return it to the next rehearsal.

Why is Ashley asking me to participate?
Ashley is asking me questions because I am a valuable member of Theatre Terrific.

I understand Ashley is/will be:
-working with my Theatre Terrific over the next few weeks. She will write down moments during rehearsal when something special happens, like when we laugh, cry, talk, or have fun together. If there is something I do not want Ashley to write down, she will not.
-Once the rehearsals are done, Ashley may email me questions about my time with Theatre Terrific. This is called an “exit interview.” She will ask me about my feelings during rehearsal: moments that I cried, laughed, made friends with my cast members, etc. If I do not want to answer a question, I do not have to. I can answer these questions any way I want to-over the phone, computer, or in person with Ashley.
These interviews will be set according to my schedule.
-If I do not want Ashley to use my name, I can make up a pretend one for her to use.
-if I wish to see any of the work Ashley writes about with me in it, Ashley
-Ashley will not use any images of me without my or my legal guardians consent.
If I use my real name:

I understand some people may not like my answers and they may say something about it. But I also understand that some people may like my answers and be very proud of what I have to say.

By signing my name I understand:
…that I do not have to answer any questions if I do not want to.
…Ashley is writing down what I am doing at rehearsal for her school work.
…that I can use a pretend name if I do not want to use my real name.
…that I can use my real name and people may like or not like my answers.
…that Ashley will use my answers in her school work and public papers.

I have read this paper and agree to the things I read above. NAME (please print)

SIGNATURE:

For all legal guardians- I have read the above conditions and give my consent for the individual I am responsible for to participate:
NAME (please print)

SIGNATURE:

If you have any questions please contact me at:
Name: Ashley McAskill
Department/School: Communication Studies of Concordia University Phone:1-514-924-4780 (long distance)
Email: *mcaskia003@gmail.com*,

Appendix 4 - Consent Form for *Eurêka!*

Formulaire de consentement pour les participants avec des capacités mixtes: Consentement à participer : *Aux participants à des activités des compagnies de théâtre canadiennes pour Les Productions Des Pieds Des Mains*

Aux co-équipiers des Productions Des pieds Des mains pour le film de danse contemporaine en août 2014 ainsi qu'aux membres de la famille et aux soignants,

Mon nom est Ashley McAskill et je suis étudiante au doctorat dans le programme d'études en communications à l'Université Concordia à Montréal, Québec. Cette semaine, je vais travailler avec Les Productions Des pieds Des mains comme aide sur le film de danse contemporaine. Menka Nagrani, et moi, sommes rencontrés l'hiver dernier quand j'ai entendu parler de leur entreprise et du travail passionnant qu'ils font. Dans le cadre de ma thèse de doctorat, je fais des recherches sur les performances des groupes travaillant avec un éventail de personnes ayant des capacités mixtes. Je suis intéressée à mettre de l'avant des groupes tels que Les Productions Des pieds Des mains dans les discussions et les bourses relatives au domaine du théâtre au Canada. Je suis également intéressée à connaître les points de vue et les expériences de tous les participants et de l'équipe de tournage ayant participé à ce tournage.

Tout au long du le film de danse contemporaine, je prendrai des notes sur la façon dont les artistes, l'équipe de tournage et les autres directeurs artistiques travaillent ensemble et de quelle manière ils sont évalués artistiquement. Pendant le film de danse contemporaine, je vais avoir un dispositif d'enregistrement et une caméra afin de documenter l'interaction que j'ai avec certains d'entre vous pendant le tournage du vidéo. Je procède ainsi pour deux raisons : a) étant donné que mon niveau de compréhension du français n'est pas assez avancée, je veux enregistrer mes conversations avec vous afin de pouvoir vous citer correctement, et b) je pourrais utiliser quelques-unes des photos du le film de danse contemporaine lors de causeries et conférences. Veuillez noter qu'aucunes photos ne seront utilisées sans votre consentement préalable. Je souhaite présenter le travail que je vais faire avec vous lors de diverses conférences et aussi ajouter ce travail à ma thèse de doctorat finale. Mon intention est de partager le magnifique travail que les Productions Des pieds Des mains a produit et le profond effet que leur travail a sur la diversification du théâtre canadien.

Ci-joint se trouve une lettre de consentement décrivant mes recherches. Si vous acceptez de participer, veuillez s'il vous plaît lire et signer les formulaires de consentement et me les remettre lors du premier jour de tournage ou envoyez-moi par courriel en déclarant: « J'ai lu et compris le formulaire de consentement, et je donne mon plein consentement à ma participation dans votre projet. »

Pourquoi Ashley me demande-t-elle de participer?
Ashley me pose des questions parce que je suis membre à part entière des Productions Des pieds Des mains.

Je comprends qu' Ashley :
-travaillera avec Les Productions Des pieds Des mains cette semaine pendant le film de danse contemporaine. Elle prendra note par écrit de certains moments particuliers survenant au cours

du le film quand quelque chose de spécial se produit, comme lorsque nous rions, pleurons, parlons, ou avons du plaisir ensemble. S'il y a quelque chose que je ne veux pas qu'Ashley prenne en note, elle ne le fera pas.

-Une fois le film terminé, Ashley pourrait me poser des questions sur le temps que j'ai passé lors du film. C'est ce qu'on appelle une « entrevue de départ. » Elle me posera des questions sur les émotions que j'ai ressenties pendant le film de danse contemporaine: sur ce que j'ai aimé et pas aimé ou sur ce que j'ai trouvé amusant ou difficile. Si je ne veux pas répondre à une question, je n'ai pas à le faire. Je peux répondre aux questions de la façon qui me convient : par téléphone, par ordinateur ou en personne avec Ashley. Ashley sait s'adapter et me rencontrera au moment qui me conviendra.

-Ashley va utiliser des images, des citations et des images du tournage du film pour son travail scolaire et ses articles/présentations publiques. Cela signifie que des gens que je ne connais pas verront mon travail et entendront parler de mes expériences avec les Productions Des pieds Des mains.

-Si je ne veux pas qu'Ashley utilise mon vrai nom, je peux me créer un nom d'emprunt qu'elle pourra utiliser.

- Ashley ne se traduira pas mes paroles en anglais dans ses publications ou son travail final. Elle veillera à utiliser les mots que j'ai utilisés. Cependant, elle traduira mes paroles lors des présentations publiques réalisées devant un public anglophone à l'extérieur du Canada, en cas de besoin.

Si j'utilise mon vrai nom :
Je comprends que certaines personnes peuvent ne pas aimer mes réponses et ils peuvent dire quelque chose à ce sujet. Toutefois, je comprends aussi que certaines personnes peuvent aimer mes réponses et être très fiers de ce que j'ai à dire.

En apposant ma signature, je comprends :
... Que je n'ai pas à répondre à certaines questions si je ne veux pas.
... Ashley prend note par écrit de ce que je fais aux répétitions pour son travail scolaire.
... Que je peux utiliser un nom d'emprunt si je ne veux pas utiliser mon vrai nom.
... Que je peux utiliser mon vrai nom et les gens peuvent aimer ou ne pas aimer mes réponses.
... Qu'Ashley va utiliser mes réponses dans son travail scolaire et documents publics. J'ai lu ce formulaire et consent à ce que j'ai lu ci-dessus.

NOM (en lettres moulées)

____

SIGNATURE :

____

Pour les tuteurs – J'ai lu les conditions ci-dessus et je donne mon consentement à la participation de l'individu dont je suis responsable:

NOM (en lettres moulées)

____

SIGNATURE :

____

Si vous avez des questions, veuillez s'il vous plaît me contacter à : Nom : Ashley McAskill
Département/école : programme d'études en communication de l'Université Concordia
Téléphone : 1-514-924-4780 (longue distance) Courriel : mcaskia003@gmail.com

Appendix 5 - Proposal of Research for Les Muses

Proposal of Research

Ashley McAskill, PhD Student, Communication Studies Concordia University

“Art or Therapy?” is usually the question many audience members ask themselves when watching a performance with individuals with disabilities. As a young scholar who entered the disability and performance field three years ago, I have discovered this question has caused a lot of tension among drama therapists and artistic directors of theatre companies that work with artists with an array of abilities. One of the main reasons why this question continues to be a place of debate is due to the medicalized gaze such artists endure- with their *diagnoses* often taking the forefront of their work versus their artistic ability.

As a research and theatre artist myself, this question has propelled me to research the current state of ‘disability theatre’ (a name which I also question) in Canada. Although my field work is just beginning- the main research question I am beginning with is: **How is the creative work of artists with disabilities and mental illness being recognized, developed and encouraged in Canada?** Based on my own background as a theatre practitioner, I have decided to speak with theatre groups such as Theatre Terrific, Les productions des pieds, des main, and les Muses to explore this. What is important to note here is how this project goes beyond the theatre by addressing the stigmatized cultural identity and rights of people with disabilities in Canada and North America at large.

In the case of Les Muses, my interest lays in how it has become a rare training ground for artists with disabilities to hone their technical skills. I am also interested in what cultural standard and space Les Muses is setting for such artists to be able to work professionally inside and outside Montreal. All too often individuals with disabilities that partake in arts programs are left without work or other opportunities to practice once their sessions are over. Les Muses, however, has demonstrated through its partnerships with Joe Jack et John and Les Productions des pieds des mains in what ways their students continue to artistically thrive (if they choose to). Such is exemplified with the national and international acclaim many of the Les Muses artists receive (like Gabrielle Marion-Rivard and other Les Muses singers from the Louise Archambault directed 2013 film *Gabrielle*).

My intention with Les Muses is to explore the complexities the artists and teachers endure/engage with in their creative work, both inside and outside the classroom. I want to investigate the rich territory members of Les Muses (and their affiliated companies) are trying to scale in an industry that does not usually validate such artists as being capable of having professional careers.

For a period of a 6-8 months, my proposed fieldwork with you and members of Les Muses would be one of participation, friendship, and witnessing. Dependent on the approval of the teachers (which are aware of the project and have expressed an interest in working with me), I would like to attend the weekly singing, theatre, and dance classes and if possible, video and audio record each class. I ask to record each class for my own records (as my French is still in development) and will need to have personal footage for my own records when writing my dissertation. I am also interested in showing some footage in public forums such as conference presentations. However, please note that no footage will be shown without consent from each artist, their legal guardians and/or the company as a whole. I also understand that some students may not be able to film due external legalities and personal comfort. In such cases I will ensure not to film them and work with them and their legal guardians around what kind documenation is possible. Furthermore, after many conversations with Cindy Schwartz, we have both agreed that in the first month of this proposed project I will not record any classes in order for the students to become comfortable with presence. After this month, I will work with the students to see which form of documentation would be the most appropriate.

In terms of the kind of interactions I am allowed to have in the classroom, I am happy to participate in any capacity whether as a silent observer or a fellow participant. My interest with attending these classes is to a) create a deeper understanding and personal connection with the artists and b) to decipher the ways in which Les Muses facilitates its program for self-expression and creative training. Furthermore, keeping in mind the busy schedule of the group and its individual members, I would like the opportunity to interview consenting artists to one 30-minute interview to ask about the affect Les Muses has had on their professional and personal lives. During these interviews, at least one member of the les Muses employees would be present to help with language barriers and also general transparency between the students and I.

Beyond the classroom, I would also like to follow some of the graduates in the program in their experiences working with Les Productions des pieds des mains and Joe Jack et John. My questions are: how are artists from Les Muses sustaining a successful career in the arts? What are their career potentialities inside and outside Montreal? And what does this reveal about the current state of Quebec theatre and artists with disabilities from Quebec?

Ultimately, my interest in the group comes from a genuine place of personal interest and also doctoral pursuits. Much like my work with Theatre Terrific in Vancouver, British Columbia, my intention is to build and maintain meaningful and mutual working relationships with all the groups I work with. 6-8 months with Les Muses would ensure valuable time for the artists, teachers and I to form such relationships. And self admittedly, this will also give time for my French.

Please know I will respect whatever decision you make and want to thank you very much for opening your doors to me. I think what you and your fellow artists at Les Muses are doing is absolutely compelling. Feel free to email or call me 514-924-4780.

Appendix 6 - Commission scolaire de Montréal Application

Commission
scolaire
de Montréal

DEMANDE D'EXPÉRIMENTATION

DATE	6 décembre 2014
NOM DE FAMILLE	McAskill
PRÉNOM	Ashley
ADRESSE	n/a for this document UdM UQAM McGill Concordia ☐ Laval ☐ Sherbrooke St. Justine ☐ ETADJES Autres *(précisez)* : ☐
TÉLÉPHONE	n/a for this document
CELLULAIRE	
TÉLÉCOPIEUR	
COURRIEL	
TITRE DU PROJET	Reconsidérer l'artiste « handicapé » : Les Muses et l'enseignement du théâtre aux personnes handicapées au Québec.
IDENTIFICATION DU CHERCHEUR	Ashley McAskill

GENRE DE RECHERCHE	**CLIQUER DANS LA CASE ET FAITES UN X** ☐ **Mémoire de maîtrise** ☐ x **Thèse de doctorat** ☐ ***Autres (spécifier) :***
BUT DE LA RECHERCHE	La principale question de recherche par laquelle je commence est: **comment le travail créatif des artistes handicapés intellectuellement est-il reconnu, développé et soutenu au Canada?** Trop souvent, le travail des artistes handicapés est perçu comme étant thérapeutique et médical. Pour cette raison, ces artistes (en particulier ceux ayant une déficience intellectuelle) sont discrédités comme artistes et on les croit incapables d'avoir un esprit critique valable à propos de la culture. Le but principal de cette recherche est de remettre en cause ce genre de préjugés à l'égard des artistes handicapés. Ce projet de doctorat présentera les artistes de Les Muses avec honnêteté et authenticité, et on verra à quel point Les Muses crée un espace important pour ses étudiants afin qu'ils reçoivent une certaine reconnaissance en tant qu'artistes professionnels. Plus important encore, ce projet démontrera comment Les Muses joue un rôle majeur dans l'évolution du paysage culturel et professionnel pour les artistes handicapés au Québec et au Canada en général.
ECOLES CHOISIES A LA COMMISSION SCOLAIRE DE MONTREAL	Centre Champagnat- Les Muses : Centre des arts
CARACTERISTIQUES ET OBJECTIFS DE LA RECHERCHE	Dans le cas de Les Muses, mon intérêt réside dans la façon dont cette école de ormation est devenue un des rares terrains d'entraînement pour les artistes handicapés afin qu'ils puissent parfaire leurs compétences techniques. Je suis également intéressée par le niveau culturel et l'espace que Les Muses offre à ces artistes pour qu'ils aient la chance de travailler professionnellement à Montréal et ailleurs. Trop souvent, les personnes handicapées qui participent à des programmes artistiques se retrouvent sans travail ou sans autres occasions de pratiquer une fois leur semestre terminé. Les Muses, cependant, a démontré dans ses nombreux partenariats avec des compagnies de théâtre montréalaises telles que Joe Jack et John et Les Productions des pieds des mains de quelle manière leurs étudiants continuent de prospérer artistiquement, s'ils choisissent de le faire. Un très bon exemple est la reconnaissance nationale et internationale que beaucoup d'artistes de Les Muses reçoivent (comme Gabrielle Marion-Rivard et les chanteurs de Les Muses du film *Gabrielle* réalisé par Louise Archambault en 2013). Mon intention avec Les Muses est d'explorer les complexités et les défis auxquels les artistes et les enseignants sont confrontés dans leur travail créatif, autant en classe qu'à l'extérieur. Je tiens à en savoir plus sur le travail et l'espace créatifs que les membres de Les Muses (et leurs compagnies affiliées) tentent de développer dans une industrie qui ne croit habituellement pas ces artistes capables d'avoir une carrière professionnelle.

CE QUE VOTRE RECHERCHE DEMANDE AUX ECOLES ***(temps, # de personnes impliquées, etc.)***	Ce projet demandera la collaboration des enseignants des élèves qui ont consenti à participer au projet. Le projet a le potentiel d'inclure jusqu'à 5-6 enseignants qui dirigent des cours de chant, de théâtre et de danse ainsi que 10 à 15 étudiants actuels de Les Muses. Je me rends compte aussi que certains élèves peuvent ne pas être en mesure d'être filmés ou photographiés. Avec ces étudiants, je vais travailler avec leurs tuteurs légaux afin de mieux comprendre quel type de documentation est le plus approprié pour eux. Au cours du projet, je peux choisir de concentrer ma recherche sur certains étudiants plus que d'autres en fonction de leur propre progression dans le programme. Pour ces raisons, je pourrais ne pas avoir à interviewer tous les participants. En raison de la nature personnelle du projet, je propose de passer 6-8 mois à suivre des cours avec les étudiants de Les Muses. En passant tout ce temps avec les étudiants, je pense que si je leur donne l'espace nécessaire pour qu'ils se sentent plus à l'aise en ma présence, ce sera une occasion pour moi de construire de solides relations professionnelles avec eux. En tant que chercheuse, cela me permet aussi de voir de quelle manière les élèves se développent artistiquement sur une période de temps plus longue. Je veux ainsi assurer une présence qui n'interrompt pas l'important travail que ces étudiants réalisent quotidiennement avec leurs enseignants.
CLIENTÈLE VISÉE	Les participants de ce projet comprendront les enseignants et les élèves de Les Muses. Le public cible de cette recherche est : les organisations qui travaillent ou offrent leur soutien aux personnes handicapées, les compagnies théâtrales qui travaillent avec les personnes handicapées, le Conseil des arts du Canada, l'Université Concordia, les politiques en matière de handicap, les militantes féministes ou en matière d'invalidité, les chercheurs et praticiens en théâtre, les artistes handicapés qui souhaitent avoir une carrière professionnelle, etc.
POURQUOI LES ECOLES DEVRAIENT ACCEPTER VOTRE RECHERCHE ?	Bien qu'il existe de nombreuses compagnies d'arts au Canada qui offrent des ateliers pour les artistes handicapés, il y a un manque évident de programmes de formation s plein pour ces personnes. Mon projet mettra l'accent sur le caractère unique de Les Muses et donnera du crédit à la programmation diversifiée de la commission scolaire. Je crois également être une bonne candidate pour cette recherche en raison de mon expérience de travail avec ce genre de compagnies théâtrales (Theatre Terrific à Vancouver et Les Productions des pieds des mains à Montréal) et mon expérience professionnelle avec L'Arche Hamilton, une communauté qui prend en charge les personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle. De plus, le travail écrit final donnera une attestation pour Les Muses et servira comme document afin de plaider notre cause auprès du gouvernement et d'autres organismes de financement. La Fédération des commissions scolaires du Québec (FCSQ) a reconnu mon travail en m'offrant 40 000$ supplémentaires pour ce projet. Mon projet sera également en mesure de proposer des recommandations sur la façon d'améliorer le programme, selon les commentaires des enseignants et des étudiants de Les Muses et aussi en se basant sur mes propres conclusions. J'ai déjà été en contact avec les membres de Les Muses au cours des 9 derniers mois, plus précisément la fondatrice, Cindy Schwartz, alors que nous avons discuté comment ce projet pourrait se développer. Je pense qu'il est important de savoir que ce projet aura toute mon attention au cours des six à huit mois (à temps plein); j'ai proposé de travailler avec les membres de les Muses. Cette durée prolongée m'offrira la possibilité de m'engager plus profondément dans le projet et impliquera davantage la critique.

MÉTHODOLOGIE	Pour une période de six à huit mois, le travail sur le terrain que je propose de faire avec votre organisation et les membres de Les Muses en serait un de participation, d'amitié et de témoignage. Tout dépendant de l'approbation des enseignants (qui sont au courant du projet et ont exprimé un intérêt à travailler avec moi), j'aimerais assister à chaque semaine aux cours de chant, de théâtre, et de danse, et si possible, faire des enregistrements vidéo et audio de chaque cours. Je demande d'enregistrer chaque cours pour mes dossiers (étant donné que mon français n'est pas tout à fait à point), et j'aurai besoin d'avoir des images personnelles pour mes dossiers lors de la rédaction de ma thèse. Je souhaite également montrer certains enregistrements dans des forums publics tels que des présentations lors de conférence. Toutefois, s'il vous plaît notez qu'aucun enregistrement ne sera publié sans le consentement de chaque artiste, de leurs tuteurs légaux ou de la compagnie théâtrale dans son ensemble. Je comprends aussi que certains élèves peuvent ne pas être en mesure d'être filmés en raison de certains aspects juridiques externes ou parce qu'ils ne se sentent pas à l'aise de l'être. Dans de tels cas, je ferai en sorte de ne pas les filmer et de travailler avec eux et leurs tuteurs légaux avec tout type documentation possible. En outre, après de nombreuses conversations avec Cindy Schwartz, nous avons toutes deux convenu que dans le premier mois de ce projet, je ne vais pas faire d'enregistrements durant les cours afin que les étudiants se familiarisent avec cette présence. Après un mois, je vais travailler avec les étudiants pour voir quelle forme de documentation serait la plus appropriée pour eux. En ce qui concerne le type d'interactions que je suis autorisée à avoir dans la salle de classe, je suis heureuse de pouvoir participer, peu importe la manière, que ce soit comme observatrice silencieuse ou en participant moi-même. Mon intérêt à participer en classe est de : a) créer une meilleure compréhension et d'établir un lien personnel avec les artistes et b) déchiffrer les façons dont Les Muses met en œuvre son programme pour faciliter l'expression de soi et la formation créative. De plus, en gardant à l'esprit le calendrier chargé du groupe et de ses membres, je voudrais avoir l'occasion d'interviewer les artistes consentants dans une entrevue d'une trentaine de minutes pour poser des questions sur les effets que Les Muses a eu sur leur vie professionnelle et personnelle. Au cours de ces entretiens, au moins un membre des employés de Les Muses serait présent pour aider à mieux me faire comprendre en français et par souci de transparence durant l'interview entre les étudiants et moi. Au-delà de la salle de classe, je tiens également à suivre certains des diplômés du programme dans leurs expériences de travail avec Les Productions des pieds des mains et Joe Jack et John. Mes questions sont les suivantes: comment les artistes de Les Muses réussissent-ils à maintenir une carrière réussie dans le monde des arts? Quelles sont leurs potentialités de carrière à Montréal et ailleurs? Et qu'est-ce que cela nous révèle sur l'état actuel du théâtre et des artistes handicapés du Québec?

AUTRES INFORMATIONS	Bien que je ne sois pas entièrement bilingue, mon français est de niveau avancé et j'ai souvent travaillé dans des situations où la seule langue de travail était le français. Je vais m'inscrire à des cours de français cet hiver et je participerai à un programme d'échange en français cet été. Je travaille avec un traducteur, lorsque c'est nécessaire (comme avec ce formulaire). Lorsque je travaillerai avec Les Muses, j'ai bien l'intention de ne parler qu'en français, à moins que certains membres veuillent pratiquer leur anglais avec moi.

INFORMATIONS SUPPLEMENTAIRES

CLIQUER DANS LA CASE ET FAITES UN X

	OUI	NON
◈ Avez-vous besoin de l'autorisation des parents ?	X	☐
◈ Avez-vous besoin d'autorisation pour enregistrer ou filmer ?	☒	☐
◈ Avez-vous besoin d'autorisation pour avoir accès à l'information ?		☒
◈ Libérerez-vous des enseignants		☒

***

❖ ❖

Engagement du chercheur

Une fois la rédaction du rapport de recherche ou le condensé de recherche *(de mémoire ou de thèse)* terminée, le chercheur ou l'organisme concerné s'engage à faire parvenir une copie de son rapport de la façon suivante :

- Par courrier électronique : marcouxr@csdm.qc.ca
- Par courrier postal : Commission scolaire de Montréal

Bureau de la direction générale adjointe à la gestion des services éducatifs et de l'organisation scolaire (5^e étage ouest)
Robert Marcoux, analyste 3737, rue Sherbrooke Est Montréal (Québec) H1X 3B3

Appendix 7- Letter to Les Muses Parents and Legal Guardians

Chers parents et les tuteurs légaux des Muses,

Mon nom est Ashley McAskill et je suis étudiante de quatrième année au doctorat dans le programme d'études en communications à l'Université Concordia à Montréal. Au cours des six à huit prochains mois, je vais travailler avec Les Muses en observant et en participant dans les cours de chant, de danse et de théâtre. Pour ma thèse de doctorat, je fais de la recherche sur des groupes de performance qui travaillent avec un large éventail de personnes vivant avec un handicap. Je souhaite mettre à l'avant-scène des groupes comme Les Muses dans les discussions traitant du théâtre canadien et des bourses d'études. Pendant le temps que je passerai avec Les Muses à suivre des cours, je prendrai des notes par écrit sur la façon dont les artistes et les enseignants travaillent ensemble, et comment ils sont évalués artistiquement. Pendant les cours je vais avoir un appareil d'enregistrement vocal avec moi ainsi qu'une caméra pour documenter les interactions dans la salle de classe et toutes conversations que je pourrais avoir avec vous au sujet de votre expérience avec Les Muses**.** Je fais cela pour deux raisons :
a) comme mon français n'est pas aussi bon que je le voudrais, je veux enregistrer mes conversations avec vous afin de pouvoir vous citer correctement.
b) je pourrais utiliser quelques unes des photos et vidéos lors de conférences et d'événements publics.
Mon intention est de partager le beau travail que Les Muses produit et l'impact profond qu'il a sur la diversité au théâtre au Canada. J'ai donné aux étudiants un formulaire de consentement expliquant mon projet . Si l'étudiant est intéressé à participer à mon projet de recherche, j'aurai besoin de leur signature et vôtre (si nécessaire) . Ce formulaire peut être remis à moi en classe ou au bureau des Muses. J'ai joint le formulaire ci-dessous.

Si tu as des questionnes:
Email: mcaskia003@gmail.com Phone: 514-924-4780

Merci beaucoup,
Ashley McAskill

Appendix 8 - Consent Form for Les Muses

CONSENTEMENT À PARTICIPER AU PROJET : *Reconsidérer l'artiste « handicapé » : Les Muses et l'enseignement du théâtre aux personnes handicapées au Québec*.

Chers enseignants, étudiants et tuteurs légaux des étudiants de Les Muses,

Mon nom est Ashley McAskill et je suis étudiante de quatrième année au doctorat dans le programme d'études en communications à l'Université Concordia à Montréal. Au cours des six à huit prochains mois, je vais travailler avec Les Muses en observant et en participant dans les cours de chant, de danse et de théâtre. J'ai eu la chance de faire connaissance au cours de l'hiver 2014 avec Cindy Schwartz, la fondatrice des Muses, après avoir entendu parler du programme et du travail passionnant réalisé par certains de ses diplômés. Pour ma thèse de doctorat, je fais de la recherche sur des groupes de performance qui travaillent avec un large éventail de personnes vivant avec un handicap. Je souhaite mettre à l'avant-scène des groupes comme Les Muses dans les discussions traitant du théâtre canadien et des bourses d'études. Je désire également connaître les points de vue et les expériences de tous les élèves et enseignants de Les Muses.

Pendant le temps que je passerai avec Les Muses à suivre des cours, je prendrai des notes par écrit sur la façon dont les artistes et les enseignants travaillent ensemble, et comment ils sont évalués artistiquement. Pendant les cours je vais avoir un appareil d'enregistrement vocal avec moi ainsi qu'une caméra pour documenter les interactions dans la salle de classe et toutes conversations que je pourrais avoir avec vous au sujet de votre expérience avec Les Muses. Je fais cela pour deux raisons :

a) comme mon français n'est pas aussi bon que je le voudrais, je veux enregistrer mes conversations avec vous afin de pouvoir vous citer correctement.

b) je pourrais utiliser quelques unes des photos et vidéos lors de conférences et d'événements publics.

Veuillez noter qu'aucune photo ne sera utilisée sans votre consentement explicite. Je tiens à présenter le travail que je ferai avec vous lors de différentes conférences et également ajouter ce matériel à ma thèse de doctorat finale. Mon intention est de partager le beau travail que Les Muses produit et l'impact profond qu'il a sur la diversité au théâtre au Canada.

Ci-joint, vous trouverez une lettre de consentement décrivant mon travail de recherche. Si vous acceptez de participer, veuillez s'il vous plaît bien lire et signer les formulaires de consentement et me les remettre en personne le premier jour du tournage ou écrivez-moi en déclarant: « J'ai lu et compris le formulaire de consentement, et je donne mon plein consentement à la participation dans votre projet. »

Pourquoi Ashley me demande-t-elle de participer?
Ashley me pose des questions parce que je suis un membre important des Muses.

Je comprends qu'Ashley :

- travaillera avec Les Muses au cours des prochains mois et sera présente aux cours. Elle prendra note des moments pendant les cours où quelque chose d'intéressant se produit. S'il y a quelque chose que je ne veux pas qu'Ashley prenne en note ou en photo/vidéo, je dois en informer Ashley et elle ne le fera pas.

- au dernier mois du projet, Ashley pourrait me poser des questions au sujet de mon expérience passée avec Les Muses. Cela s'appelle une « entrevue de départ. » Elle va me poser des questions à propos des sentiments sur ce que j'aime ou n'aime pas faire en classe, et sur ce que je trouve amusant ou difficile. Si je ne veux pas répondre à une question, je n'ai pas à y répondre. Je peux répondre à ces questions de toutes les manières qui me conviennent, c'est-à-dire par téléphone, ordinateur, ou en personne avec Ashley. Elle s'adaptera à mon horaire et me rencontrera au moment qui me convient le mieux.
- elle utilisera des images, des citations et des images de ces moments passés en classe dans son travail scolaire et dans des documents et présentations publiques. Cela signifie des gens que je ne connais pas verront mon travail et entendront parler de mes expériences avec Les Muses.
- si je ne veux pas qu'Ashley utilise mon nom, je peux m'inventer un pseudonyme (faux nom) qu'elle pourra utiliser.
- Ashley traduira mes paroles et citations en anglais dans ses publications ou ses travaux finaux, mais indiquera toujours le français en premier dans le texte et les présentations.

Si j'utilise mon vrai nom:
Je comprends que du moment où une captation est rendue publique, elle est susceptible d'être critiquée par les personnes qui la voient. Aussi, je comprends que certaines personnes peuvent aimer mes réponses et être fières de ce que j'ai à dire.

En apposant ma signature, je comprends:
... que je n'ai pas à répondre aux questions si je ne veux pas.
... que Ashley prendra des notes par écrit de ce que je fais dans la classe pour son travail scolaire.
... que je peux utiliser un pseudonyme (faux nom) si je ne veux pas utiliser mon vrai nom.
... que je peux utiliser mon vrai nom et les gens peuvent apprécier ou critiquer mes réponses.
... qu'Ashley va utiliser mes réponses dans son travail scolaire et des documents publics.

J'ai lu ce formulaire et j'accepte les informations que j'ai lues ci-dessus. NOM (en lettres moulées SVP)

SIGNATURE

Pour tous les tuteurs légaux- j'ai lu les conditions ci-dessus et je donne mon consentement à ce que l'individu, dont j'ai la responsabilité légale, participe au projet :
NOM (en lettres moulées SVP

SIGNATURE:

Si vous avez des questions, veuillez s’il vous plaît me joindre à :

Nom : Ashley McAskill, Département / École: Études en communication de l'Université Concordia Téléphone: 1-514-924-4780 (appel interurbain)
Courriel: mcaskia003@gmail.com