



**Protecting the Right to Culture of Persons with Disabilities and Enhancing Cultural Diversity through European Union Law: Exploring New Paths (DANCING)**

**Report**

**The ERC DANCING WP4 Tools for Change**

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The first initial quote of the report is taken from then-Senator Barack Obama’s speech to supporters after he was nominated as candidate for presidency in 2008. This is taken from the New York Times website at <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/05/us/politics/05text-obama.html>. The second quote is taken from the lyrics of ‘*Smisurata Preghiera*’, written by Italian songwriter and singer Fabrizio De André.

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*'Change will not come if we wait for some other person or if we wait for some other time.*

*We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.'*

Barack Obama

*'Per chi viaggia in direzione ostinata e contraria.'*

Fabrizio De André

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## Executive Summary

This cross-cutting report presents various outputs and dissemination tools of the European Research Council (ERC) funded project 'Protecting the Right to Culture of Persons with Disabilities and Enhancing Cultural Diversity through European Union Law: Exploring New Paths – DANCING', and highlights their role in raising awareness and in supporting legal and societal change. Particularly, this report outlines the key tenets of Work Package (WP) 4 of the DANCING project, which aims to deploy 'Tools for Change'. Such tools range from graphic design outputs to reports and toolkits, and stem from a close collaboration with Accessibility Designer Norbert Croonenberg, artists with disabilities, and the inclusive dance company Stopgap Dance Company (Stopgap), and builds on input received from Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) across Europe.

DANCING started on 1 September 2020 and is due to be completed on 31 August 2025. It pursues three main objectives. It explores barriers and facilitators to cultural participation of persons with disabilities and how that affects cultural life as a whole (experiential objective). It investigates the intersection of cultural rights of persons with disabilities and cultural diversity in European Union (EU) law (normative objective). Finally, the DANCING project re-theorises cultural diversity as a constitutional principle of the EU (theoretical objective). These three objectives support and complement each other and are tackled through three research WPs of the project.

A fourth, cross-cutting WP, titled 'Tools for Change', ensures that DANCING's pursued academic advancements, which are the essence of an ERC project, can also be shared with the general public, and particularly with people with disabilities. Further, as the title suggests, WP4 also provides a platform for experiential, normative and theoretical findings of the project to be translated into effective tools to spur legal, policy and societal change. WP4 leverages on a participatory research strategy that ensures that people with disabilities are active participants in the project. Such participatory strategy tallies with synergies with stakeholders and the wider academic community that DANCING has pursued through discussions of emerging findings, conferences, workshops and bespoke 'DANCING Academic Conversations'.

In presenting the 'Tools for Change' created in WP4, this report first outlines the main features of the project's website, which serves as DANCING's main outlet for sharing updates, findings, and outcomes with the academic community, stakeholders, and the general public. The DANCING website further functions as an archive which includes all achievements, outputs, events and provides an account of the overall timeline and progress of the project. It is also meant to enhance the visibility of the project and its achievements and showcase the project's contributions to academic scholarship and its broader impact. The report then outlines all outputs that have been conceived of as 'Tools for Change' to raise awareness, and effect societal and policy change. These outputs include the Interactive Map which offers a new way to display research findings; as well as cartoons and infographics designed by Accessibility

Designer Norbert Croonenberg in collaboration with Professor Delia Ferri, which are key to raising awareness of the project's milestones in an accessible way. This report also highlights the main artistic outputs of the project, such as the DANCING accessible concert organised on the occasion of the DANCING Mid-Term Academic Conference, the '*Lived Fiction*' inclusive dance performance organised in collaboration with, and performed by, Stopgap which was a powerful tool to showcase what cultural diversity is; as well as the artwork created by Tiziano Pantano for the project. The report further provides a brief account of the videos and final documentary created for DANCING by Feenish Productions Ltd., which showcase the work 'behind the scenes' of the DANCING research and give snippets of the research processes and collaborations. This report also covers dissemination outputs such as the Toolkit for Cultural Organisations, the Resource List and the Policy Brief, aimed to effect inclusion of people with disabilities both as professionals and as audiences within the Cultural and Creative Sector (CCS) at all levels of society.



## 1. INTRODUCTION

This introduction outlines the DANCING project, its main objectives and tenets, before expanding on Work Package (WP) 4 of the DANCING project. This section then elaborates on the aims of the report, the terminology used and finally details the structure of the report.

### 1.1. The DANCING Project: Objectives and WPs

The project 'Protecting the Right to Culture of Persons with Disabilities and Enhancing Cultural Diversity through European Union Law: Exploring New Paths – DANCING' explores the right of persons with disabilities to take part in cultural life as an essential aspect of enhancing cultural diversity in the European Union (EU). The project is funded by the European Research Council (ERC) and is based at Maynooth University (MU) under Professor Delia Ferri as Principal Investigator (PI). It explores the extent to which the protection of the right to take part in culture of people with disabilities and the promotion of cultural diversity intersect and complement each other in the EU legal order. On the whole, DANCING deploys interdisciplinary approaches to produce ground-breaking knowledge intended to challenge the cultural exclusion often faced by people with disabilities, contributing to the creation of a more inclusive and culturally diverse European society.

DANCING commenced on 1 September 2020 and is due to be completed on 31 August 2025. It has pursued three main objectives. Firstly, it has identified and categorised barriers to and facilitators of cultural participation experienced by persons with disabilities and how they affect the wider cultural domain (experiential objective). Secondly, it has provided a normative exploration of how the EU has used and can use its competence to combat discrimination and its supporting competence on cultural matters, in synergy with its wide internal market powers, to ensure the accessibility of cultural activities, to promote disability identities, while achieving cultural diversity (normative objective). Thirdly, it aims to advance the understanding of the legal concept of cultural diversity, which stems from the intersection of different sources of law, and, in the final phase of the project, will articulate a new theorisation of the promotion of cultural diversity within the EU legal order (theoretical objective).

The project is underpinned by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which represents the global legal standard on disability rights, and is informed by the human rights model of disability. Methodologically, DANCING combines legal, empirical, and arts-based research to achieve its experiential, normative and theoretical objectives.

DANCING is divided into four complementary and partially overlapping WPs. Three of them correspond to the key objectives of the project. The fourth one is a cross-cutting WP that focuses on translating scholarly research and key academic findings into practical tools that can effect societal change (Tools for Change).

## **1.2. The Key Tenets of the DANCING Project**

DANCING is informed by the principles and rights set out in the CRPD. It is underpinned by values of empowerment, respect for diversity and participation. It embraces the concept of disability laid out in Article 1(2) CRPD, which recognises that persons with disabilities include those ‘who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others’. It further embraces the view, set out in General Comment No. 6 of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities that ‘disability is a social construct’ and ‘is one of several layers of identity’ (CRPD Committee, 2018, para. 9).

Furthermore, DANCING looks at the right to participate in culture in a comprehensive way with reference to its twofold individual dimension and its collective aspect (Romainville, 2015; Chow, 2018). The twofold individual dimension encompasses the right to access cultural activities, goods and services (i.e., the right to cultural consumption) and the right to active involvement in culture, which includes the engagement in the creation of cultural goods, services and activities. The collective aspect entails the right of cultural communities to be recognised and protected as well as to enjoy and make use of their cultural heritage and cultural expressions.

The project acknowledges the current comprehensive definitions of culture and the cultural domain that connect to cultural rights but deliberately focuses on arts practices (encompassing different art forms, including literature, dance, music, theatre, and visual arts) and heritage as forms of cultural expression (Caust, 2019), and uses dance as a selected art practice for the purpose of arts-based research.

The project also embeds and strives to implement the principle of accessibility, provided for in Article 9 CRPD, by making the research available in accessible formats and throughout different media. In that regard, it is also worth recalling that the Preamble to the CRPD explicitly recognises ‘the importance of accessibility to the physical, social, economic and cultural environment, to health and education and to information and communication, in enabling people with disabilities to fully enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms’.

Additionally, WP4, which will be discussed in the following subsection, strives to implement Article 8 CRPD on awareness raising. This provision *inter alia* requires States Parties to the CRPD to raise awareness in order to foster respect for the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities; to combat stereotypes, prejudices and harmful practices relating to persons with disabilities; and to promote the capabilities and contributions of persons with disabilities.

## **1.3. Work Package 4 in a Nutshell**

WP4 titled ‘Tools for Change’ aims to share DANCING academic findings and scholarly advancements, which are the essence of an ERC project, with the general public and particularly with people with disabilities. Indeed, raising awareness of academic blue-sky

research (Linden, 2008) is essential to ‘democratise’ research and ultimately ensure that people, primarily people with disabilities, can reap the benefits of cutting-edge research. Further, as its title suggests, WP4 also provides a platform for experiential, normative and theoretical findings to spur legal, policy and societal change. In that regard, WP4 (in combination with WP1) is also essential to effect a participatory research strategy, by ensuring that people with disabilities are active participants in the project, and embed co-creation elements in a PI-led project such as DANCING. This is consistent with the human rights model of disability (Degener, 2017) which informs the project.

Within the remit of WP4, DANCING has also pursued synergies with the wider academic community and various stakeholders, through discussions of emerging findings, conferences, workshops or bespoke ‘DANCING Academic Conversations’.

On the whole, WP4 has translated cutting-edge research led in DANCING into an accessible and diverse range of outputs, including cartoons, infographics and artistic performances, leveraging on a participatory research strategy and robust peer review as well as constructive criticism at different junctures, in line with best research practices (Kelly, Sadeghieh and Adeli, 2014).

#### **1.4. Terminology**

In line with the CRPD, which represents the global legal standard on disability, the report uses ‘people first language’ (i.e. persons/ people with disabilities).<sup>1</sup> This is consistent with the approach applied throughout the project and in the various outputs, communications and activities, including in reports. We acknowledge that ‘people first language’ is not used by everyone, nor is it wording with which everyone identifies or agrees, however, it captures the broad range of people who could be interested and involved in the project, and aligns with legal language used in international and EU law.

#### **1.5. Aim and Structure of this Report**

The aim of this report is to present the various tools developed within the remit of WP4 which incite change at different levels and raise awareness about the right to culture of people with disabilities and the diversity brought by persons with disabilities in culture. The report also outlines how DANCING has promoted accessibility for audiences with disabilities.

Following this introduction, Section 2 outlines the main features of the DANCING website and its role in documenting and sharing the main outputs of the research. Section 3 further

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<sup>1</sup> In line with the language used by European Union of the Deaf and other organisations, this report uses the term ‘Deaf people/persons’ but acknowledges that this term is not used by everyone, nor is it wording with which everyone identifies or agrees.

expounds the project's social media strategy. Section 4 then discusses the cartoons and infographics, while Section 5 deals with the artistic outputs commissioned by the project. Section 6 presents the videos and documentary of DANCING and Section 7 explores outputs aimed to support policy and societal change, such as the Toolkit for Cultural Organisations, the Resource List, and the Policy Brief generated by the DANCING project. Finally, Section 8 provides some concluding remarks.

## 2. WEBSITE

This section presents the [DANCING Project website](#), with a focus on its most notable features. It also highlights key actions and challenges in pursuing the full accessibility of the website.

### 2.1. Aim of the Website

The DANCING project's website serves as the main outlet to showcase the achievements and outputs of the project, as well as to raise awareness on the right to cultural participation of persons with disabilities. To be accessible to the broadest audience, graphic content on the website comes with a text description or other accessibility features. The DANCING website is an overall archive which highlights achievements and provides access to the outputs 'Tools for Change'. It also provides an account of events organised during the course of the project. It is frequently updated to include the latest progress of the research.

### 2.2. Web Accessibility as Underpinning Principle and a Goal

As discussed in the introduction of this report, accessibility is a prominent principle featured in the CRPD. Web accessibility is also specifically emphasised in the text of the CRPD, particularly in Article 21, and is key to the enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms in digital spaces. Commonly, web accessibility is defined as the combination of measures which ensure that 'people with disabilities can perceive, understand, navigate, and interact with the web' (Henry, 2006). It is, for example, implemented by using scripts for audio content to support users with hearing impairments or by adopting contrast between text and background to support users with visual impairments in reading text (Schmutz, Sonderegger, and Sauer, 2016).

From the very beginning, the DANCING project deployed an approach aimed to ensure web accessibility as a priority. Each graphic and several pages have an accessible version to accommodate users with disabilities. There is, in addition, a sidebar available on each page of the website which allows users to customise settings to accommodate their accessibility preferences, such as the colours and contrast of a given page's background, an alternative display of links, and access to different fonts and sizes. Ensuring the greatest accessibility of the website is always a work in progress. Indeed, Hilary Hooks, project manager of DANCING, responsible for the website, has carried out periodic accessibility checks and frequently updates the website, taking into account the most recent studies, guidelines, and best practices on web accessibility (Hooks, 2024).



*ERC DANCING Website Accessibility Tools Sidebar.*

The website follows the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.1](#) to reach high accessibility standards (either to WCAG standard AA or AAA). To this end, the [Website Accessibility page](#) features the various measures put in place regarding perceivability, operability, understandability and robustness.

### *2.2.1. Perceivability*

To ensure accessibility, DANCING provides 'alt text' descriptions to accompany images and illustrations on the website. DANCING offers closed captions and transcripts for embedded videos, including leveraging YouTube's 'CC' and 'open transcript' features. Sign language interpretation is available for the home page, and audio content is free from background noise. Pre-recorded videos have alternative formats to enhance accessibility. DANCING's content is designed to be flexible to accommodate different needs. Images can be enlarged, and text (with exception of captioning) can be resized up to 200% without losing functionality. To ensure a good navigation experience, content shown on the menu is hover-able at all magnifications of text, and text formatting is kept clear by limiting the use of italics, which may be difficult to read for some. Hover menus do not block content, links are visually distinct through a non-colour indicator (underline), and text is not justified to facilitate reading. Additionally, the DANCING website makes it easier for users to see content by ensuring high contrast between foreground and background which is also customisable by users for better readability.

### *2.2.2. Operability*

All website functions can be operated using a keyboard. To protect users from seizures or overstimulation, the DANCING website does not feature flashing content or automatic animations. Any video or GIF must be manually played. The DANCING website ensures simple navigation with clear headings, unique link text, and logical site structure. ‘Skip’ links allow users to bypass repetitive content, and a sitemap provides an overview of the site. The list of links to the parent pages of the current page helps users find their place within the website. Users can interact with the DANCING website using different input methods beyond the mouse, such as with a keyboard or touchscreen. Dropdown menus are navigable with the keyboard, and no path-based gestures or single key shortcuts are required.

### *2.2.3. Understandability*

To support users with cognitive or intellectual disabilities, the DANCING website can be navigated without unexpected changes. Clicking a button only triggers an action when intended, and consistent design elements appear throughout the site. There are no disruptive or other features that may confuse users such as pop-ups. Additionally, the DANCING website provides Easy-to-Read versions of several pages and documents.

### *2.2.4. Robustness*

Further, the DANCING website is built on WordPress, avoiding unnecessary custom controls that could interfere with accessibility, ensuring robustness. To maintain high standards, Hilary Hooks regularly tests accessibility using:

- WCAG 2.1 guidelines
- WAVE accessibility evaluation tool (every six months)
- Keyboard-only navigation tests
- High-contrast mode and image-disabled browsing
- ChromeVox screen reader
- Mobile and tablet testing

## **2.3. The Development of the Website**

The website has embraced the view of accessibility as an iterative process and it is understood that accessibility does not only result from a collaborative effort, but also entails a procedural approach where accessibility is actively considered and included in each step of the way (Ferri, 2024). Thus, it has undergone constant updates and revamping processes, which have not been without challenges.

### *2.3.1. Revamping the Website*

The DANCING website has undergone two major revamping processes to enhance accessibility features and to combine accessibility with effectiveness and usability – where usability is defined as the effectiveness, efficiency and satisfaction of a product for users

(Abran, Khelifi, Suryan et al., 2003). The main focus was on combining accessibility with effective communication and an elegant aesthetic of the website. This was achieved in collaboration with Accessibility Designer Norbert Croonenberg who offered his input and support, besides designing bespoke icons and navigation buttons for the website.

The first main revamping was in August 2023 around the time of the DANCING Mid-Term Academic Conference. During this update, pages were added to the website on [Conferences and Presentations](#), as well as on [Policy Contributions](#) and [Blogposts](#) made by the team. Furthermore, with the rapid growth of the project and the multiplication of outputs, a lot of changes were incorporated to maintain a user-friendly platform and ensure readability and accessibility. This was done through colour coding and labelling each type of output to improve user experience, as well as changing the banner image of the website to a more appealing and representative picture of the project. Finally, in addition to aesthetic changes, accessibility was also improved, notably by adding a distinctive accessibility icon to redirect users more easily to accessible versions of outputs.

The second major makeover was undertaken between October 2024 and March 2025 which improved the aesthetic of the website once again and showcased outputs, features and collaborations. More Easy-to-Read versions of the reports were added as well. Finally, the [Contact Page](#) of the project was updated to include the new DANCING LinkedIn page, which presents research outputs to a new and broader audience.

These revamps have endeavoured to ensure that the DANCING project website is interesting, lively, up to date, user-friendly, and accessible to people with disabilities.

### *2.3.2. Challenges*

The maintenance of a website that includes outputs and findings of a five-year project and with 100 pages of content is not without its own set of challenges.

Some of the challenges we have encountered were related to specific programme updates – which could randomly change the formatting of the website and its content – and the PHP (Hypertext Preprocessor) language, which needed updating to avoid the language going obsolete before the end of the project. The latter issues were addressed and resolved thanks to the collaboration between Maynooth University's IT Services and the DANCING team.

The sheer amount of content on the website in and of itself, while incredibly valuable for the archiving purposes of the project, is a constant challenge from a maintenance point of view and has required several bespoke arrangements to be implemented manually as well as continuous attention to functionality and accessibility features.



## 2.4. Notable Features of the Website

### 2.4.1. Home Page

The [Home Page](#) is a window on the project and the page upon which new users, unfamiliar with the project, form their first impression. This page enables users to apprehend the ethos and goals of the project. Additionally, the Home Page links to a video: '[ERC Story – Reimagining Cultural Diversity: Disability and Inclusion](#)' created by the funding body ERC which introduces the challenges of cultural participation for people with disabilities, and presents the research approach of the DANCING project. The Home Page also hosts an Irish Sign Language video of the '[ERC Project DANCING core tenets](#)' which notably discusses the various goals and WPs of the project as well as the legal principles DANCING relies on. The latter video is one of the accessibility features of the landing page and aims to recognise the importance of sign languages and Deaf culture.

### 2.4.2. The Logo

The project logo was created at the very beginning of DANCING by Wonder Works Studio Ltd. in consultation with Prof. Delia Ferri.

The [Logo Page](#) describes the meaning and symbolism behind the design. This distinctive logo is used throughout all DANCING communications, whether it is on publications, in presentation slideshows, during correspondences, or on the social media accounts of the project. This feature is easily recognisable and catches the eye, contributing to a better widespread recognition of the project.



*The DANCING Project Logo.*

### 2.4.3. The Timeline

An important feature of the website is the [timeline](#). It consists of a reversed chronological timeframe of the project retracing each milestone and achievement that marked the project, from the beginning of the project (2020) to its completion (2025). The timeline covers both major milestones such as conferences, and other events like 'DANCING Academic

Conversations'. Further, the timeline gives an account of all scholarly peer reviewed publications but also of dissemination outputs such as blogposts. It also features other relevant updates such as collaborations or artworks commissioned specifically for the project. The page lays out an archive of all the achievements of the project.

#### *2.4.4. Interactive Map*

The [Interactive Map](#) has been created through a collaboration between the DANCING team and Accessibility Designer Norbert Croonenberg and web designers Marble IT. This interactive map enables user interactivity with DANCING research and content, meaning individuals can navigate through the research, zoom in and out and click on integrated links. DANCING's Interactive Map aims to provide a novel and appealing way of presenting the key aspects and outputs of the project, specifically with a non-academic, general and broader audience in mind. The map aims to help simplify more complex concepts and uses colours, shapes, and graphics to enhance readability for the user.

### **2.5. Impact of the Website**

Created at the very beginning of the project, the DANCING website has been a powerful tool for the dissemination of the findings of the project. The website has been particularly useful to reach readers in different geographical areas, as the visitors came from different countries, and while the majority of the visitors were from Ireland and European countries in general, the website had a global reach, with visitors accessing the website from the United States of America being the third most frequent users.

Over 2000 users visited the website in 2024 alone. Furthermore, on average each visitor opened around five pages, which shows a high interest by visitors and is promising in terms of dissemination. This brings the total page views to over 16632 since the website was opened, with a total of 6612 sessions at the time this report is written. Regarding the most visited pages, after the Home Page, the most viewed ones are the pages about publications and events, meaning that the project's outputs are successfully disseminated to viewers, and encourages them to be more involved with the DANCING project community.

While the website will not be further updated once the project ends, it will stay live and available as a valuable archive of resources advancing the state of cultural rights for people with disabilities.

### 3. SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

Social media plays an important role in raising awareness about DANCING and its findings, engaging with stakeholders and disseminating results and outputs to a broader audience. It also enables DANCING to foster collaboration with other academics and experts across disciplinary fields enhancing the scholarly impact of the project.

#### 3.1. Social Media Strategy

At the start of the project, in 2020, a [Twitter/X profile](#) was set up to reach out to a range of professional audiences, including academics, policymakers, Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) and civil society. We identified a content schedule aligning with project milestones and key outputs. We further identified relevant hashtags and keywords in advance. At that time, we preferred Twitter/X since Instagram/Facebook were more effective for visually appealing content aimed at the general public rather than professional audiences.

Twitter/X has been used both to circulate notices of publications, and to repost other news pertaining to the matter of disability law and policy. Twitter/X has been particularly useful for the creation of an engaged and interested community and to get in touch with other ERC funded projects or civil society initiatives on cultural participation of persons with disabilities. Our posts have used hashtags to increase visibility, and tagged collaborators, research institutions, the ERC, and journals or publishers to expand reach and impact. During the course of the project, we have used analytics tools to track engagement rates, shares, and click-throughs, and regularly reviewed data to refine our strategy and implement changes if needed.

In light of changes and open debates on social media tools, at a later stage of the project, we have started deploying a new [LinkedIn page](#) to enhance impact and diversify our social media portfolio. Once the page was set up, we connected with people who were already engaged with the project, in order to reach them and their respective networks, who were likely to have interests related to the DANCING project. For example, we connected with participants of the DANCING Mid-Term Academic Conference and participants in the ERC DANCING Final Conference, together with contributors to volumes edited under the remit of the project. At the time of writing this report, we have also engaged with people who attended ‘DANCING Academic Conversations’ and other events organised within the project. As the DANCING project is based within the Assisting Living and Learning (ALL) Institute and the School of Law and Criminology of Maynooth University, we have engaged regularly with the LinkedIn pages of these institutions. We currently use LinkedIn to announce notable events like webinars, workshops and the ERC DANCING Final Conference.

### **3.2. Impact**

Overall, DANCING's social media pages have close to 700 followers combined, and in over four years the team published more than 3000 posts across all platforms, enabled by the planned and considerate social media strategy expounded above.

## 4. CARTOONS & INFOGRAPHICS

In an effort to raise awareness of the project through outputs accessible to a diverse range of people, DANCING has been collaborating with Accessibility Designer Norbert Croonenberg. Drawing upon ideas and text by Prof. Delia Ferri, Norbert Croonenberg has created bespoke cartoons and infographics, which have made the progress, milestones and research findings available in alternative accessible formats to a broad audience.

### 4.1. Cartoons

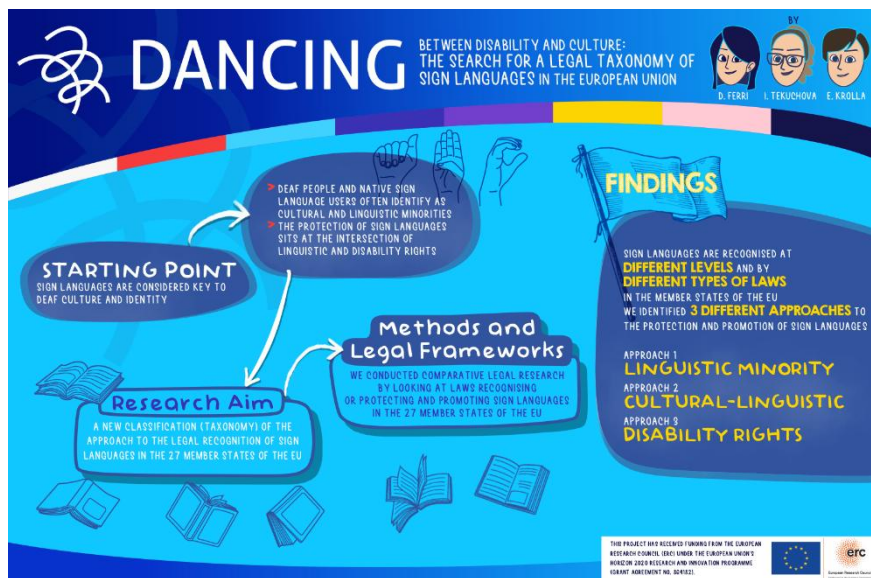
The [DANCING cartoons](#) available on the website have been designed as a primary way to raise awareness on the research progress and on the project's milestones. The language used is plain English and the use of images make them easy to read and understand. These cartoons showcase the project year by year, highlighting important events – such as conferences or workshops – and dissemination activities. A cartoon also showcased the collaboration between DANCING and Stogap and the ensuing premiere of 'Lived Fiction', which will be discussed later in this report.



*Cartoon designed by Norbert Croonenberg Accessibility Design. Ideas and text by Prof. Delia Ferri, Principal Investigator of DANCING.*

## 4.2. Infographics

[Infographics](#) have been deployed to raise awareness about key goals, methods and findings of the project. Infographics also translated academic publications graphically and in easy and appealing formats. For example, one infographic explained the search for a taxonomy of sign languages in the EU, building on a scholarly article published on *International and Comparative Law Quarterly* (Ferri, Tekuchova and Krolla, 2024).



*Infographic designed by Norbert Croonenberg Accessibility Design. Ideas and text by Prof. Delia Ferri, Principal Investigator of DANCING.*

## 5. ARTISTIC OUTPUTS

DANCING aims to go beyond the state-of-the-art and to provide a novel approach to the concept of ‘cultural diversity’ in the EU as encompassing disability. In doing so, it has also revisited concepts and tenets of disability law. The epistemic positioning of DANCING, in line with the human rights model of disability, has included persons with disabilities also through arts-based research. As such, the arts-based research carried out in DANCING served as a data collection method to understand barriers and facilitators to cultural participation for people with different types of disability, both as professionals and as audiences. Furthermore, arts-based research has provided an actual demonstration of the cultural diversity brought by, and inherent to, disability as discussed in depth in other DANCING reports (Ferri and Leahy, 2024).

### 5.1. Accessible Concert

On the occasion of the DANCING Mid-Term Academic Conference, the project presented an [Accessible Concert](#) held at Maynooth University on 4 September 2023 as part of DANCING’s arts-based research. The concert showcased the work of composers both with and without disabilities at one of the biggest dissemination-focused events of the project which has been discussed further in other DANCING reports (Krolla and Ferri, 2023).

The Accessible Concert included musicians with and without disabilities. It was co-organised in collaboration with the Department of Music of Maynooth University, and particularly Dr. Antonio Cascelli. Other collaborators included Dr. Francesca Placanica and Paolo Grazioli – professional soprano and tenor respectively – as well as Irish Sign Language (ISL) interpreter Shelley Gibson.

The concert took place in the Drama Room of the School of Education of Maynooth University which is fully accessible and allowed for a flexible layout to accommodate different needs. Although some aspects of the stage area and seating were pre-set, the Drama Room features a spacious entrance, stage area and accessible first-row, floor-level seating with space for wheelchairs. In line with the DANCING ethos and approach, the programme for the DANCING concert was available in various accessible formats. These formats included large print versions, Braille copies and digital soft copies compatible with screen readers. Two members of the DANCING team, Ms Hilary Hooks and Mr Tiarnán McDonough, acted as live audio describers. The live audio descriptions were one strategy pursued in creating a more widely inclusive performance and to supplement the experience of the music as performed. Furthermore, the ISL interpretation accompanied each piece by focusing on the mood, tempo, and experience of listening to the music, as it was likely experienced by those who do not speak Italian (the language of most operatic songs included in the programme).



*Dr. Francesca Placanica, Paolo Grazioli and Irish Sign Language Interpreter Shelley Gibson during the Accessible Concert as part of the DANCING Mid-Term Academic Conference.*

This concert effected and deployed the findings of the project and showcased an inclusive approach to art practices (in this instance opera). It offered participants the opportunity to engage directly with an accessible and inclusive art performance that showcased good practices discussed under WP1. The programme details of the performance can be found in Annex I of this report.

## **5.2. *'Lived Fiction'* Premiere**

As outlined above, the DANCING project collaborated with Stopgap which created a bespoke piece titled '[Lived Fiction](#)' for DANCING. This is an inclusive dance performance which aims to be a dynamic representation of accessibility, inclusivity and cultural diversity. The collaboration with Stopgap is premised on the idea that dance can be a powerful tool of non-verbal communication, reaching out to a wide audience, and generating insight on what cultural diversity really means.

The collaboration with Stopgap is part of the arts-based research that included various phases over a period of time between 2022 and 2024. Professor Delia Ferri as PI of DANCING and researcher Dr. Ann Leahy of DANCING had the opportunity to engage with members of Stopgap in interviews at different stages. Furthermore, Professor Delia Ferri also had the opportunity to observe and be immersed in the development of the choreography '*Lived Fiction*' created by Stopgap for DANCING during their residency in Ireland. While the methods



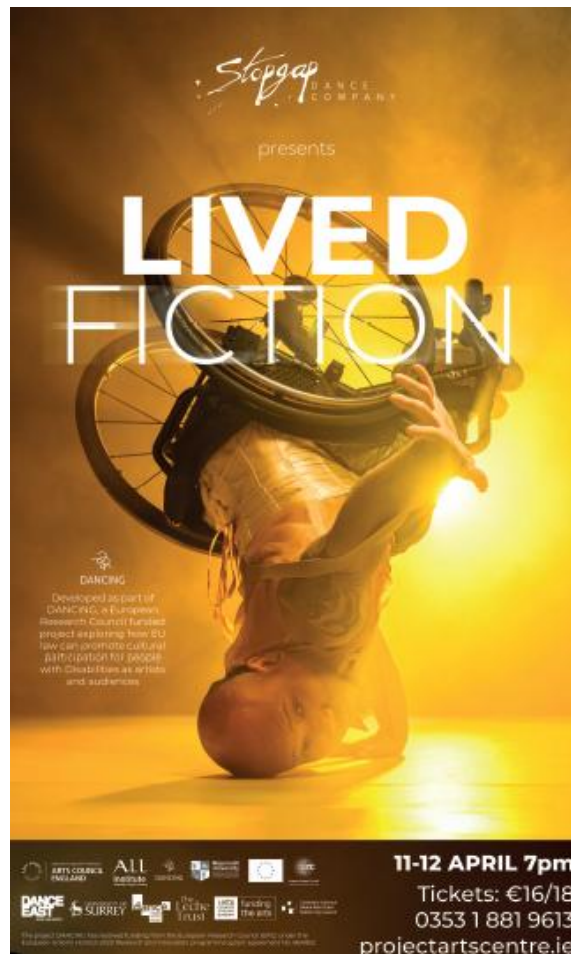
are explained in other reports (Ferri and Leahy, 2024), it is worth recalling that the research took place in three main phases that preceded the final performance in April 2024. An initial research engagement with Stopgap was conducted during their residence in Ipswich (UK) in December 2022, involving interviews with some members of Stopgap. A second and more in-depth engagement with observation, additional semi-structured interviews with members of Stopgap, as well as a survey with audience members was conducted during their residency at Dance Ireland premises in Dublin in February 2023. In that instance, the PI had the opportunity to partake in dance classes and training before observing the rehearsals. The work-in-progress or 'scratch' performance open to invited audience was held on 24 February 2023. Following which, during a residency of Stopgap at the University of Surrey (UK) in April 2023, additional observation by the DANCING team took place in a theatre setting at Guildford School of Acting. A focus group discussion was also conducted afterwards with six audience members. According to Lucy Glover, the Executive Producer of Stopgap, the research conducted by the DANCING team provided insights that bolstered Stopgap's reflection, creative processes, and course of action (Krolla, 2024).

The world premiere of the piece '*Lived Fiction*', directed and created by Lucy Bennett in collaboration with Stopgap, was held on 11 April 2024 in Dublin at the Lir Academy Theatre. The cast included Christian Brinklow, Monique Dior Jarrett, Emily Lue-Fong, Jannick Moth, Lily Norton (Audio Describer), Nadenh Poan, Hannah Sampson and Dan Watson (Voice of Dan). Full acknowledgement of all those who contributed in different capacities to '*Lived Fiction*' is included in Annex II of this report.

Overall, the premiere of '*Lived Fiction*' represented a major milestone for the DANCING project as well as for Stopgap (Ferri and Leahy, 2024).

The performance was open to diverse invited guests including academics, policymakers, representatives from OPDs, persons with disabilities, artists with and without disabilities and people working in the Cultural and Creative Sector (CCS), particularly those involved in inclusive practices. To further connect with the audience, following the performance a lively and engaged Question-and-Answer session was held with the full cast of '*Lived Fiction*' and choreographer Lucy Bennett as well as Professor Delia Ferri, which raised additional awareness on cultural participation of persons with disabilities and the furthering of cultural diversity in the EU (Krolla, 2024).

Finally, following the world premiere on 11 April 2024, a performance was open to the general public on 12 April 2024 in Dublin. Since then, Stopgap has continued to tour the piece further contributing to engaging new audiences. At the time of writing this report, the next performance of '*Lived Fiction*' is planned for [April 2025 in Singapore](#).



*Lived Fiction Performance Promotional Poster.*

### 5.3. Artwork

Another creative output deployed specifically for DANCING is the artwork of blind artist, Tiziano Pantano. Due to retinitis pigmentosa, Tiziano, a visual artist and musician, gradually lost his sight, but in 2018, began to create art again, notably by making collages and glued drawings.

DANCING commissioned an artwork representing the ethos and core tenets of the project, and in 2024, Tiziano delivered a bespoke creation titled '[Odisseo – Ulysses](#)'. The panels depict Ulysses tied by his companions to the main mast of his ship in order to hear the song of the sirens without being deceived by them, and thus continue on the long journey back to Ithaca. This part of the poem, more than others, demonstrates Ulysses inexhaustible thirst for knowledge.

Tiziano's glued drawings technique consists of glueing many cards of different shapes and colours together, choosing the components by touch and glimpsing their appearance, without knowing the final result but only imagining it. The artwork for DANCING is made of two side-by-side panels; each panel is 50cm x 70cm of both white and coloured cut-out pieces which

enable tactile representation and an exploration of the shapes and forms, emphasising the mythological story through texture rather than just colour. Through these panels, Tiziano uses an art form accessible for all those experiencing the art, including people with disabilities and especially people with visual disabilities.



*Artwork 'Odisseo – Ulysses' created by artist Tiziano Pantano.*

The themes of Ulysses and the search for new knowledge bring out the essence of DANCING as an ERC project, which is about advancing the state-of-the-art and frontier research. Further, the collage techniques and the two identical yet different panels speak to the ethos and goals of the DANCING project, promoting accessibility and diversity.

The official unveiling of the painting at the ERC DANCING Final Conference fulfils the artist's wishes to raise awareness since his art will be experienced by a broad audience on this occasion and will continue to be displayed long after the conference. This is in line with what scholars have noted, i.e. that for artists with disabilities, their work 'act[s] as the means through which disabled people share their experiences, convey their feelings and views or provide criticism to the society' (Symeonidou and Loizou, 2018). The artwork has been donated to Maynooth University and will be kept on permanent display on campus.

## 6. VIDEOS AND DOCUMENTARY

The DANCING project utilises various and diverse tools to showcase research processes, methods and findings. These media include short videos and the end-of-project documentary produced in accessible formats to ensure access to all. These videos have been created by Feenish Productions Ltd. and Director James Kelly.

### 6.1. Videos

The DANCING website includes a [Videos Page](#), which presents videos with captions offering insights into the DANCING project and its methodology. Each video has a link to accessible versions with text description of the content of the videos. One of the latest videos produced, titled '[Towards an Accessible and Inclusive Culture](#)' showcases the collaboration between the DANCING project, the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art of Trento (MART), Rovereto and the Interconnected Nord-Est Innovation Ecosystem (iNEST) project on the occasion of the 2024 'National Day of Contemporary Art' at MART. Another video discusses the '[Arts-Based Research](#)' developed in DANCING, and specifically the collaboration with Stopgap, which includes interviews and rehearsal footage. Further, the website also displays the '[Mid-Term Academic Conference Promo](#)' video which briefly explains the DANCING project and highlights the collaboration with Stopgap featuring dancers with and without disabilities prior to the conference.

### 6.2. Documentary

One of the key outputs representing 'Tools for Change' to reach a broader audience is a documentary on the project. The documentary illustrates the research process and its outcomes. It was filmed at various junctures over the course of the project until December 2024, and captures the most important research challenges, progress, and findings. The documentary promotes an understanding of the interrelation between culture and disability. It encompasses all the experiential, normative and theoretical objectives, being an audio-visual representation of the process leading to their achievement.

This documentary of approximately 40 minutes reflects the voices and contributions of people involved in DANCING. It will be released at the end of the project for the ERC DANCING Final Conference and will further be presented at appropriate cultural festivals. The documentary will be available on the DANCING website.

## 7. OUTPUTS: TOOLKIT, RESOURCE LIST AND POLICY BRIEF

This final section highlights outputs and resources aimed at translating academic findings into practical tools and to reach specific stakeholders, such as cultural organisations and policymakers. First, a Toolkit aimed to support cultural organisations in their ‘inclusivity journey’ and in encouraging greater diversity in their cultural spaces. Second, a non-exhaustive Resource List showcases existing initiatives improving the cultural participation of people with disabilities. Finally, a Policy Brief aimed at policymakers both at EU and national levels to support them in developing policies enabling a better systematic inclusion of people with disabilities in CCS.

### 7.1. Toolkit for Cultural Organisations

The [Toolkit](#) has been drafted to provide cultural organisations with key information and recommendations to improve and advance inclusion and cultural participation of people with disabilities, both as professionals and as audiences. This Toolkit informs about the key barriers faced by persons with disabilities, and how to implement accessibility. It also includes guidance on how to develop a successful accessible and inclusive disability policy.

### 7.2. Resource List

The [Resource List](#) supports the Toolkit mentioned above, by highlighting relevant projects, initiatives, toolkits, reports and additional resources produced by different projects or organisations aimed at advancing the cultural participation of people with disabilities. In doing so, this Resource List includes references to existing tools and resources which may be of interest to OPDs, cultural organisations, as well as academics, policymakers and civil society organisations. This Resource List built on findings of WP1, includes transnational and national initiatives, funded either by the EU, national and regional institutions, or private funds, which either started or were ongoing between 1 January 2010 (the year the CRPD was ratified by the EU) and 31 December 2024.

### 7.3. Policy Brief

The DANCING [Policy Brief](#) advances the inclusion of people with disabilities in culture, including recommendations to policymakers on how to advance the right to cultural participation of people with disabilities, both as professionals and as audiences. This output will be presented at the ERC DANCING Final Conference and will be discussed by members of EU institutions and bodies as well as representatives of European OPDs.

## 8. CONCLUSIONS

In line with ERC goals, DANCING is primarily an academic project pursuing frontier research and groundbreaking scholarly advancements. However, DANCING also recognises the importance of transcending the boundaries of academic knowledge and aims to present findings to the general public and engage with non-academic audiences. As noted in the introduction, this is consistent with the CRPD which places strong emphasis on awareness raising when it comes to disability rights.

The research conducted within DANCING and its results have been published in scholarly outlets and in highly reputed peer reviewed journals. However, DANCING, through its WP4, has also ensured that academic research can be translated into practice, and inform policy decisions as well as public programmes. WP4 has also aimed to improve accessibility practices in academia and in research projects, providing an example of how different formats can support access of people with disabilities in research to which they contributed and which advances the CRPD.

Further, reaching a broader audience by making outputs accessible, reader-friendly, and inclusive to all, enables the incitement of active change in all circles, including on a day-to-day basis by raising awareness on accessibility and inclusivity issues.

All in all, DANCING has endeavoured to trigger and support meaningful societal and policy change, drive progress and improve the lives of persons with disabilities.

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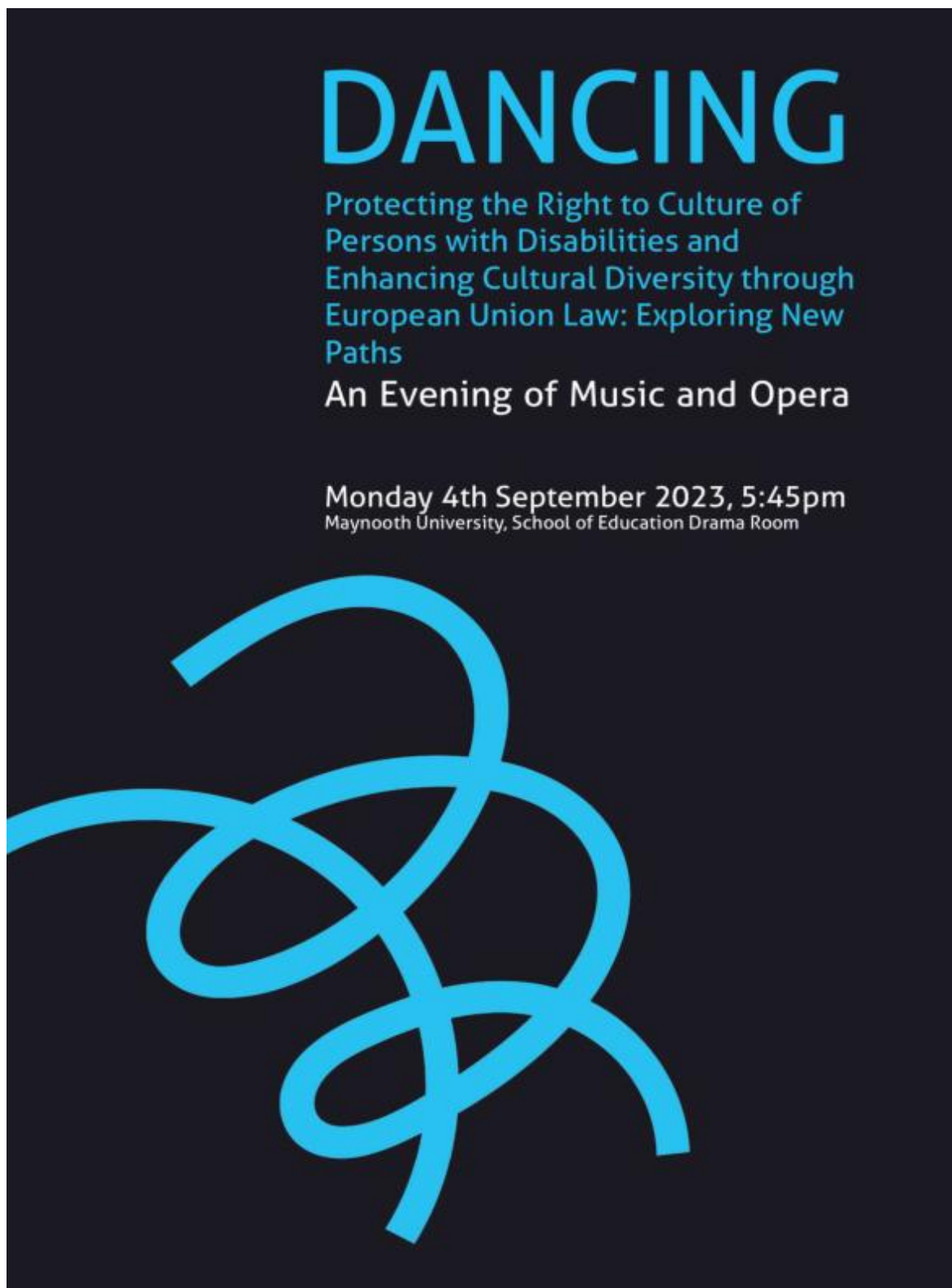
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## Annex I – Programme of the DANCING Concert, 4 September 2023

The formatting of the programme has been adapted to the file and does not fully reflect the final graphic format of the final programme. Accessible versions are available on the DANCING website at: <https://ercdancing.maynoothuniversity.ie/diary/events/event-accessible-concert/>



# Welcome

Good evening,  
*Buonasera,*

I am pleased to welcome you all to an evening of music and opera to mark the occasion of our Mid-Year academic conference, held earlier today. This evening's concert is an opportunity to enact some of the inclusive practices we have identified as part of our research, and to celebrate how cultural life is enriched when greater inclusion is afforded to people with disabilities. We are pleased to welcome disabled and non-disabled performers on the stage and to present a performance that embeds some important accessibility features, including sign language interpretation and audio description.

Tonight's concert, graciously organised in collaboration with the Department of Music at Maynooth University, is key to the ethos of the DANCING project. DANCING investigates the extent to which the protection of the right to take part in culture of people with disabilities and the promotion of cultural diversity intersect and complement each other in the European Union (EU) legal order. Being premised on the idea that cultural exclusion of people with disabilities has not only engendered their marginalization, but has also entailed a loss for society as a whole, DANCING aims also to support the implementation of Article 30 of the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. DANCING disrupts the conventional approach adopted by EU law scholarship by using a combination of legal, empirical and arts-based research to pursue three complementary objectives, experiential, normative and theoretical respectively. In that regard, engagement with different art forms is part of the interdisciplinary approach that characterises the project. Hence, tonight's performance expands such engagement, which has thus far focused on inclusive dance practice.

On a more personal note, tonight's concert is close to my heart as it presents some *arie* from Italian opera, and reminds me of my time as intern in the Arena di Verona back in 2003. I also feel that opera illustrates the rich palette of human life, reflecting the full inclusion that DANCING aspires to promote.

Delia Ferri  
Principal investigator for DANCING

**Please join us after the performance for a reception graciously offered by the School of Law and Criminology.**

# DANCING

Protecting the Right to Culture of  
Persons with Disabilities and  
Enhancing Cultural Diversity through  
European Union Law: Exploring New  
Paths

## An Evening of Music and Opera

Presented in collaboration with Maynooth University  
Department of Music

**Soprano** Francesca Placanica

**Tenor** Paolo Grazioli

**Accompanist** Antonio Cascelli

## Concert Programme

**Stanislao Gastaldon** Musica Proibita

**Maria Theresia von  
Paradis** Morgenlied Eines Armen Mannes

**Francesco Paolo  
Tosti** La Serenata

**Francesco Paolo  
Tosti** 'A Vucchella

**Leonard Cohen** Alleluya Music

**Franz Lehár** Tace Il Labbro

# Programme

## Musica Proibita

**Stanislaw  
Gastaldon**  
(1861-1939)

'Musica Proibita' ('Forbidden Music'), is a composition with a compelling history. The text of this aria by Gastaldon was written under the pseudonym Flik Flok, to music he had composed twenty years earlier

The text describes a young girl's desire to echo the refrain of a love song, sung to her by an attractive young man each night beneath her balcony. This is forbidden by the girl's mother, so the girl sings the melody alone in her absence.

## Morgenlied Eines Armen Mannes

**Maria Theresia von  
Paradis**  
(1759-1824)

The English translation of this piece is titled 'Morning-Song of a Poor Man'. It is a setting from a poem by Johann Timotheus Hermes. The text recounts the inner monologue of a poor man who wakes up in the morning and when confronted with the misery of his life, wishes for his wife and child to keep sleeping in blissful slumber. The music portrays the sense of urgency implied by the text through a tragic declamation recalling eighteenth-century operatic style

Von Paradis was an Austrian musician and composer who lost her sight at an early age. Some believe it was for her that Mozart may have written his Piano Concerto No. 18 in B-flat major. She had a successful career as a concert pianist, and switched to composing and teaching later in life. She was an advocate for the musical education of young girls and the visually impaired.

Von Paradis' overcame the barriers she faced in her time, as both a woman and a person with disabilities, to become a star musician and composer. Unfortunately, Von Paradis' work remains underrepresented in current classical music programming

# Notes

## La Serenata

Tosti was a singer and one of the greatest composers of chamber music. His contribution to the genre, which includes over 400 compositions in multiple languages, is comparable with Schumann and Schubert.

The song's title, which means "the serenade", is a 'supplica', in which the singer is heard urging the sound of the serenade to wing its way to a beloved who rests alone under the moon's radiance.

**Francesco  
Paolo Tosti**  
(1846-1916)

## 'A Vucchella

'A Vucchella', one of Tosti's most well-known romanzas, is built on Gabriele D'Annunzio's poetic metaphor describing the lips of the lover as a small rose ('A Vucchella' translates as "a dimple", referring to the dimple at the crest of the lips).

The poet, using the Neapolitan language, begs his lover for a kiss with a romantic yet fervent tone.

## Alleluya Music

'Alleluya Music' transforms the well-known song 'Hallelujah' by Leonard Cohen into a sacred composition, with revisions to both the music and the text of the original. This adaptation was done by the Bass singer Salvatore Schiano di Cola, with input by Giampaolo Grazioli.

**Leonard Cohen**  
(1934-2016)

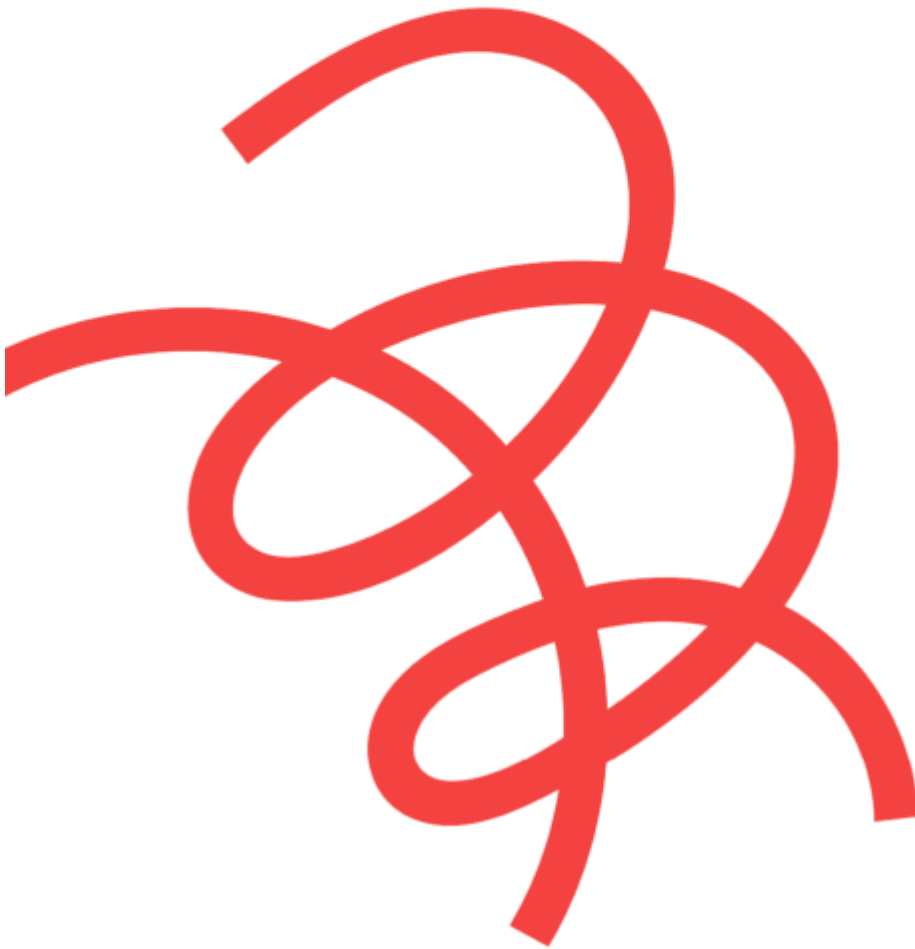
## Tace Il Labbro

The final piece is 'Tace Il Labbro', which translates as 'Lips are Sealed' from the operetta 'La Vedova Allegra' or 'The Merry Widow', composed by Franz Lehár.

This piece appears in Lehár's operetta towards the end, as various schemes start to unfold. The aria is sung by the character Danilo who, on the notes of a splendid and well-known waltz, declares his love for Hanna.

**Franz Lehár**  
(1870-1946)

# About the Performers



## Francesca Placanica

Francesca Placanica, soprano and artist-researcher, performs extensively as a music theatre, opera and chamber soloist in Europe, Canada and the USA. A PhD in Music from University of Southampton (2013) and a twentieth-century vocal performance scholar, she has been producing and performing on smaller-scale musical monodramas since 2012, which she toured across European Universities and concert venues, with the support of higher education partners. She is currently a Marie Curie Senior Research Fellow at University of Huddersfield and the project-leader of her practice-based project, 'Networks of Practice in New Music Theatre (NePraMusT, 2022-24). For more information, please visit: [www.francescaplacanica.com](http://www.francescaplacanica.com).

## Paolo Grazioli

Paolo Grazioli is a tenor whose long career is strongly connected to the Arena di Verona where he began as a choir artist in 1973. Following a serious injury in 1979, Paolo's singing career was temporarily halted, returning to the Arena as choir singer again in 1981.

Since 1989, Paolo has performed in prestigious venues across Italy as well as Budapest, Salzburg and Vienna. This includes solo performances at Teatro La Fenice (Venice), Teatro Massimo (Palermo). His operatic work includes several supporting actor roles at the Arena di Verona, where he performed until 2010. Notable performances include appearing as a featured performer in a live performance of Strauss' 'Salome' on RAI RADIO, the Italian radio channel operated by the national public-broadcasting organisation RAI, and as a soloist at the Mozarteum premiere of Salieri's Requiem. In addition, he has performed for audiences across Italy as part of composer and conductor Ennio Morricone's choir.

## Antonio Cascelli

Antonio Cascelli is a musicologist and performer specialising in piano accompaniment. He has taught music and performance studies at the University of Hull, University of Southampton and the University of Maynooth, where he is currently Associate Professor. Antonio's research focus is the history of music theory, with particular focus on analysis, theory, metaphor and performance. His papers on Chopin and Schenkerian analysis, among other topics, have been widely published in illustrious journals including Cambridge Opera Journal, Early Music, and Ad Parnassum. Antonio has collaborated with Radio Vaticana in Rome, Italy, on several recorded programmes. In 2018 he coordinated the Medieval and Renaissance Music Conference (MedRen2018) in Maynooth. As performer, he has collaborated with singers Virginia Kerr, Niamh Murray, Eamonn Mulhall, Francesca Placanica, and cellist Alison Hood.

# DANCING

## Project Team

|                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Delia Ferri</b>       | Principal Investigator   |
| <b>Ann Leahy</b>         | Post-Doctoral Researcher |
| <b>Hilary Hooks</b>      | Project Manager          |
| <b>Léa Urzel Francil</b> | PhD Candidate            |
| <b>Iryna Tekuchova</b>   | PhD Candidate            |
| <b>Eva Krolla</b>        | Research Assistant       |
| <b>Tiarnán McDonough</b> | Research Assistant       |

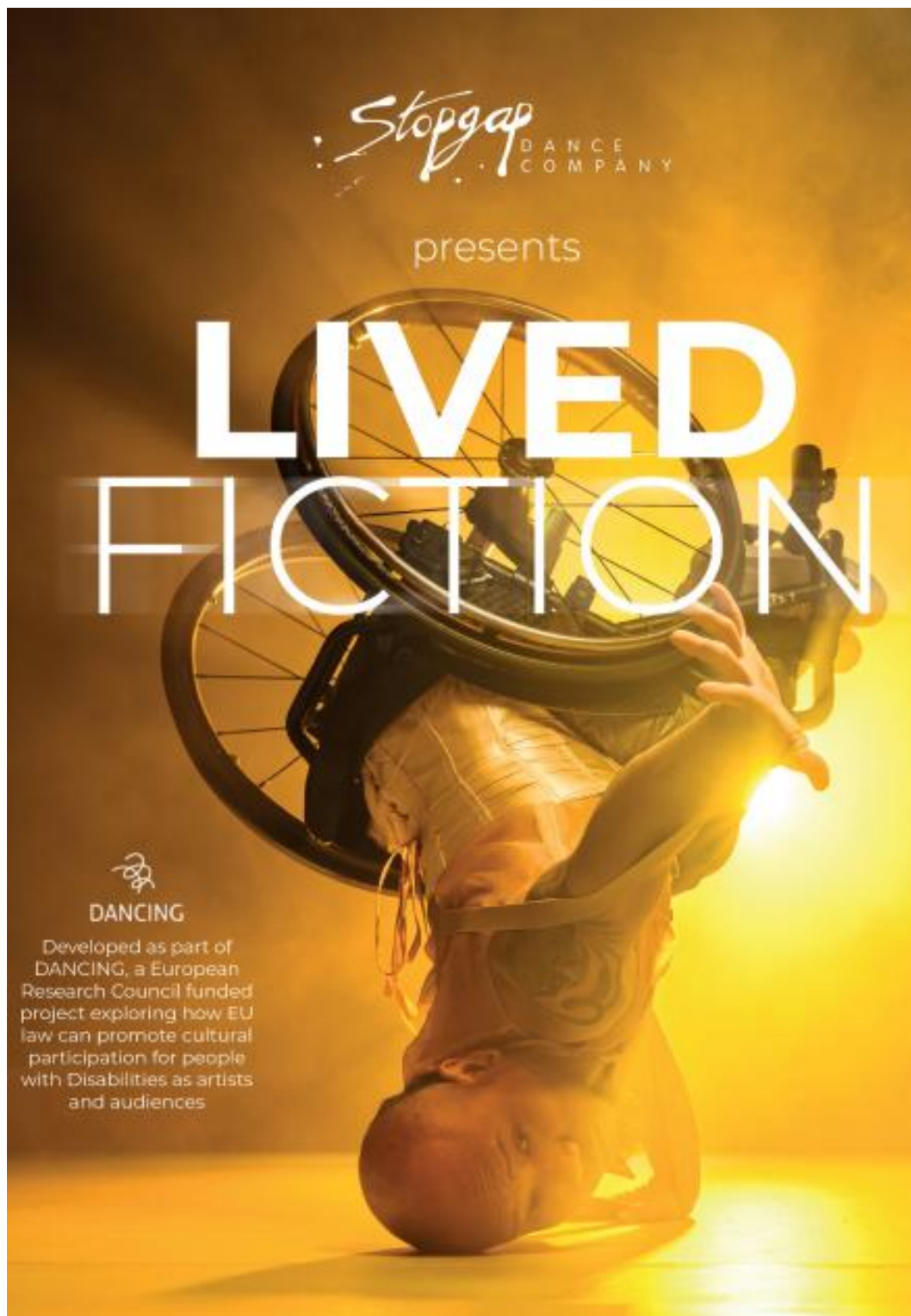


This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation programme (grant agreement No. 864182).



## Annex II – Programme of ‘Lived Fiction’, 11-12 April 2024

The formatting of the programme has been adapted to the file and does not fully reflect the final graphic format of the final programme. Accessible versions are available on the DANCING website at: <https://ercdancing.maynoothuniversity.ie/diary/events/event-world-premiere-of-lived-fiction/>





# *Lived Fiction*

11-12 April 7pm

Project Arts Centre, Dublin

Developed as part of DANCING, a European Research Council Funded project at Maynooth University School of Law and Criminology

Premiere performance on 11th April, followed by a post-show Q&A with Stopgap and members of the DANCING research team

**Show Duration: 90 minutes,**  
*including a 15-minute intermission*

Welcome message from Prof. **Delia Ferri**, Principal Investigator of 'Protecting the Right to Culture of Persons with Disabilities and Enhancing Cultural Diversity through European Union Law: Exploring New Paths (DANCING)'

# Good Evening,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the premiere of *Lived Fiction* by Stoppgap Dance Company, which was developed as part of DANCING, a European Research Council funded, interdisciplinary research project exploring how European Union (EU) law can advance the right to culture for people with disabilities, based at the Maynooth University School of Law and Criminology.

*Lived Fiction* challenges barriers that continue to make both performing and attending dance (as other cultural events) more difficult for people with disabilities. Stoppgap have developed an exciting piece of contemporary dance and one where accessibility is considered artistically, not as an afterthought but intrinsic to a creative vocabulary that combines choreography with audio description, captioning, tactile elements, and responsive sound-design.

Tonight's premiere of *Lived Fiction* showcases how DANCING facilitates exchange between researchers and artists that lead to artistic innovation but also enable artists who work inclusively to support current developments in EU law and policy. We are pleased to welcome to tonight's event legal scholars, policymakers, representatives from organisations of people with disabilities and those working in the arts, particularly those involved in inclusive practice. We hope that *Lived Fiction* will continue to spark conversations between those working in different disciplines long after the house lights have dimmed. This is characteristic of how DANCING aims to disrupt conventional approaches to EU law scholarship, combining legal, empirical and arts-based research to understand the extent to which the protection of the right to take part in culture of people with disabilities and the promotion of cultural diversity intersect and complement each other in the EU legal order.

Having previously trained as a dancer and worked in the arts, I am keenly aware of the enrichment that cultural participation brings. DANCING is premised on the idea that cultural exclusion of people with disabilities has not only engendered their marginalisation but has also entailed a loss for society as a whole. To address this, DANCING supports the implementation of Article 30 of the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which recognises the right of persons with disabilities to take part on an equal basis with others in cultural life. DANCING's findings so far have shown that the persistence of barriers for people with disabilities means that inclusion continues to be denied to many. We believe that dialogue between artists, policymakers and people with disabilities is fundamental to bring about inclusion for all, as exemplified in tonight's performance by Stoppgap.

**Delia Ferri**  
Principal Investigator of DANCING

**Statement by Lucy Bennett, Choreographer of *Lived Fiction* and Co-Artistic Director of Stopgap**

"...It's sharing and caring and finally chairing conversations about the mainstream or our own stream that we can slip down to our own big fat we don't give a damn about being invited to the table, we invite you to ours instead..."

—Lived Fiction Text

Stopgap Dance Company wants everyone to experience an inclusive world where diversity is not just accepted, but pursued. We are a choreographer-led company that specialises in devising inclusive dance productions collaboratively. For *Lived Fiction*, our latest performance developed as part of project DANCING, we wanted to invite non-disabled people into the culture of Disabled creatives, together evolving a new way of experiencing dance.

In developing *Lived Fiction*, we wanted to go beyond reasonable accommodation for Disabled audiences and embrace Integrated Creative Access, considering access as an artistic element to the work itself. As a collective of Deaf, Disabled, neurodivergent and non-disabled allies we regularly break from the past and the traditional and thrive on the creativity and potential of an alternative way of doing things. We are inspired by the thrill of reinvention, upcycling and translating dance and theatre and for us creative access is just that, bringing everyone closer to the intentions, beauty and passion of dance.

One of the questions we revisited within the creative process was: 'How can we balance access for audiences and the aesthetics of the choreography?' We would take a long time as a team trying to resolve the question scene by scene only to realise, we needed to take in the whole production holistically to be able to truly answer that question. It was a constant dance between being up-close to the details of the work and experiencing the feel and pace from a distance. Every seemingly small change in the choreography would create a ripple effect for collaborators working to embed creative access throughout.

Our involvement with the DANCING research team meant at certain points in the process we could open rehearsals to Deaf, Disabled, neurodivergent and non-disabled stakeholders outside of Stopgap. We nervously prepared for huge changes in direction but found instead insight and clear solutions borne out of the lived experience of participants. This bolstered our course and gave us permission to keep pursuing creative access alongside inclusive choreography. The insights we gleaned, however, are not something we can just add to our 'to-do' list when making a show. To stay relevant, we need to continue to evolve through feedback from a diverse range of patrons.

Stopgap has employed Disabled performers for over twenty years and in this time, we have been disturbed by the lack of Disabled talent being developed by cultural institutions, dance organisations and local dance schools worldwide. We too must own up to a lack of diversity in our audiences. To change this, maximum effort is needed. In developing *Lived Fiction*, we have come to realise that Integrated Creative Access is not about simply 'helping people who face barriers' but helping everyone. The experience has taught us so much about how we receive and perceive dance. Through this, our practice has evolved and is now more original than ever. It is only now, at the end of the process and the start of a tour, that we understand how inviting diverse audiences into our dance world through creative access has broadened cultural participation in all directions. We hope *Lived Fiction* will ignite a passion for experiencing dance in new and diverse audiences worldwide.

# *Lived Fiction* Credits

*Lived Fiction* was conceived, written and devised by Stopgap's Deaf, Disabled, neurodivergent and non-disabled creatives. The process was facilitated by Stopgap's Co-Artistic Director Lucy Bennett.

|                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Cast and Creatives                   | <b>Christian Brinklow, Monique Dior Jarrett, Emily Lue-Fong, Jannick Moth, Lily Norton (Audio Descriptor), Nadenh Poan, Hannah Sampson and Dan Watson (Voice of Dan)</b> |
| Director and Co-Writer               | <b>Lucy Bennett</b>  |
| Access Artist and Co-Writer          | <b>Lily Norton</b>   |
| Rehearsal Director                   | <b>Amy Butler</b>  |
| Composer and Sound Designer          | <b>Dougie Evans</b>  |
| Creative Captions and Projection Art | <b>Ben Glover</b>  |
| Lighting Design                      | <b>Jackie Shemesh</b>  |
| Costume Design                       | <b>Ryan Dawson Laight</b>  |
| Prop Designer                        | <b>Colin Holden</b>  |
| Access Guide                         | <b>Lauren Trim</b>   |
| Production and Stage Manager         | <b>Ethan Duffy</b>   |
| Production Manager                   | <b>Emma Henderson</b>  |
| Technical Manager                    | <b>Francois Langton</b>  |
| Lighting Associate                   | <b>Joe Hornsby</b>   |
| Costume Associate                    | <b>Rosie Whiting</b>   |
| Consultants for Creative Access      | <b>Kelsie Acton, Angela Bettoni, Lucy Clark, Martin Glover, Andrew Loretto, Anne McCarthy, Lesta Woo, Sofia Young-Santamaria, Ada Eravamo, Maria Oshodi</b>              |



|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| <b>Project Manager</b>       | <b>James Greenhalgh</b>                    |
| <b>Access Workers</b>        | <b>Abbie Thompson &amp; Laurel Flatley</b> |
| <b>General Manager</b>       | <b>Charlotte Mackie</b>                    |
| <b>Administrator</b>         | <b>Amy Owen</b>                            |
| <b>Co-Artistic Directors</b> | <b>Laura Jones &amp; Lucy Bennett</b>      |
| <b>Executive Producers</b>   | <b>Sho Shibata &amp; Lucy Glover</b>       |

**Stopgap Dance Company** is driven by a diverse creative team who uses dance as a movement for change.

Stopgap's mission is to create an inclusive world where diversity is not just accepted but pursued, a world where no one is limited by prejudice against Deaf, Disabled, or neurodivergent people.

Working with an artform shaped by human touch and energised by the spark of connectivity, Stopgap's work demonstrates the compelling power of diversity and inclusivity. Stopgap's artists move together to create a remarkable experience that transforms society's perceptions of difference and dismantle the inequity of privilege, in dance and in all aspects of living, collaborating, and creating together as humans.

Stopgap's work is both focused on and born out of the company's rigorous investment in equity and inclusive culture. They are committed to removing barriers to dance, nurturing the talents of dancers born into any body and any mind. Stopgap are in coalition with a wave of organisations moving towards a better representation of diversity on our stages and in society.

Stopgap are a global leader of disability access in dance and continuously examine best practice. They actively advocate for the industry and the wider world to become more inclusive.

Discover more about Lived Fiction on our website:

[www.stopgapdance.com/lived-fiction](http://www.stopgapdance.com/lived-fiction)

Twitter/X: [@stopgapdance](https://twitter.com/stopgapdance)



# DANCING

**Protecting the Right to Culture of Persons with Disabilities and Enhancing Cultural Diversity through European Union Law: Exploring New Paths (DANCING)** is an interdisciplinary research project, funded by the European Research Council (ERC) and based at Maynooth University, under Principal Investigator Professor Delia Ferri.

DANCING combines legal, empirical, and arts-based research methods to investigate the extent to which the protection of the right to take part in culture of people with disabilities and the promotion of cultural diversity intersect and complement each other in the EU legal order. This approach involves:

**Identifying** and analysing features of cultural access experienced as exclusionary by people experiencing different types of disability.

**Exploring** how the EU has used and can use its competence to combat discrimination to ensure the accessibility of cultural activities. This includes promoting disability identities, while achieving cultural diversity. In doing so, DANCING bridges the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

**Rethorising** the legal concept of cultural diversity, stemming from the intersection of different sources of law to encompass the protection of the rights of people with disabilities. In doing so DANCING promotes a new way of understanding the right to participate in cultural life within the EU legal order.

# DANCING believe that everyone has a right to take part in the cultural life of the community and to enjoy the arts.

DANCING looks at the right to participate in culture in a comprehensive way that has individual and collective dimensions and encompasses:

**Participation** in culture, such as the right to access cultural activities, goods and services.

**Active involvement** in culture, including creating cultural goods, services and activities.

**Recognition and protection for cultural communities**, as well as the right to enjoy and make use of their cultural heritage and cultural expressions.

DANCING are committed to engaging in broader dialogue with artists, the academic community, organisations of persons with disabilities and society at large. DANCING provides platforms for collaboration and discussion of emerging findings, through conferences, workshops and public conversations with artists, legal scholars and key stakeholders. DANCING is also collaborating with an accessibility designer and artists with disabilities to raise awareness of the project through outputs accessible to a diverse range of people.

You can find out more about our activities , including an archive of resources, academic papers and previous events on our website:

<https://erc.dancing.maynoothuniversity.ie/>

For news of upcoming events and activities we are involved in, follow us on Twitter/X:

@DancingErc



# Lived Fiction and the arc of creative access

**Performers and audiences revelling in a shared-experience of an inclusive theatre space**

*Stopgap Dance Company explain their multifaceted approach to embedding access in the creation of Lived Fiction*

To make dance accessible to the widest possible range of audiences, *Lived Fiction* places the aesthetics of access at its core. This is an approach which seeks to address barriers to art whilst also recognising the enormous artistic potential of access. *Lived Fiction* integrates audio description, creative captioning and a relaxed environment with world class choreography, allowing each element its own artistic voice so that dance takes on a new form that resonates with all audiences. Our success hinged on deconstructing dance in its purest form and re-constructing it in collaboration with creatives and advisors with lived experience of deafness, disability and neurodivergence. This collaborative approach to accessibility began right at the beginning of our creative process and was not an afterthought.

We want to avoid describing *Lived Fiction* as 'universally accessible'. To make every minute of a full-evening's work accessible to everyone would assume all access needs are the same and disregard personal preferences and unique perspectives. Instead, *Lived Fiction* has an arc, where the balance of artistry and accessibility ebbs and flows, offering audiences an understanding of how different people might meaningfully experience dance and the wider world.

## **Creative Audio Description**

We are integrating both live and pre-recorded audio description, delivered by our on-stage audio describer and the dancers. The majority of scenes place emphasis on audio description and spoken word, supporting blind and visually impaired audiences with access to the choreography. This also presents opportunities for sighted audiences to engage with dance work in a new way. In some scenes text and description is pared back, leaving space for the music, sounds of the dancers, the space, and the costumes to do the descriptive work.

## **Creative Captions**

We feel that the work is visually rich and engaging for Deaf audiences, supported by creative captioning and digital projections working together to artistically express the choreography, spoken word and music. Through consultation with our Deaf, Disabled, neurodivergent and non-disabled collaborators and creatives, we made a collective decision to not incorporate sign language interpretation during the performance. However, we will work with host venues to provide sign language interpreters for any pre or post show talks and announcements.

## **Relaxed Performances**

We warmly welcome Learning Disabled and neurodivergent audiences to *Lived Fiction* and are committing to core elements of Relaxed Performances. Our Access Guide will be working with Project Arts Centre's Front of House staff to implement this, ensuring a committed shared approach to access.

We welcome voluntary and involuntary noise and movement in the auditorium.

We will have the house lights on at a sufficient level and leave the auditorium doors open throughout the performance, and we welcome audiences entering and exiting the auditorium at any time.

For our performances at Project Arts Centre, a Quiet Space is available before, during, and after the performance.

There is an Access table outside in the foyer of the Project Arts Centre, where audiences will be able to access resources, alternative format programmes and sensory supports such as ear defenders and sunglasses.

There will be no specific adjustments to the sound or lighting during the show. The show uses text, music and soundscapes, with varying levels of noise. When available, please take a look at our visual and sonic stories which share more about the sound levels. In particular, the eight-minute scene called 'Tight Textures' in the middle of act one has loud bass-filled music and bright moving lights. We will provide an in-show warning before 'Tight Textures'. This will allow people to prepare for the scene and potentially leave the auditorium temporarily if they wish to.

## **Alternative Formats**

A Visual Story is available for this performance and braille versions of the programme and visual story are both available at our Access table.

## A Note on Language

The dialogue between Stopgap and DANCING is a productive and enabling one that transcends boundaries between disciplines. Stopgap use 'identity first' language (i.e. disabled person) while DANCING use 'person first' language (i.e. person with a disability) in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the human rights model of disability.



Supporting public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**



Lived Fiction was developed as part of the research project DANCING: Protecting the Right to Culture of Persons with Disabilities and Enhancing Cultural Diversity through European Union Law: Exploring New Paths, led by Della Ferri, Professor of Law at Maynooth University

This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation programme (grant agreement No. 854182)