

# **INCLUSION THROUGH PERFROMANCE**

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# **ABSTRACT**

Timotej Kotnik: Performance as a form of inclusion

(Under the direction of Victor Mendoza)

This thesis explores musical performance as a form of inclusion, especially in relation to people with special needs. It introduces a brief historical overview and traces the development of society's reaction to People with special needs over time. In addition, it defines the ideal of inclusion.

Performance, often seen as a single act, is presented instead as an ongoing process, providing participants with solid grounds for growth, learning and development. This thesis flirts with the idea of musical performance not only as a form of inclusion, but as a means of achieving catharsis for both the performer and the audience simultaneously.

The idea and mission of the International Festival “Igraj se z mano,” is offered as a thread for the insight into the process, development and effects of performance while proving its potency as a vehicle for inclusion.

To my one and only love, I could not have done this without you.  
Thank you for your love and support. To my brother, that was always there for me. He has  
been my inspiration and guidance.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS**

SN – Special needs

PWSN – People with special needs

KWSN – Kids with special needs

ISZM – “Igraj se z mano”

US – United States

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The struggle for equality and justice by excluded and oppressed groups is not something entirely new and unheard of. There have always been people who defied the founding principles, practices and factors that determine the criteria for assimilation and inclusion into society. Just as Rosa Parks fought for unalienable rights of life, liberty and the opportunity to participate in society in a full way, many are still fighting for opportunities of inclusion for people with special needs.

Inclusion undertakes a different significance in various parts of the world in various contexts. In terms of people with special needs however, the definition of inclusion spans from issues such as accessibility to basic facilities through wheelchair ramps, to access to education and basic opportunities for interaction. People with special needs have always been pushed on the edge of society and “hidden” in institutions. This issue is most prevalent in the education system which tends to separate “normal” students and students with special needs. In discussions about differently abled individuals, phrases such as “we don’t have enough funds”, or “there is not enough time to create a special program for them” tend to resound through staff rooms and conference halls. This mentality stems mainly from fear and delusions about what inclusion really means.

A common misconception about inclusion is that everyone must “love” everyone else in order for inclusion to work. According to John O'Brien, Marsha Forest, Jack Pearpoint, Shafik Asante & Judith Snow in “The Ethics of Inclusion,” “Inclusion doesn't call on us to live in a fairy tale. It doesn't require that we begin with a new kind of human being who is always friendly, unselfish, and unafraid and never dislikes or feels strange with anyone... The

real challenge of Inclusion is to find common cause for important work that cannot be done effectively if we isolate ourselves from one another.”

It is because of this idea, that performance is such a feasible tool for inclusion. Music is considered as a universal language with the ability to surpass barriers of culture, race or color. The aim of this thesis is to explore the bonding properties of music through performance as a tool for social inclusion especially with regards to persons with special needs.



## CHAPTER 2: INCLUSION

### 2.1 Introduction

While driving around recently, my brother and I were having an extensive conversation about the Festival “Igraj se z mano”. Deep into the conversation, it occurred to me that the term inclusion undertakes a different significance around the world. and this realization was quite thought provoking. As a citizen of ex-Yugoslavia, which is known for its communist and socialist order, I have never encountered inequality between men and women or between races although issues such as these are very prominent today in places like the U.S.

Physical workers being men and women dressed exactly the same, with same rights and duties. Since 1942 (note: beginning of communist Yugoslavia) there was general voting right and first female member of the parliament was elected. By 1945 we had first female minister. Just thinking about the fact that this was in the middle and right after the W.W. II I find it pretty remarkable how significant the role of women has been since the beginning of Yugoslavia. I have never personally encountered the racial issues either. Until recently, Slovenia did not have much tourists coming in and out of the country, so racial diversity was not present at all. I remember seeing a black person for the first time on a street in Ljubljana when I was a little kid. I went up to him and tried rubbing his skin off to see if its really that color. In my opinion, more often than not, we find it interesting seeing people of different skin color rather than having hostile disposure towards them.

Different story, however, is when we are addressing people with special needs. Historically they have always been pushed on the edge of society and “hidden” in the institutions, behind four walls. Even today issue remains. Instead of them being integrated into society, given equal opportunities and treatment, they are being pushed aside and often forgotten. This issue is most prevalent in the education system which is oriented towards

segregating “normal” students and students with special needs. This mentality is then further projected onto the students and into the wider society.

It is Igraj se z mano's main goal and mission to integrate people with special needs into society, while providing the necessary education in terms of inclusion, diversity and acceptance of others.

## 2.2 Definition

The term inclusion first appeared at the special needs education conference in Salamanca in June 1994 (The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on special needs education).

Various authors define inclusion in many different thought provoking ways such as:

- »Increasing integration and decreasing expulsion from ordinary society.« (Potts in Lesar 2009, p. 103)
- »Inclusiveness means full membership in the age group, in local school; it means following the same curriculum as other schoolmates and it is important in you are not present.« (Hall in Lesar 2009, p. 103)
- »Inclusiveness describes a process, where school tries to respond to all students as individuals by revising their curriculum, organisation and supplies.« (Sebbav in Lesar 2009, p. 103)

This paper focuses on broader definitions of inclusion that merge all aspects of diversity in terms of race, sex and sexual orientation, religion, special needs, social status, disability and education.

There are three branches of integration in relation to inclusion– physical, educational and social, and all three must be fulfilled for inclusion to take a full effect.

According to Siperstein and Parker, “physical integration has no effect if there is no social interaction between participants of pedagogical process. The success of educational integration depends on the adjustments and modifications of the program, qualification of pedagogues, and suitable didactic equipment”. (Sipstein and Parker in Rovsek 2010) We can

conclude that physical and educational integration doesn't necessarily lead to social integration, although it takes place in a classroom, school or any other group education form. There must be a condition fulfilled in order for social integration to take effect. This condition is spontaneous interaction amongst various and diverse participants in educational process that is based on interest in observation, interaction, relationship and partnership with others. It is our main goal and mission to explore, create and develop this at International Festival "Igraj se z mano".

## CHAPTER 3: SPECIAL NEEDS

### 3.1 Historical overview

Throughout history, people with special needs have often been treated inhumanely, even cruelly. There is no reliable information of their treatment in ancient times. Sources such as A. Marovt in "Monografija ob 100 letnici Zavoda Janeza Levca" conclude that everyone not capable of taking care of himself was removed from the "healthy" social tissue (Monografija ob 100 letnici Zavoda Janeza Levca, 2011). They faced similar fate in Roman Empire, where kids with special needs were put into baskets and thrown into river Tiber (Novoljan 1997).

Even medieval times did not bring about the necessary changes in relation to PWSN. The church at this time portrayed KWSN as a sign of "bad" spirit. Due to its dominant position as one of the main social institutions of the time, it instigated an effort to deter these kids from social life, no matter the social status. There have always been certain critical individuals, especially in arts that were critically portraying the theme of expulsion of diversity as problematic social practice. This became transparent already in the early, recorded history. "Medea is marked as a different, barbaric foreigner, though helping Jazon, cannot escape the fact that she is a member of a non-Greek tribe and tied to raw force and not rational posture." (Krofljic 2006, p. 3)

Enlightenment brought the first major changes to treatment of PWSN. The first institutions for educating KWSN were established in France, mainly for the deaf. In Slovenia, the first organized education for KWSP started in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Gorica. Before the establishment of these institutions, individual kids would be treated by foster homes, orphanages and Church orders providing them with basic supplies necessary

for survival. Initiatives and a rise in the awareness of different approaches to educating KWSP brought development in this area.

There were new institutions established, geared mostly towards the deaf and blind. Years of effort and a rise in awareness were needed before the first “subsidiary” department was established in 1911 at "IV. Male Primary School Prule" in Ljubljana. In next few years, the demand for educating KWSN outgrew predicted capacities.

In his studies of the history of insanity, as well as in treatment of other marginal groups (criminals, prostitutes, homosexuals, etc.), Foucault states that we cannot look at the historical changes to diversity as a one-sided humanization of relations of majority to “outcasts”. (Foucault 1998). Although, enlightenment brought the establishments of special institutions for treatment of PWSN and encouraged the establishments of special professions (psychiatry), has the same period with Descartes “cogito, ergo, sum” most vigorously cut into the ambivalent relation of society to PWSN. (Kroflic 2006) Therefore its not surprising that only in the 90s of 20<sup>th</sup> century the idea of inclusive stance of help, that would help abolish stigmatic forms of expert treatment of this population.

### **3.2 Defining special needs**

The tendency to classify and evaluate people is probably as old as humanity itself. However, the criterion for classification and evaluation of people has changed over the years. There have been different terms, which define different “defects” and people with special needs. These terms were mostly connected to medical discourses and even to discourses of negligence, often to classify and normalize institutional life. Today, attempts are being made to transform the medical discourse into pedagogical discourse, justified with modern values such as human rights. Efforts are also being made to integrate even post-modern discourses involving inclusive relationships to diversity and differences.

“In modernistic conception, handicapped were seen as individual and social pathology. For the same reason, they developed a system of valuation, professional and systematic solutions, based on these foundations. They wanted to define handicapped as precisely as possible in relation to their defect or disorder. Individual was defined by generalizing the disorder (deaf, blind, mental disorders, etc.) PWSN were defined and classified by the type of defect or disorder and so they compared deaf with deaf and all of them of course stigmatize with titles, with their dislocation from social environment and devaluation.” (Opara 2003, p. 37)

Even today, we still feel the need to classify and value people distinctively outstanding by their physical or mental characteristics from arbitrarily set standards of “normalcy”, while are trying to avoid universal valuating systems and explicitly exposed ethics of justice. When values of a person are under the standard, we classify him as a person with special needs; the adjustments of physical, cultural and educational environment are conditional with formal orders based on medical diagnostics of handicap.

S. Wendell and generally acclaimed definitions in United Nations in 1993, differentiates between impairment, disability and handicap as such:

“Impairment: loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological or anatomical structure or function.

Disability: inability to perform an activity in the capacity defined normal for human beings.

Handicap; detraction, that comes from impairment or disability which limits or prevents the fulfillment of the role, that is defined normal in regards to age, sex, social and cultural factors.

Handicap: therefore handicap is a loss or limitation of opportunity for participation in the life of community on equal level as other participants.” (Wendell v Zavirsek 2000, p.98).

These well-intentioned definitions advocate a change of term “special needs” to “handicap”, since they point to the fact that handicap/special needs co-create social environment, and expose the responsibility of society to adjust the environment for different groups of people with atypical development and abilities for functioning.



## CHAPTER 4: FESTIVAL IGRAJ SE Z MANO

### 4.1 Introduction

Being part of the Festival “Igraj se z mano” for nine consecutive years has been a tremendous and unique experience. Every year I am positively surprised to see how much this festival means to kids/people with special needs, schools and kindergartens around Slovenia, the local community, institution Center Janez Levec (partner in organization) and the city of Ljubljana itself. Each year I get to see smiles and joy on participants' faces and how excited they are to be part of something of this size and importance. Some of the kids that have been coming to the festival year after year I, in a sense, grew up with. We grew together.

I had the pleasure to experience the festival on the broadest spectrum. I started off as a part of the technical team in the first year, working side by side with KWSN with one mission: “Make the festival run as smooth as possible.” That meant waking up every morning at 4am in order to be at the venue at 5am and start setting up and preparing everything needed for the kick off at 10am, everyday. When working with someone and are able to see past the differences, handicaps, disabilities or any kind of diversity really, you start to form a beautiful bond with them and you really enjoy what you do together. I don't think there was anyone who would ever complain about waking up everyday basically in the middle of the night. They knew you will be there for them and above all they honestly appreciated being part of the crew. Over the years, I went from being part of technical team to being a mascot for our sponsors (and still working as a technical team), to an all-around coordinator and later a founder and leader of the festival's “house band” and then slowly transitioned to a program manager for the evening concerts.

In 2009, my brother and I came up with a very daring and risky idea. We couldn't really wrap our heads around why for people with special needs (we are talking from 10yrs – 30+yrs) they always bring some kind of singer-songwriter that does music for little children, as if they couldn't enjoy or understand any other kinds of music. We decided to start bringing in bands with jazz, funk, rock and fusion backgrounds. We took a great risk in doing that, due to the fact that we had no clue how the audience (people with special needs) or the educators would respond to it. To big surprise, the response was great. I have played from small to really big stages in many different countries but have never seen an audience more appreciative than them. They were dancing to us playing jazz standards, would demand more and wouldn't want to leave until we finished. Just imagine! With these experiences in mind, we have decided it would be a great idea to make use of the stage (main festival runs from 9am to 1pm) in the evenings as well. I started bringing in people and bands I knew from Slovenia as well as Netherlands, Nigeria, Cameroon, Bulgaria, Germany, Turkey etc. Although we had some success with the evening concerts in past years, we have never been really able to do it on a larger scale.

I walked by the office at Berklee College of Music – Valencia Campus one day and saw a brochure, and I am really not a person to care about brochures much, but a word caught my eye: “diversity”. I didn't think much of it yet, however, a few days later I received an email that contained two words that I was so fond of for past decade: “inclusion and diversity”. I immediately went and searched the Berklee website and came across “Office for Diversity and Inclusion”. My heart jumped. It was clear to me that Berklee College of Music was about the same. My mission to bring Berklee College of Music to Slovenia as part of even bigger mission of diversity and inclusion on Festival “Igraj se z mano” began.

## 4.2 The Idea

The festival years organized activities, where groups of youth with special needs are at forefront and endeavor dispel of taboos, being an obstacle in spontaneous socializing and accepting people with special needs, creating an opportunity to obtain positive experience, which is the base for accepting differences.

The main idea is to create an “environment and time” for mutual integration of children and youth with special needs with other children and youth as well as adults with or without special needs. Through socialization and mutual creation, the gap between “handicap and normality is bridged and the social inclusion of all people are exercised. The core of inclusive activity is spontaneous socializing of children of various capabilities and highlights justice and ethics of care as well as the idea of “meaningful combining of both ethical approaches in inclusive school or kindergarten” (Kroflic 2003)

With this project we are trying to create a model and connections for more successful social inclusion of children, which are now in different educational institutions (regular and special) in the main regions of the country as well as abroad. We are trying to influence better and more ethically acceptable treatment of PWSN in different areas of education. The gap between regular and special education is still very wide. With international festival “Igraj se z mano”, our work ethics and a strong message, we are trying to create smoother transitions between schools, special schools, institutions and other associations that would contribute to social inclusion of children and youth with special needs. Festival ISZM combines activities with a goal of spontaneous active participation, through gam, of children, youth and adults with special needs, creating base for inclusion into wider social environment and vice versa.

Activities are both active and passive, depending on the role of every individual at the festival events, however, the roles constantly transition from one (passive: listener, spectator, listener, etc.) to another (active participant of the workshops, performance, etc.). Center Janez Levec, and the Association of Inclusive Culture organize festival events that take place throughout the year. At festival events, there is actual exercise of inclusion of all people, no matter the differences and diversity. Children, youth and even adults together with spectators and passers-by are play together, create together and have direct experiences with one another through the principle of co-creating, cooperating, partnering, performing, etc. It is a ground for establishing and creating relationships and therefore a base for melting the stereotypes. This direct experience with others disregarding differences gives the primary guidelines for a future society that we all want and deserve. This Festival proves that it is possible to mutually create different, but also similar things, to be successful without competition and envy, to be a “star” only through joy and work, to find a child in yourself that doesn’t know the boundaries in the most positive sense. To find something for yourself no matter the “handicap”, to accept and be accepted (B. Kotnik 2010).

International festival year “Igraj se z mano” and Center Janez Levec as the copyrighter of “Igraj se z mano” (“Play with me”) and main organizer of events and activities trying to influence the foundation of values and reinforce those values of society, crucial for inclusion. Solidarity, respect, community, diversity are some of them. It tries to influence and reinforce those crucial competencies allowing quality integration of children and youth with special needs as well as children and youth with characteristic development. Socialization, social skills, communicational skills, conceptual skills, practical skills are some of them.

### 4.3 Festival

The festival is the most extensive part of the project. The main festival takes place in Ljubljana, but there are other small festivals taking place in Maribor, Begunje, Muta (Slovenia), Jaworzno (Poland), Rijeka (Croatia), Kragerø (Norway). In Ljubljana, part of the festival is the evening concerts, in previous years entitled »Jazzers of the world for kids with special needs«, this year transitioned into a beautiful relationship with elite school Berklee College of Music and has been named Berklee Meets Ljubljana.

In Ljubljana the festival takes place at Kongresni Trg – Park Zvezda. At all festivals the main activities are situated in the center of the city with main stage primarily designed for musical/dance/theater performances and is surrounded with numerous workshops and animation areas. There are also smaller puppet-theater stages.

## CHAPTER 5: BERKLEE MEETS LJUBLJANA

### 5.1 Introduction

Diversity being such an important part of music it is almost impossible to imagine a contemporary musical style without the influences of different cultures, religions, social backgrounds, continents etc. Diversity has always been the “main” ingredient in the development of music. From classical to jazz, many great composers and performers have been, and still are, influenced by various cultures, ethnic and social backgrounds. Diversity having a major role in musical development would not be enough if there were no inclusion. Integrating those foreign influences into new music, into your music, in order to make it better or more interesting is the key to success. Being open minded and allowing new and different music to widen your spectrum is the key to becoming a great artist. With all that in mind I asked myself one question: “Why stop there?” Diversity has so many levels and all should matter equally. Race, gender, religion, culture, social status, social background, disabilities, handicaps, are equally important in creating great but also socially responsible artists.

I see music as a testing ground for the joint creation of diversity as well as an art form of inclusiveness with no boundaries. Performance is a symbol of inclusiveness and overcoming the barriers. It is a foundation for creating important social values as well as a ground for mutual expression through art. Rather than seeing handicap as a disadvantage, I see it as advantage and an upgrade to the performance drawing not only symbolic but real qualitative values.

## **5.2 Evening program**

The main idea of this year's evening program was to fuse two sides that appear incompatible at the first glance. On one side, we had an elite music school that prides itself with top musical talent from all over the world, and on the other side we have children and youth with special needs. Integrating Berklee's talent with KWSN and local community was our main goal. We saw a great benefit for children with special needs to perform with great musical talent and share the stage with musicians from all over the world.

Growth, development and artistic expression, through melting stereotypes, overcoming language and other barriers, finding mutual answers, and expression tools, mutual components of recreation, creates, between all protagonists (performers, spectators, audience, etc.) added value in the artistic, personal and social sense.

Performance is often seen as a single act, however, the time and resources invested prior the appearance on stage are often forgotten. When you say performance you have to take into account hours of rehearsals, preparation, making charts, trial and error etc. Only the end product of the "performance" is actually performing on stage.

Evening program of the festival took place on the main stage at Kongresni trg – Park Zvezda in Ljubljana for 4 consecutive days (26.5 – 29.5) and featured more than 220 performers from Slovenia and abroad. It integrated top international musical talent with kids with special needs and local community.

### **5.2.1 Tuesday**

Tuesdays concert featured Berklee College of Music with maestro Victor Mendoza on vibraphone. Although it was primarily a Berklee feature, it integrated local swing dance school Studio Dansa and mentor Ms. Petra Robek, a local salsa dance school Academia Salsa Libre and their founder Sabina Remskar and, a very special guest of the evening, a therapeutic wheelchair dance club Vrtiljak from CIRIUS Vipava.

The first part of the concert was intended for dance schools to showcase their skills and repertoire. It started off with two well-known jazz standards: Take The A Train and It Don't Mean A Thing performed by Studio Dansa followed by a very moving performance of Libertango by Vrtiljak, both accompanied by Berklee College of Music. The concert continued, featuring students of Berklee College of Music under the leadership of professor Victor Mednoza. The concert featured Mendoza's music as well as some tunes from the all time repertoire of Salsa, where Academia Salsa Libre joined to showcase their salsa dancing skills.



### 5.2.2 Wednesday

Wednesday's concert was the most important concert of the festival featuring more than 80 performers. It was showcase we all worked so hard for and was a true display of integration, diversity and inclusion. It featured 10 acts accompanied by Berklee College of Music. It involved local music schools, upcoming young artists, dance clubs, an artist with special needs from abroad, departments for kids with special needs from Center Janez Levec and Berklee. The whole concert was in the spirit of Slovenian evergreen pop repertoire. We chose the repertoire due to the fact that all of the songs are well known and most of the kids already know them, so we slightly eliminated the struggles that might occur trying to learn completely unfamiliar tunes as well as we thought it would be interesting for Berklee students to experience traditional Slovenian pop songs.

The first act of the show was a dancing act entitled musical fairytale performed by Center Janez Levec's Primary School for Special Needs Deckova. It continued with a performance of Muzikavivas very own young autistic singer that took the audience by surprise with a well known Slovenian pop song entitled Pegasto Dekle. Following, was a music school with an autism department performing Do-Re-Mi. In their performance, they integrated their regular music school choir with their outstanding autistic pianist performing Mlade oci, Nad mestom se dani and Lahko noc Piran. The next 9 songs were performed by a department of Center Janez Levec starting with Primary School for Special Needs Deckova Choir singing Cuj deklica and Ko bos prisla na Bled. Deckova Choir also made an appearance on a morning TV show on a National TV station earlier in the week. Ne cakaj na maj and Ti si moja ljubezen were performed by Primary School for Special Needs Levstikov trg Choir followed by Department of education of special needs Jarse Choir singing Mini in

maxi and Zemlja plese. All 3 departments formed a United Center Janez Levec Choir for 3 more songs entitled V Ljubljano, Dan ljubezni and Cez Sustarski most joined by the winners of the past two seasons of Slovenia Got Talent, Alja Krusic and Jana Sustarsic. Muzikaviva continued the show with two of their talented female singers performing Mala terasa and Ti si rekla sonce. Next act was a feature of a very talented autistic singer, winner of 2005 Eurovision for Special Needs, with two famous songs Poslednji vlak and Moj crni konj. We concluded the concert with performances by Alja Krusic and Jana Sustarsic. The crowd was ecstatic. There were approximately 1000 spectators at the venue.

### 5.2.3 Thursday

Thursdays concert featured big bands from all 3 Slovenian music conservatories (high school level) with Berklee students and mentor Victor Mendoza as soloists. Due to the fact that students of conservatories would benefit tremendously by sharing stage with top tier musicians, not only during workshops that took place throughout the week, but also on a big stage in the heart of Ljubljana. The vocal soloists joining all 3 of the big bands were Fanika Krizaj (singer with cerebral palsy and the finalist of Slovenia Got Talent) and Jana Sustarsic (Berklee student and winner of Slovenia Got Talent)

Big Band Konservatorij za glasbo in balet Maribor led by classical and jazz trumpeter Janez Vouk, performed two vocal pieces with Fanika Krizaj as a soloist continued by great and virtuoso arrangements of instrumental tunes with Timotej Kotnik and Nick Stefanacci as featured soloists. The audience, surprised by the level of musicianship and the quality of music could not stop applauding. Next to perform was big band Fran Korun Kozeljski Velenje mentored by Slovenian jazz trombone legend Jani Suligoj, performed two vocal pieces sang by Krizaj and Sustarsic as well as instrumental pieces that featured Wycliffe Gordon II and Timotej Kotnik as soloists. We concluded the concert with performance by Konzervatorij za glasbo in balet Ljubljana led by guitarist, composer and arranger Igor Lunder. The band featured Sustarsic, Mendoza and Kotnik as soloists and concluded the concert on a highest level possible.

#### **5.2.4 Friday**

We concluded the festival with traditional concert of the 9<sup>th</sup> year ambassador of “Igraj se z mano” and the most famous rapper in Slovenia Zlatan Cordic aka Zlatko with guests.

A traditional Slovenian wind orchestra Litostroj opened Zlatkos concert with evergreens of wind orchestras’ repertorie such as My Way, Bohemian Rhapsody, Deep purple medley, etc. led by Military orchestra conductor Gregor Vidmar. Berklee students joined them for the majority of the concert as a part of the orchestra. For the second part for the concert, Zlatko took over the stage and together with Berklee band, an upcoming Slovenian singer Tamara, a rapping prodigy Dr. Speedy (a 14 year old freestyler) and a very young, only 9 year old singer April Kotnik. Zlatko concluded the concert as well as the 9<sup>th</sup> festival “Igraj se z mano”.

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Performance is often seen as a single. When we say performance we often mean a concert, a show that lasts a short period of time. What we often tend to forget is that rather than as single act, performance is a process that includes, practice, rehearsals, learning lyrics, learning music, interacting with people, teamwork, socializing, interpreting, expressing etc. therefore I see the potential of live performance having therapeutic effect on performers. Over the years I've seen how kids (especially those with special needs) have developed. Musically, socially, even there were cases of kids starting to express themselves or had a ground braking point in their development and interaction, through music. Because music includes so many various elements I think it could be the future of music therapy. Music therapy is such a great tool for ones development but it is often put behind four walls of an institution. I believe it has a great potential in live performances as well. It's a field to explore.

More importantly we are trying to create what Victor Mendoza put as: "Socially Responsible Artist". We need to raise awareness of inclusion, diversity and acceptance of others on all levels. Artists should be aware of current and general social issues and engage in the events and activities that raise awareness and educate people of those issues. Artists are often, as people with special needs, spending most of the time between four walls (practicing, learning, etc.) but is crucial for them to engage with local community as well as to take action.

Bridging the gap between elite, and often elitist, artist communities, "normal" communities and "special needs" communities is our priority. We strive to connect everyone, giving them equal opportunity for participation, development and expression.

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