

I remember being told
at the drama school,

when I tried to sit for the exams,

they just said I can't do it
and hung up the phone.

So I started searching for lessons

that I could be taught
in a drama school.

But the law was lifted in 2017,

and people now have the right.

However, in practice,
it is still not easy.

There are no accessible schools,
not only regarding the infrastructure,

but also regarding the teachers,

and lesson planning.

In Greece today,
there are no equal opportunities

in art education for disabled people.

The lack of substantial
vocational training

may unfortunately leave...

or rather, limit disabled people,

to the sphere of amateurism
regarding the arts.

This creates a vicious cycle.

The stakeholders of culture
or the audience believe

that disabled people

can only engage with culture
as amateurs.

And the disabled artists themselves
do not have equal opportunities

to express themselves and to create.

And thus, unfortunately, we all lose

an opportunity, I'd say,

to enrich and create art and culture,

which addresses everyone,
is made by everyone,

and instead of setting up obstacles,
breaks them.

[silence]

I can feel it.

They'll say she is crazy.

That she is a freak.

Taxi!

A freak...

The neighbors
would call my mother a freak.

Our mother.

But she wouldn't listen.

She would laugh...

[Elie] You know what,
when they choose a disabled person,

when they cast them for a role,

the society is being educated.

I've always thought, since puberty,

that the theater

is like the society we live in,

either the society we live in,

or the one we would like to live in,

so you can't exclude people from it.

Since 2013, if I'm not mistaken,

Stegi is involved

in European programs and networks

aiming to support, educate and promote

dancers with and without disabilities.

And we have managed,

I believe, over these years,

it's been almost ten years now,

to create a "nursery" of people,

who face so many obstacles,

in entering the field
of choreography and dancing,

because they can offer different,

and very rich and interesting ideas
and practices about dancing.

I mean, this is about,

beyond inclusivity, rights and equality,

this is about an aesthetic
which is very important to have.

[dance music]

The representation
of the disabled in the media

is wrong and is filtered in a way

that neglects the voices
of the disabled, their experiences

their thoughts, their rights,

our rights, and our social demands.

This misrepresentation

excludes the disabled

from society, from the stage,
from the spotlight,

from a non-visual project,
from a narrative,

and essentially it creates a distortion,

which also reduces our social status,

putting us generally on the margins.

This also defines that disability

is not about our bodies,
about the diagnosis we have,

that I was born with a gene

that couldn't control
my muscle function,

or that Panos was born deaf.

Disability is essentially
the imposition of obstacles,

which are set by the state
and the society

and these obstacles deprive us
of the chance to participate.

So it is not a social construction,

rather it is performed
within the state and the society.

1.2 BILLION PEOPLE IN THE WORLD

EXPERIENCE DISABILITY

IN EUROPE

30% OF THE DISABLED YOUTH

IS EXCLUDED FROM WORK AND EDUCATION

WORK, EDUCATION

IN GREECE

52-57% OF THE DISABLED YOUTH

IS EXCLUDED FROM WORK AND EDUCATION

IN GREECE

THERE'S NEVER BEEN A NATIONAL REGISTER
OF DISABLED PEOPLE

I have a very important question.

It addresses all of you,
anyone can answer,

but let's start with Elie.

How often do we see a disabled person
outside, in the urban fabric?

Here in Athens or elsewhere in Greece?

I want to rephrase the question.

Do we really think that we should see

the disabled outside,
in the urban fabric?

That is, to what extent
do they have the right to be outside

and who defines this right.

Will it be appointed by the state,
by the disabled citizens themselves?

I use the subway a lot.

So, I'm in Syntagma Square,
I turn around,

trying to reach the elevator,

and a man stops me,

he was rather old, and he says,

"I'm so glad you're with us".

I'm taken aback, I think

"There must a protest or something,

and I don't know what it is about."

[Thalia] A cult or something.

Yes.

"Who are they?"

And I'm like "What on Earth?"

He says "No, that you're here, with us".

And I fearfully say,

"Sorry, but what is this here?"

And he goes "The Syntagma Square".

[laughter]

Do you see? The man gave me a tour.

It seemed very strange to him
that a woman was moving around.

It wasn't late,
but there was a woman outside,

alone, and used the subway
in a wheelchair.

Didn't he offer to help you
get back to your care home?

No, he didn't take it that far.

[Katerina] People
want to show their joy,

and they don't know how,

or they want to help
and they don't know how.

I've received
a rather positive attitude,

from people who don't know
how to express it, rather than negative.

Both exist, that's for sure.

My question and my thought is,

why can't they express
this positive attitude?

I mean, they have
good intentions, alright,

but they lack the knowledge
and the background to express them.

I mean, we have learned to see
the disabled in the Hollywood movies

as the bad guy or the poor guy,

or the person
whom we ought to admire by default,

just because they are impaired,
disabled.

He didn't say to Elie
"I'm so glad you're with us",

because he thought that you were

a grant, important figure
whom he met there,

but because he thinks
that Elie cannot be outside,

she does not have this ability,

because her body deprives her of it.

On this subject
of visibility and invisibility,

there is a paradox,
for when the disabled go out

and there are
the right conditions for it,

there is this feeling
of hypervisibility,

that is, they become
sort of a spectacle.

They must be very self-conscious
of their body at that moment.

They become a spectacle,

and this again contradicts the fact

that disabled people
are not visible in the public sphere

as active people,

as active players, so to speak.

There is no representation
of a disabled person

in daily life.

We either are or we overcome

our obstacles and impairments,

or we're the "poor" guy,

or the "strong" guy, which I love!

I am super strong, Spyros, you as well?

What kills me is, I think,

instead of showing pity

to anyone who is going
through some difficulty,

there is a huge need for understanding
and practical help.

To reach understanding,
you need to be educated,

and there is a huge lack of education,

because education will also give you
the ability to understand

what practical help you can offer.

For in order for us
to have our daily life,

we require practical help.

Daily life for a person like me,

a quadriplegic on a wheelchair,
is basically sedentary.

I understand that my humor is bad,
so let me be more serious.

My daily life
basically requires a lot of humor

and I need to be thick skinned.

Because I often face
obstacles and behaviors

that I don't like
and may affect me negatively.

So, to some extent,

we, the disabled, become numb.

And this is not always good,

because, sometimes,

when we see an obstacle, a behavior,

we need to speak, to shout, to be heard,

because being indifferent and saying

"OK, it's over now, it's nothing",

won't bring about change.

[Spyros] The main thing is to represent
ourselves and the community...

even beyond the social sphere,

let me get back to Menti,

and ask about the field of Art,

for the field that enjoys

the spotlight, the exposure.

How often do we see

a disabled person there?

I believe that dancing

is the perfect field

to bring about change.

Over the past decades
there have been communities

who try to create a new model on stage.

I danced with disabled dancers
for the first time

around 2000, maybe a little earlier,

and since then I've been working
with disabled dancers,

in projects by Konstantinos Michos,
and in Stegi's initiatives.

We see disabled dancers on stage,

but certainly not as much as we should

and as much as we could,

but I believe it is a field

that gives us hope.

[inspirational music]

[woman] Dance communicates

and expands the universal
language of communication,

giving life to joy, beauty,

and the advancement of human knowledge.

[the music becomes rhythmic]