Name one barrier your organization has in terms of equity-

money, access, dominant ideology?

Inequity in arts reflects society at large.

The AMY Project supports women and non-binary youth

To tell their stories with honesty, integrity and rigour.

Nikki Shaffeeullah speaks of containers-

spaces at work that respond to those within it;

making space for the margins to join the mainstream.

There are no shortcuts to building relationships.

Go beyond priority group check boxing.

It’s enticing, it really is, but give up the temptation to tokenize

A group needs to make space for the margins or it will die.

This is container building- a process of healing, learning and building trust.

Do community artists trust you?

Who is at your table for dinner?

The neighbors you always knew, or those you want to include?

Who’s not at the table? Can they knock on the door?

Do you like to say: “We should get together sometime”

But never make a date?

It’s the difference between meeting up and walking together

And saying “Just Google it” and walking away.

But be transparent in why you are reaching out.

Have multiple channels for communication

so it’s not a one-way, uphill street

Leave one two or three doors open for people to reach

let key numbers be known, leave the lights on

Have picnics over the policies so everyone knows what’s up.

Break it down into something that makes sense.

 It’s challenging and dense but it’s possible and priority.

How can you make space for these conversations continually?

And when you ask the questions, be ready to respond

And if someone is speaking in secret, don’t dismiss it as gossip.

Ask why haven’t I made it possible to talk to me?

Leave space in your schedule for solving conflict, breathing, rearranging

Make space in your budget for lighting, childcare, training and interpretation

If it applies, don’t cling to hard to your own marginalization.

We’re taught that diversifying will hurt artistic quality

We get trapped in fear of rejection and wonder if we can afford it.

Until we confront these fears, we won’t be able to change.

Spend time with these fears to transform the status quo

into more creative, artistic landscapes.

We’re gonna shake things up now, we’re gonna decenter!

Enter: Kevin A. Ormsby

Let’s ask some questions about the way we’re sitting all facing the front,

And the words we use ikle “classical dance” who owns that?

Classical from where? Kevin would ask.

Yes, it’s gonna get uncomfortable, but we’re shifting discomfort into inquiry.

So instead of being mad at “the gossip” ask “why is this issue happening here?”

Pluralism too asks who is not in the room.

Who would have made it if they had the invite and the map?

 In Halifax they asked Kevin – “how long have you been here?”

He said, “Since the Maroons started kicking up a rumpus and were sold to nova scotia for codfish.”

We been here and your organization is on our streets

But do your boards reflect our communities?

You can’t have one black guy speaking for everybody.

One is tokenism, two is parity, three is equity.

How intimately do you want to understand everyone?

How can we sing equity like a song? The song that never ends!

Yes, it goes on, and on my friend,

But don’t feel down, don’t beat yourself up.

You’re doing good work,

It’s just that…you can do better. We can do better.

We can share resources for free and we can start at the grassroots.

As artists we have more resources than we choose to use-

Who can you partner with? You can help them, they can help you.

We’ve been checking boxes for way too long in this country.

Think about the box before you check it.

Decenter, decenter, decenter!

Shake it up from when you walk in the room!

Look people with a kind glow,

Now reach out to your neighbor and say hello

“Dat don’ feel good?”

Now that we’ve decentred let’s build a Tangled team for arts and disability

Cyn Rozeboom presents the picture:

Image one: Black blobs that form a giraffe

Image two: is it duck or rabbit?

Once your brain makes the flip, you cannot *not* see it.

Our brains can draw different conclusions from the same material.

We can see or not see things that are right in front of us.

Center accessibility in your agenda rather slip it in as an afterthought.

The medical model says a disability means something wrong.

The social model says it is caused by how society is designed

From this perspective, disability can be a challenge for communities to reorganize.

Why not build ramps from the beginning so those in wheelchairs can come in!

Why not break up all this sitting time for dancing or stretching or singing

Why is it the mature thing to sit still for four hours straight

like it’s some kind of competition?

That’s no fun, break it up!

We all need some adjustments at times

like all of you who wear glasses have impairment of your eyes

Now imagine if all text was written in size six font?

Just think about that- need I go on?

It’s not enough to believe in inclusion but not try to make it happen.

It can seem like an insurmountable task but that’s not always the case,

There is probably something simple you can do this week if not today:

* caption your images for the vision-impaired
* make your arts studios more affordable throughout the year,
* seek the beauty in the non-normative- the so -called ugly

Learn to be ready for opportunities to change

And when they arise, act!

It is better to make changes that you can maintain and sustain

Make it so that people want to come back.

When you make a mistake, don’t get defensive,

 It’s not about you so much as lifetimes of social unfairness.

In that moment, you can unload a brick from someone’s shoulders.

The chance to make change has always been there,

you may not see it at first, but look closer.

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