

NOR DAF NEWS

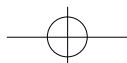
Winter 2003

Helen Smiles in No Limits Theatre's *Silver Street*



northern disability arts forum
empowerment through disability arts and culture





NorDAF NEWS

NorDAF is an arts development service staffed and managed by a majority of Disabled people. It aims to empower Disabled people in County Durham, Northumberland, Teesside and Tyne & Wear through the promotion of Disability arts and culture.

NorDAF News promotes and discusses all aspects of Disability arts and culture, and welcomes unsolicited articles, reviews and letters for publication by Disabled and Deaf people.

We cannot guarantee publication and the Editor reserves the right to edit contributions. Whenever possible, however, this will be done in consultation with the author.

The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of NorDAF.



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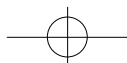
NorDAF News
Editor Dave Baker: db@nordaf.org

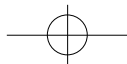
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WINTER 2003

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TEARING DOWN THE TEMPLES

The arts institution, (the gallery, the theatre, the opera house, the ballet, the museum) has long been the domain of a 'mainstream' elite – a temple to a canon of art that relates to a 'high-art' minority which ignores cultural diversity. The work of **Vici Wreford-Sinnott**, writer, director and the new Director of NorDAF aims to promote cultural equality and disability arts as professional arts practice on a par with all arts practice. She is working towards an 'aesthetic for change', both through her own creative work and in her strategic, proactive approaches to disability arts sectoral analysis and development.

I'm very excited to be home in the North East after three and a half years in Dublin as the Chief Executive of Arts and Disability Ireland. I have learned so much working at national level and feel that I can make a meaningful contribution to my own region.

My vision is completely informed by being a disabled artist and the needs expressed by my peers around the world. My starting point is to look at the biggest possible picture – the daring to dream scenario. I am very ambitious for disabled people involved in the arts and would like to see Disability Art move out of a solely community arts definition, and see it held up as professional arts practice in its own right.

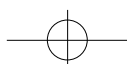
We want spaces where cultural identities are explored and shared and platforms created for ideas and new thinking. We will be

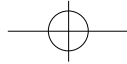
working towards a world where disabled artists have space, time and resources to dare to dream, to innovate, to engineer imaginations, to fail and start again; space for new voices, new ideas and new forms.

Tearing Down The Temples is a phrase that is deliberately provocative – it's about being spurred to action after a period of reflection, but we need to be methodical and strategic in our analysis and planning.

In Disability Arts in the North East, we have a lot of work to do. As a sector we need to dismantle some of our own perceptions of the world of art and the perceptions of those in the world of art who do not connect with promoting disabled artists, culture or experience.

Please turn to page 13





What a year for

“As a committed manic-depressive I spent most of Today I feel like I’m on Day Release.”



Looking back, my web site gallery has been busy with over 200,000 hits. We’ve had a total update with a new free selection plus a whole new archive on other bands from the period 1977-82.

New this year are two fantastic, Jamtastic pop posters exclusively available through Rick Buckler’s Jam shop.

In July I was asked by The Manic Depression Fellowship to host a

poetry launch in Covent Garden, London. The book was called *See Me, Hear Me* (ISBN 0-9543621-1-X) and it’s great.

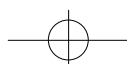
I had the pleasure of introducing the man hotly tipped for Mayor of London next year Mr. Simon Hughes MP (Lib/Dem).

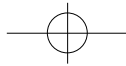
At the moment I’m very involved with Nordaf management committee and pursuing MDF projects. My advice to anyone out there is, join up with Nordaf and together we can make a difference, if not to your life, maybe someone else’s.

When I was asked to write something for this publication, I was flattered, it wasn’t until I sat and thought about it that I was really amazed at how much my life had changed over the last year.

As a “committed” manic-depressive I’ve spent most of my time within the realms of clinical depression.

It’s not unheard of for my sleeping pattern to last twenty hours a day for months on end. I certainly confess to being a prisoner to my illness but today I feel more like I’m on Day Release.





the roses

by Neill "Twink" Tinning

My time within the realms of clinical depression.



I thought I was the only one

It was through a Nordaf news article Summer 2002 that I was invited to follow the late, great Spike Milligan as a patron of The Manic Depression Fellowship.



The Jam courtesy of thejamarchive.com

For me this was a huge honour. The position has opened new doors for me. It proves once again that Nordaf news is read by the right people..... and you are one of them.

I have a soapbox on which I stand. Remember, we are artists first and foremost.

If your talent can get you noticed, use your talent; don't let disability make you a prisoner.

As I look forward to being the MC at the next National Conference for the Manic Depression Fellowship I'm reminded of my closing statement at the last conference.

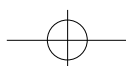
I gave out 120 Red Roses so everyone could wear one. In the end everyone was wearing his or her roses.

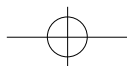
I was so proud and I said: "We live in the daily dunghill of manic depression. But it sure grows beautiful roses"

(This quote applies to all who have felt pain of one sort or another)

Neill Tinning is a Member of the NorDAF Management Committee and a patron of The Manic Depression Fellowship.

I thought I was the only one and I got up today courtesy of The Manic Depression Fellowship.





No Limits Theatre Company's

SILVER STREET

Reviewed by Beth Ford

Presented as an enchanting fairy tale, *Silver Street* explores the issues facing a refugee who arrives in a big unknown city.

Watching this performance was a new experience for me, as I am used to a somewhat 'conventional' theatre style format. It's difficult to pigeon-hole *Silver Street's* style - it's unique - but one thing is certain, it works remarkably well.



There is no spoken dialogue between the characters, the story is told through a mixture of music, acting, dance and narration. It begins by depicting the cold unwelcoming nature of a big city which leads on to the arrival of the refugee who appears very lost, and everything about her appears to be 'out of place' with the environment she is now in.

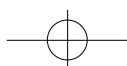
“ No Limits have never addressed issues that could be difficult to portray. With their latest production, *Silver Street*”, they have shown again that it is not only possible to

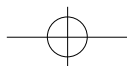
The performance documents her journey from being alone in the city to finding her way and feeling she belongs. Many issues are touched on along the way such as differences in cultural identity, self identity and romance.

Three aspects of *Silver Street* that stood out particularly for me were - the truly amazing original musical score, which was specially commissioned, the seamless choreography and the abundance of talent coming from the actors. After all, it is the actors who make the music and choreography work. The tone of the music plays an important part in helping to illustrate the events on stage, in a similar manner to the soundtracks which accompanied old silent films.

I must confess, before seeing *Silver Street* I was curious as to how well it would work, but what I discovered was that feelings, thoughts and atmosphere can be expressed more deeply when there is only occasional narration in the form of poetry.

Silver Street is a stunning piece of theatre which unfolds before your eyes in a manner that is highly innovative. The only way to do it justice is not to read about it, but go and see it for yourself!





atre Company
ided tackling
be considered
hrough theatre.
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e proven once
: only possible,
t brilliantly! ”

*Photographs;
Helen Smiles, Paul
Norman and the
cast in scenes from
Silver Street.*



Silver Street national tour;

York Pocklington Arts Centre; 7.30pm
22nd January 2004

Durham Drama Studio, New College;
2.00pm 5th February 2004

Warrington Pyramid Arts Centre; 2.00pm
11th and 7.30pm 12th February 2004

Hartlepool Town Hall Theatre; 2.00pm
26th February 2004

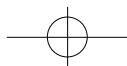
Huddersfield Lawrence Batley Theatre;
7.30pm 11th March 2004

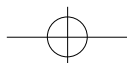
Sunderland No Limits Theatre; 16th, 17th
and 18th March 2004

Salford Quays The Lowry; 8.00pm 22nd
March 2004

Bishop Auckland Town Hall Theatre;
7.30pm 31st March 2004

Peebles The Eastgate Theatre; 7.30pm
22nd April 2004





from LITTLE things **BIG THINK**

Caroline Bowditch, Project Worker for the Community Arts Pro

In the January 2003 edition we welcomed “Little Devil” Caroline Bowditch to the North East from the sunnier climes of Australia. Since then she’s been busy building an enviable portfolio of courses, workshops and activities covering an astonishing range of activities - opportunities eagerly taken up by the people of North Shields. Here she reports on progress so far.

Well, as I promised when I wrote my last article, these 12 months have been full of fantastic projects!

Since October last year the Community Arts Project (CAP) group has provided artistic opportunities for over 400 people.

Summer Extravaganza

For six weeks over the summer the CAP group coordinated 36 different arts workshops. There were workshops in stained glass work, photography, drama, percussion, computer generated music composition, junk art, filmmaking and general arts and crafts.

At the end of it all we produced a 20-minute film called *So U think U know me*, lots of junk sculptures and wall hangings, a song, a fantastic photography exhibition and we had a showcase event so everyone could display their new talents fully!

We also ran a Signed Singing Summer School that was incredibly popular and as a result we are hoping to establish our own signed singing choir.

Festivals

The CAP group had a presence at the Time Festival, Wallsend Festival, the Segedunum Charity Day and entertained hundreds of children at the launch of the first ship built on the Tyne for nine years. We’ve really been getting out amongst it.

Committee

We have established a committee, who work incredibly well together but we are always looking for more members.

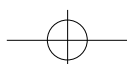
AND we have run.....

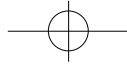
Autumnofest

Possibly one of our biggest undertakings, this one day event brought together many people who had not had any contact with the CAP group before.

They came from local amateur and professional theatre groups, performing arts courses, dance schools and the local North Tyneside community.

We offered free arts workshops in stage make-up and costume design, percussion,





AS GROW

t at the Linskill Centre, North Shields



contemporary dance - oh,
and lunch (maybe *that's* why
so many people showed up).

We are looking forward to launching into our programme for 2004 when our aim is to establish some on-going groups as well as continuing our arts taster sessions that have proven to be so popular this year.

On a personal note, I have yet to form a mixed ability dance company but discussions have begun.

I have joined a fantastic women's choir called Ominous Women and I am looking forward to continuing to find my artistic feet in the North East.

For more information contact

Caroline Bowditch, CAP Project Worker
Linskill Centre, Linskill Terrace,
North Shields NE30 2AY

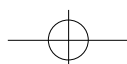
Phone/Fax: 0191 200 6429

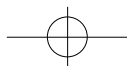
Email: caroline@ntynedisforum.org



*Top: Andy and Sarah get to grips with
computer music composition.*

Bottom: A proud display of junk art





PICTURES FROM THE BIG SN



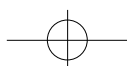
Over 500 people enjoyed the Big Snapper, a nightclub held for people with learning difficulties at the Telewest Arena to celebrate the European Year of Disabled People 2003.

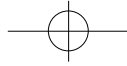
The Gateshead Krocodile Krew who are DJ Keybabe, DJ Stevie Boy, DJ Wolf, DJ Morris, DJ Liddle John, DJ Bart Simpson and MC Highlander organised and hosted the event.

All the Krew have learning difficulties, as did all the performers on the night, and this event showed what brilliant talent exists within the learning disabled community.

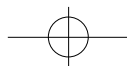
Special thanks to Boo, Gill, Cat and everyone who made it such a fabulous night. And don't forget, the Krew also run the monthly Krocodile Klub nightclubs at Caedmon Hall in Gateshead (see p16).

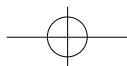
The "Krocodile Krew" is a Lawnmowers Project. For further information contact the Lawnmowers on 0191 478 9200.





APPER





Disabled artists & the exhibit

Lost tribe or cynical system?

In a world where, according to artists' magazine *an*, the three main employment areas for arts graduates are commissions, exhibitions and residencies, are disabled artists getting the opportunities and career prospects afforded to their non-disabled peers? Disabled artist and writer Sally Sedgwick has been investigating in an ongoing personal research project.

The Disability Discrimination Act and changing attitudes mean that there are more and more disabled arts graduates. Having been supported through their college careers, what awaits them out there in the real art world?

Sally argues that their career prospects and employment opportunities will certainly not be the same as their non-disabled peers.

Currently, disabled arts practitioners manage their situation with a combination of a network of friends, goodwill and suitable opportunities - heavily influenced by the nature of their disability.

Her research shows that often the needs of professionally trained disabled artists are effectively sacrificed for the sake of the majority of untrained disabled people.

Their relatively small number merits cursory attention and funding policies reflect this. They have been described as a deliberately disenfranchised group.

This policy must change, redefining these artists as a *disability elite* with a very specific identity attributable to being disabled artists. Non-disabled and non-art trained people have continually taken charge of disability

arts projects and groups, perpetuating and exacerbating the problems with inappropriate knowledge.

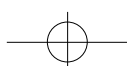
Professional disabled practitioners and graduates must be promoted and profiled as this new elite - exercising an informed, experienced and specialist authority for everyone.

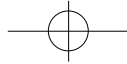
They must be encouraged and supported to develop a disabled artists' professional practice which speaks about their world - everybody's world - not patronised and warehoused with art as mere therapy.

The situation is particularly bad for disabled artists with mobility problems. Health & Safety issues are often cited in workplaces and colleges - mobility-impaired artists are seen as a 'risk'. Artists are expected to be fully 'flexible' and available for meetings, previews, talks and travel.

Not being available for 'paid' employment is even more disabling than a physical impairment - an extraordinary fact in these days of technology and digital communications where the concept of distance to and from anywhere globally is totally irrelevant.

Specifically targeted study and funding could





on process

develop an artistic practice not simply centred on and around traditional exhibition practice.

The 1990s saw a series of missed opportunities and sadly the start of the 21st century seems still slow to present tangible or visible change in policy and perception.

Here is some of Sally's agenda for change:

Where are all the disabled curators and exhibition managers? How about guest disabled curators in permanent galleries mounting disabled and non-disabled exhibitions from a disability perspective?

Set up a New Disabled Artists' Graduate Show with an annual prize with the prestige of, say, the Turner. A national tour could coincide with College Degree Shows around the country.

Create a National Association of Disabled Arts Practitioners to give an identity and professional profile. Disabled people need experienced disabled specialists to explore and advise on all aspects of disability culture.

Sally Sedgwick lectured in Drawing & Painting, Art History and Cultural Theory until her teaching career was curtailed by severe mobility problems. She has since concentrated on painting, exhibiting and writing. She is the first disabled artist to have a piece accepted into the permanent collection of a major regional art gallery.

Sally's new exhibition, *Testament*, is about becoming disabled. It opens 10th Jan 2004 at 20:21 Visual Arts Centre, Scunthorpe.

Tearing Down The Temples - from page 3

I'm interested in creating dialogue between artists and institutions, between artists and artists, between artists and consumers of art. I'm particularly interested in matching creativity and innovation with strategy and planning.

NorDAF needs re-invention for the 21st century – we can build on the successful work and partnerships of the past and move everything on in new and exciting ways.

NorDAF is keen to move on and to be involved in repositioning itself as a lead agency for the region. To have legitimacy and to be effective we need to employ a wide ranging process of consultation - meeting, listening, and discussing key areas with all interested parties over the coming months.

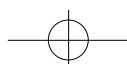
We have a number of things we can offer - new thinking, analysis, models of excellence, pilots, support, training and education, resources. We are conscious of our own need to develop so there will be some restructuring of the organisation along with the development of a five year plan.

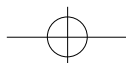
To start things off, in the new year we're having a cabaret which will be very exciting and then in March we're hosting a Disability Arts Symposium with a mixture of art works, workshops and discussions.

We want to put Disability Arts in the North East on the map.

We would like to hear from anyone who is interested in being involved or has ideas for the future.

Vici Wreford-Sinnott





in brief

AIRS

Gateshead Council Library Service's AIRS (Access to Information and Reading Services) sets out to provide information of all kinds in an accessible form to people who have difficulty reading standard print.

They offer Braille, large print, audio and BSL transcription services. Information Assistants help to ensure that Gateshead's libraries are accessible to everyone.

Over 100 computers are available with screen reading software and free internet access.

Training is available in BSL, and the service has a large collection of resources for Deaf and Hard of Hearing people in iKnow at the Central Library.

The AIRS Talking Newspaper and Audio Magazine Service is free to Gateshead residents and available for a modest subscription to those living outside the borough, anywhere in the UK.

It consists of four 60 minute audio cassettes per week, with an entertaining and informative mix of news, features and magazines.

AIRS, Gateshead Central Library, Prince Consort Road, Gateshead NE8 4LN. Phone 0191 477 3478, Fax 0191 477 7852, Minicom 0191 478 4839, Videophone 0191 478 5986.

Email airs@gateshead.gov.uk

Management bursaries

Management Bursaries for Black, Asian, Chinese and Disabled Arts Managers.

Arts Council England has announced the organisations taking part in a joint programme combining the successful Fellowship and Apprenticeship schemes.

Funded by the Arts Council and managed by Showhow, the programme works with leading arts employers to address the under representation of Black, Asian, Chinese and disabled managers in the arts.

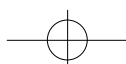
Fellows and Apprentices take part in a 12-month work placement, supported by an extensive training programme, mentoring and networking.

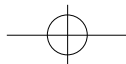
Out of the total of 11 employers, eight will host a Black, Asian or Chinese arts manager; the Almeida Theatre, London; Arts & Business South East; Audiences Yorkshire; Contact Theatre, Manchester; **Darlington Arts Centre**; the Gardner Arts Centre, Brighton; Kala Sangam, Bradford and Oxford Playhouse.

The three organisations that will be working with disabled arts managers are Hampstead Theatre, London; Cheshire Dance, Winsford and Derby Dance, Derby.

Contact Alex Holdaway, Arts Council England on 020 7973 6459 or email alex.holdaway@artscouncil.org.uk.

Courtesy NDAF's EtCetera





Shape Deaf Arts 2004 Calendar

Shape Deaf Arts with sponsorship from Siemens have produced a full colour calendar for 2004 showing art work by 12 deaf artists.

The Calendar, as well as telling you what date it is, highlights the achievements of British Deaf artists.

The calendars are available from Shape for £5.00 each plus £1.00 for postage and packing. Cheques should be made payable to Shape.

Send your order to;

Shape, London, LVS Resource Centre, 356 Holloway Road, London N7 6PA.

Courtesy NDAF's EtCetera - a weekly email newsletter. To subscribe visit www.ndaf.org

The NDAF Arts Access Database

The National Disability Arts Forum (NDAF) has secured funding from Arts Council England and The Baring Foundation for Arts Access UK, a free extensive online database of access facilities at arts venues throughout the UK.

The database will offer disabled people up to date information on all aspects of a venue's public access. It will also allow venues to promote programmes of work that may be of specific interest to disabled people.

Northern Disability Arts Forum

Notice of Annual General Meeting

NorDAF's Annual General Meeting will be held on

Thursday 4th March 2004

**at MEA House, Ellison Place
Newcastle upon Tyne NE6 5AA**

If you wish to attend, please call 0191 222 0708 or 0191 261 2238 (minicom)

Call for new Committee Members

Following the appointment of a new Director, NorDAF is entering an exciting and challenging phase in its development. We are looking for new members to augment our already strong Management Committee.

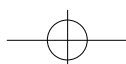
If you care about Disability Arts in the North East and feel you have the time and commitment to contribute, please get in touch.

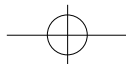
It is hoped that in time the database will become a central source of information for disabled people.

In order to make sure that it serves everyone's needs, NDAF would very much welcome feedback regarding the structure of the database.

Have a look at the database prototype and let them know what you think.

Go to www.ndaf.org/accessfeedback.html





NEWCASTLE 24th January 2004 10am - 4pm

HANDS OFF OUR GENES - Diversity Not Annihilation

Disability Action North East conference on genetic engineering with drama, workshops and speakers explaining our point of view.

MEA House, Ellison Place, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 8XS.

This event is FREE but you must book early to avoid disappointment! Phone 0191 230 4111 (voice) or 0191 230 4009 (text) for booking form.

NORTH SHIELDS Friday 12th December, 6 - 7.30pm

Community Carols by Candlelight at the The East Hall, Linskill Centre
Get into the Christmas spirit! We'll provide the song lists, the atmosphere and the mince pies, you provide your voices and your good tidings.

To register for the session or for more information contact:
Caroline Bowditch, Project Worker, Community Arts Project Group
Linskill Centre, Linskill Terrace, North Shields, NE30 2AY
Phone: 0191 200 6429 Fax: 0191 200 6427 Minicom: 0191 200 6275
Email: caroline@ntynedsforum.org

GATESHEAD every month (usually Friday - ring for details)

THE KROCODILE KLUB, run by and for people with Learning Disabilities featuring cabaret, bar, DJs, chill room, funky music and theme nights.

At the Caedmon Hall, Gateshead Central Library, Prince Consort Road, Gateshead. Admission £1.00. Telephone 0191 478 9200

NEWCASTLE Every Friday 1.30 pm - 2.30 pm

MUSIC GROUP for older people with Learning Disabilities at Age Concern Newcastle, Mea House, Ellison Place, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 8XS Telephone 0191 232 6488

List your event in What's On

If you would like to list your event in NorDAF News, please contact Dave Baker 0191 222 0708 or email db@nordaf.org. Each issue covers three months, so make sure we know in good time. Other events can be listed on our website, www.nordaf.org

