



**Season 1 Episode 7:  
How can we make the arts accessible for patrons?**

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[Upbeat intro music]

Both laughing

Sarah:

Are we going to start? Disarming Disability!

Nicole:

Ok are you ready?

Sarah:

Yeah. Are we going to count?

Both:

[off key] Disarming Disability

Nicole:

I'll say welcome to and you say disarming disability.

Sarah:

Okay, we can do that.

Nicole:

Oh hello and welcome to

Sarah:

Disarming disability!

Nicole:

What's new? What's going on? Sarah? You're here that you are on an adventure.

Sarah:

I am on an adventure. I decided at some point in my life that it was going to be a good idea to move to five states and 12 months. So I'm on this little adventure and finishing up the last bit now and so I'm I left Chicago. So I'm really sad about and I'm with my father and we were driving from Chicago back to California, but I haven't been to Montana or Idaho yet. So we decided to do a little Northern route and then hit Idaho and then dive South down to Nevada and California. So I am halfway through that Adventure now, it's been a lot of fun. So yeah, so I guess we're here. So I'm in Idaho right now,

Nicole:

Which is really fun that and I got to meet Papa Tubs while he was in Chicago.

Sarah:

yeah. Yes. I'm sad. I left Chicago to I don't want to feelings it's hard and and again that also comes with living in so many different states. So I started and I finished up school in Boston as far as my in class classes and then so saying goodbye and appreciating the two years. I spent in Boston and then I went to Philadelphia for the summer which is what I've kind of I have been doing. I continue my life as a flight attendant there. So that's sort of like a high by but I'll be back to Philadelphia. In fact, I'm going to Philadelphia in three days. So hey and working again is a flight attendant so I don't be nice to meet up with all my friends there and the people that are out there which is fun. And then I spent some time in Minneapolis for my first rotation. And so I met a lot of really wonderful people and then had to say goodbye to them and then I my second rotation in Chicago and again, like I was hanging out with you and I know these wonderful people I'm so in love with everyone there and I'm so appreciative my placement. So it's hard. It's exciting to be in new places, but also really hard to say goodbye also, so that's been kind of nice to have the road trip adventure because we're driving where we spend maybe six or seven hours driving, you know, and I get to hang out with my dad and learn more about him which is really fun and see places I've ever been to and also just have time where I'm not emailing. I'm not in meetings. I can't do any of those things because I'm driving to focus on the road. But and then I'm headed back to Sacramento, which is somewhere that I have not spent more than seven days in in the past seven years. So I left it back in 2012. And so it'll be sort of a weird and fun. I'm welcomed at a homecoming and I'm doing my final rotation at my home hospital where I was a patient at with a lot of my team that I worked with my hand surgeon will be my supervisor and I'm going to be doing work for us, which I'm really excited about. I had an application in my email for a clinical research assistant and that just sounds really exciting not as to sit just a clinical research application. So not even the assistant part. It just feels like I'm doing really cool things. Just it's really fun to sort of come to the end of this whole grad school Whirlwind of an experience. And so I'm really happy but I also have so many feelings.

Nicole:

I know we're sad that you left us Sarah. I mean really the joke was that you were fourth roommate and anyone and anyone who's spent any time in Chicago in the space that I live in you know that my roommates and I are really close. So if you come you don't just get one of us, you get all three of us and the beauty of being here in the apartment that I'm at so we were sad to see you go to but also the funny thing is the conversation here at 1W. Is that Sarah's coming back. Like were now we're talking about you as a family returned to us. So we hope that that's true. Who knows? I don't know but we are talking with coming back right?

Sarah:

I hope so too. I've got good leads for potential jobs in Chicago. And it's kind of fun because Chicago is a place. I had thought even when I was in school that that's somewhere I could really see myself going because it's a base for my Airline and then there's different opportunities to work for as an OT, you know, of course, I have to apply and get jobs. I'm not saying I'm granted anything but it just seems like a nice blend for both of those spaces. So we'll see good.

Nicole:

Good. I'm glad I'm glad to hear it. Yeah, and I'm glad that you get to like do the fun road trip with your dad. I just think of yeah. Yeah. I'm just excited for the whole thing. She sent in a group text message to me and my roommate's yesterday a picture of her dad at Mount Rushmore. So cute.

Sarah:

This is we're there, yeah me and Papa Tubs.

Nicole:

Yeah Papa Tubs. So today we are going to talk specifically about so last week we talked with Lawrence carter-long about the overview of media just like big picture where we see each other. Each other excuse me, where we see ourselves that is disability in the media. But really what that means is where we don't see ourselves because we don't see here and what is that and how does that work and really just kind of the big picture of media and this week we have a really exciting guest for you because she is well, she's an expert in a lot of things which is what makes her so wonderful, but really her specific expertise has been being a teaching artist and being a teaching artist within art spaces and really learning how to make them inclusive for all different types of people. So, how do you be a patron in a space where you are wanting to sit and enjoy a festival or a theater show or a live concert event. That is her area of expertise, right? So so this is kind of the flip side of the coin. How how do we consumers when when we are people who are living with disability? Today, we have Talleri McRae who is a theater artist educator and inclusion access specialist based in Louisville, Kentucky in addition to her work as a visiting teaching artist for grades K through 12. Talleri currently offers her service as a consultant to organizations like Actors Theater of Louisville, Kentucky Arts Council the Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts and the Indiana Repertory Theater Talleri is the co-founder of the National Disability Theater alongside friend colleague co-founder and Advocate extraordinary actor Mickey Rowe, so Talleri, let's Jump Right In. Welcome, Talleri to Disarming Disability. Thank you so much for being here with us. How is your day going today?

Talleri:

I am fantastic. I get to talk with other disability nerds on purpose, which is great.

Nicole:

That's our favorite thing to do Talleri So I we're so happy to have you here and for you to bring your knowledge and your expertise to us. We are yet again, the steep learning curve of book podcast is ever exciting and so we're thankful to our friends and experts who trust us enough to come hang out

Talleri:

Pleasure.

Sarah:

I wanted to summarize that sort of last week on disarming disability. We talked a lot about making space for disabled bodies on screen and on the camera on runway and so we're sort of looking at the flip side of that is being able to access all of these media Outlets as well. So what accommodations are being made to make entertainment spaces inclusive for guests coming to be able to consume the media?

Talleri:

Well, I work primarily in live performance theater mostly but I also because I work in professional theater as I also have kind of ongoing professional conversations with other live performance venues, like orchestras or ballets things like that so I can sort of speak about some of this quote-unquote standard accommodations that might be offered. Let's assume that there is a venue I'll use the Kentucky Center for the Arts in Louisville, Kentucky as an example because they happen to be one of the most accessible spaces in the country. So they are a large Performing Arts venue in downtown Louisville. They have really, I'd say three main theater spaces that they use one of them is a very large Hall that seats over I think two thousand people maybe right around 2000 where they bring in some of their bigger National tours. It's where Hamilton will be later, this summer things like that. There's a smaller space at the Kentucky Center that seats about 700 and then they have an experimental Black Box space as well. And because the Kentucky Center for the Arts has been dedicated to access and inclusion, since it came to being in the early 80s. So this is pre ADA they were visionary in making their building accessible and also their programs. They have a full-time access department and the access services that you can ask for and request when you come to a Kentucky Center show include audio description captioning sign language interpretation sensory friendly performances, you can request accessible seating and really you can connect with their access Services director Stacy Ridgeway, who's incredible and make any other kind of individual requests that you might need in order to feel comfortable spending time in their venue as a patron, but I would say that making sure that there are accessible seats available for not only patrons that use wheelchairs, right but patrons that might use walkers or crutches or other kinds of canes patrons that have temporary disabilities that might need to elevate a foot or ice and elbow things like that is really helpful and then the specific services that would benefit communities like audio description for the Blind Community benefits from that sign language interpretation captioning for the Deaf Community, but also other communities like communities that maybe don't speak English as a first language and then the other thing that Kentucky Center will offer as well is that for the show touched or orientation, which has been really beneficial for my friends that are in the Blind Community but also for example for people in the Autism Community or people who are autistic will say that having a chance to kind of engage with the pieces and parts of the show the costumes and the props actually before the show really helps them feel oriented and engaged and ready to show when they see it. So it does not help kind of give you a broad overview before we get more specific.

Nicole:

Yeah, that was amazing. And I when I was child wrangling at Steppenwolf, that was the first time I ever experienced a touch tour in which they had a handful of guests who were visually impaired or blind that they brought up onto the stage and exactly what you were saying. It was it was very profound for the actors. They invited the actors in so they could speak and say what their name was first and you could hear so you could hear the actor's voice and they could explain who their character was what their character was and then they proceeded to bring them up onto the stage and explain the set and give them a tour around the set and it really that was the best

show of that entire series of shows that we did because the cast suddenly saw the show in a way that they had never seen the cast in the show before themselves and it was because they had to pause and share it with somebody who had you know, a visual impairment a disability. It was really really cool which that wasn't a question. That was just a comment. I wanted to share.

Talleri:

I think it's so neat. When an audience service like that gives an artist insight to their own process right that the idea of making something accessible gives you an additional vocabulary that you haven't had before to consider an artistic process or product and I think that's really valuable whether or not you're doing that for somebody that's part of the artistic team or part of the audience.

Nicole:

I agree what since we're in the theater Community specifically is your expertise. How is the theater Community sharing- What's working? What's not working? What are what are the spaces? Is that just you get to know one another. Is there a better way to do that? How are we sharing? What's working best?

Talleri:

Well, I think in any field, you know that individual connection is great professional development watching somebody that you really admire I think that Evan Hatfield at Steppenwolf is incredible with the work that he's done with a touch tour as you were talking about. So having those individual connections are great the theater Communications Group offers their conference every year for member theaters, and those are professional regional theaters that are that are members of the of that group and they have had a commitment to equity diversity and inclusion in recent years. And so they've been really mindful to make sure that their sessions are offering, you know, tips and tricks for how to be more accessible. But the best place for a professional development I have found specifically for accessibility is the Leadership Exchange in Arts and Disability or the LEAD conference that the Kennedy Center puts on and that is not just for Performing Arts venues. That is for anybody that works in the Arts and Cultural sector. So there are people there that work at zoos or museums or orchestras or anywhere where you're kind of welcoming a patron into your into your public space. What I like about that conference is that it was started over 20 years ago by a group of Administrators with disabilities. So disability culture has always been at the center of that conference and we are always learning from each other within the disability community. And of course, they're our allies that join us as well because allies are doing some really important work, but I just love that that the voice of people with disabilities is right at the center of LEAD and always has been since the beginning.

Nicole:

We've been talking a lot about who are the leaders in the community and the importance of people who have disabilities being the leaders but also the role that other people play that that don't have a disability but are also there to support and I'm wondering when you are teaching or sharing with people who don't have the disabilities. Is there a certain language that you specifically use is there is there a difference how I'm asking that question weird. How do you invite them into the space to be a part of it? I guess is the question. I'm trying to get at.

Talleri:

So in my work I find people that are really excited and enthusiastic about accessibility, but they don't always have the tools to know how to implement it and one of the barriers that gets in their way and implementation is the fear that they are saying something wrong or saying something offensive or something wrong. So in practical terms what that means is people avoid the conversation and they don't do anything and then people that have been excluded from that space are still excluded because we're just kind of afraid to take the first steps. So the two words that I offer people when they are new to accessibility and really excited about it. I offer them the word accessible and I offer them the word accommodation and when I talk about accessible I say this is really exciting for us because you don't have to know anything about an individual's disability diagnosis personal history to be able to make a space accessible for them talking about creating a space that works for somebody else. And so you are the expert on your own space, right? You are the host you are the super host and they're the expert on their own experience and together you can work as a respectful team and that takes away sometimes this sense of obligation, which gets you into weird icky space of pity right where you're thinking. Oh, I wish that you didn't have a disability so that we didn't have to make things different for you which is which is unproductive. So I say that given is that everybody is different but everybody is going to have a need and that our job as hosts is to know our space well enough to offer choices to the people that are kind of into our spaces and it is the person coming in as responsibility to communicate and know themselves well enough to know what might work best for them and in an educational space, I think young people are still learning that so one of the things we can do as adults is help them know how to advocate for themselves how to know what works for them how to know what accommodations work for them, but people really grab onto that that sense of how can I make this space accessible for you and the tool in my tool kit that I have to do that is a reasonable accommodation right that I can make an adapt and adaptation and adjustment a change to the environment and accommodation that's going to make you feel more welcome more comfortable and more able to contribute in a really positive way.

Sarah:

I even see that even just taking disability out of context that like if I'm having a party at my house, I want all my guests to feel comfortable. So it's like do you want anything to drink? What kind of thing would you like to drink? Would you like somewhere to sit down is the someone that's comfortable for you? So it it just extends that whole host mentality of how can I welcome you into that space and it's not just like, oh we have to do these things different for people with disabilities. It's just extending that welcome that step further.

Talleri:

Yeah and the adults that I know in the disability Community they can kind of smell from a mile away when somebody is trying too hard, right? So that that also applies to being a good host. Right like give people a couple options and then back off I go to a lot of theater and occasionally particularly when I was living in Texas for grad school. There were a couple of super Usher's that would be like my flashlight Brigade

like every time I tried to go like down a couple steps in a theater, they like follow me with like 4 flashlights and I was like, no, I don't need for flashlights that you would like ask me what I need and I'll tell you I need a railing. I don't need 18 flash lights shined on my food just in case I do fall then everybody's gonna see it too.

Nicole:

I was just about to say that so when you fall everybody gets in on it.

Talleri:

I agree with you Sarah. It also kind of works both ways, right? How do you want to be a good host? But not overdo it in anything as well.

Nicole:

So in your personal experience of being a part of this community for a really long time specifically kind of being the expert and inclusion what changes have you seen over the past few years the good I'm going to say what good changes.

Talleri:

There are so many it's so exciting. I think 20 years ago people that were doing inclusive work. We're still having to make a case for why that we should be doing inclusive work and a lot of the literature that you can look at from that time period was a lot of the argument for why this work is important. I am so pleased to say I think really in the last decade I have yet to meet a client. That's like, oh yeah. We're okay being exclusive. It's cool. Right there, like know we'd like to learn strategies to be more exclusive. No Everybody wants to be inclusive people know that that's important and they know there's a value to it. I think the idea of figuring out what tools they have in their tool belt is really key. So one of the trends that I have seen in the Performing Arts is the idea of customized experiences that really specifically address the needs of a specific community and I'll use sensory friendly performances as a great example of that. 10 years ago there were a very small handful of theaters that we're doing sensory friendly performances, even seven or eight years ago. It was kind of a new thing to talk about in the access world and it has really just ballooned and mushroom in the best way that now it's becoming standard practice. But one of my favorite things about sensory friendly performances is that there's not a standard menu for how to take a traditional performance and make it sensory friendly. Sure, there are some best practices that if you were Consulting with me, I would be able to offer you but the biggest piece of advice I would give you is to connect with your local Autistic Community. Right? this past season actors theater of Louisville right here in Louisville did a production of the *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*. I am so proud to say that the director was committed to inclusion. We had an actor on the Spectrum who played Christopher. In fact, the director Meredith McDonough who is an incredible human being did not see any actors at any point in the rehearsal process that did not have autism and the Casting and the casting team didn't actually believe her they're like, oh so that's for General additions and then you mean for callbacks, you'll see some neurotypical actors and she was like No. And so she and it's a really demanding role and it's not an easy role to cast and she had lots of options from within the autistic Community forecasting that role so that was huge. She decided not to make a huge deal about that to the Press which I thought was really classy of her. She's like this is just how we do things. It's you don't make a press release if you cast an African-American and African American role, right? So,

why would we do that with this? It was great. But she said we're going to need some support the staff of the theaters going to need some support and we're going to need some support about how to make sure that the Autistic Community feels welcome. Not just for the performances of the sensory friendly performances, but for the whole process so long story short I said, okay, I know a lot about access but I don't have autism. So I reached out right "nothing about us without us." I reached out to the local autistic community and found an incredibly Kick-Ass group incredibly awesome group of adults with autism in Louisville and Lexington, and I also got connected with an online group of teenagers with autism that excuse me, they would be so mad at me with autistic teenagers that just rocked my world. So anytime I had a question about how do we put this in writing? How do we want to talk about this, marketing materials, show materials information, that was going to the artistic team and the cast I would run it by my autistic consultants and they wouldn't all agree. I mean I had six or seven people on the list and it was great because I wasn't just depending on one person to kind of represent a community. We would really have a great active dialogue about what that was like. There were for autistic people that came to visit rehearsal and talked to the director and actors. They helped with language for the sensory friendly performances. They previewed the show to make sure that our materials for sensory friendly performances made sense, but they were also really clear to me that they were not interested in being a part apart of our sensory friendly performances that they wanted to have an artistic and put in one of our traditional performances that was their request. So we said, okay and we contracted with them to work with us on teen night where we invited a group of teenagers to come see the play and they created an interactive Lobby experience that would making art using autistic space that the teenagers that saw the show could engage with anybody else that was seeing the show can engage with and then they were also part of our top back for that evenings performance, but it was just by asking them, they said, you know, we'd like to not be limited to participating in your sensory friendly events we'd also like to be part of your mainstream performances. And so we found a space with them and I just learned so much from including them in the process and engaging them and learning about their perspective and point of view was really really helpful for me.

Sarah:

I just want to ask from what I'm hearing from. That is that nothing about us without us and that inclusion and collaboration piece because I think in being someone who is designing this, they're not going to be experts in every single different type of disability or may not be experts and disability at all. But want to have that be able to make these accommodations want to be want to be able to provide that access. So I think it's really important to then just reiterate that including people and collaborating and then things work better when we work in teams and when we collaborate so I think just really like underlining that again in that people don't have to have all the answers but there are people who do have answers and that we can connect with them and build this whole world together.

Talleri:



And one of my collaborators Micah who's incredible. They started the Kentucky Autistic Spectrum Alliance, they came to our staff meeting a full staff meeting at actors theater and gave a 15 minute presentation debunking some of the understandings and myths about the autistic community and just helping like 12 minutes not long helping the theater start wrapping their brain around what it is like to work with someone from a different culture and the metaphor that Michael offered us. That was so helpful was Micah said think about it this way y'all are iPhones and I'm an Android there is nothing wrong with how I work but it's two different operating systems. So if you're going to try to use an iPhone app on Android, it's not going to compute and that is not my fault and that is not the software's fault. That's just the way things are. So make sure if you're downloading an app that it's going to work for my Android autistic brain and we were all like, okay, you can do that. I know it's great. It's great. I can say that. I'm just a neurotypical person over here.

Nicole:

Yeah, right. That's an incredible parallel and a way to think about it and and that yet again as this podcast is were just trying to get people to to own their story and on their space and the off the authenticity that you are, you know, we are we are operating in a world of iPhones and we are not an iPhone and that is okay. That is okay. But that also requires you to acknowledge that and to take up space in in a way that is authentic and real so we were talking before we started recording you're sharing a little bit about the process of learning to be a leader in an inclusive space and I'm wondering if you can share a little bit about that and perhaps the good and the bad that go along with with trying to be in a collaborative space and what that may be like?

Talleri:

Yeah collaboration is hard and it's all about building relationships and Trust which takes a really long time and is very hard to do and that is we can be very easily fragile. Right and can be very easily broken. And so that takes a lot of bravery. I think it takes a lot of checking in with that authentic self of who am I and who do I want to be and what kind of projects are going to be the most accessible to me? How do I work the best and how can I make sure that I'm saying yes to projects that honor my process and what I need to do my best work so that part it can be really tricky can also be really tricky as I keep going. The field of accessibility is always growing but it is also really small and so people get to know you and they get to know your work and you know, they're interested in it, but then they also have expectations that you can offer some sense of clarity and certainty. And expertise and my experience and accessibility is that if you walk away from a project feeling like it had clarity and certainty then you might not have been in it's inclusive as you thought because every inclusive situation I've been in has been pretty messy sometimes in really wonderful ways, but there's always the unexpected there's planning and then there's re planning and then there's thinking on your feet. So the more I've done this work the more I've really realized that part of it is just being braver and braver about trying something new and failing and failing publicly to model for other people that there is no rut one right way to do it that it's figure it's trial and error. It's figuring it out and then it's being able to step back and reassess and try it again and then and then build a better

mousetrap the next time and part of it is just modeling for my clients that I don't have all the answers. I don't know what to do sometimes and I have to look for other people to help me and support me and I have to work with people that I trust there willing to help me fail.

Nicole:

I love that. Yeah, so I would love to hear about okay so selfishly. I'm going to tell you a little bit of a story before we get there. So when I was working in New York City the last show that I worked at was on 47th Street and next door to my theater the show that was on Broadway was *Curious Incident* and the whole time it was playing I knew that there were conversations about the fact that the main character was not played by an autistic character or an excuse me an autistic actor, but at the time didn't have I knew it was happening but didn't feel like I had any opinion one way or the other then I kind of came into the pride of who I was and what I was in the disability world and then was so excited to hear that Mickey Rowe was cast in the same show at the I think it was the Indiana Rep is not correct.

Talleri:

Yeah is a co-production between Indiana Repertory Theater and Syracuse stage in 2017.

Nicole:

Thank you. Thank you for the details. I appreciate it was so excited and just was the biggest fan and followed that production and now you and Mickey are collaborating and I would love for you to share with us. Now what you are collaborating on and maybe tidbits of what we can look forward to and that space

Talleri:

Sure. So I also was a big fan of Mickey. He does a lot of advocacy and self-advocacy and writing and so I had been following some of his writing on how around and other platforms for several months, but I actually got a call from Indiana Repertory Theater. They're not too far from Louisville. For those of you that aren't familiar with your Midwestern geography. It's only about a hundred miles between Louisville and Indianapolis and and I am a teacher and work in children's theater and Indianapolis has in the past hosted a development workshop for Theater For Young Audiences for years. So all of that to say I had a working relationship with some of the folks up in Indy and when they decided to cast a Mickey they called me and they said we don't know how we need you yet, but we know that we need you on our team to help us figure this out. And I said sure. So I worked on that production as an accessibility consultant and I met Nikki that way I drove up to Indianapolis one morning and I saw a student matinee where he performed *Curious Incident* for an audience of a hundred autistic young people.

Nicole:

Oh my gosh. How was that?

Talleri:

It was life-changing. It was really life-changing. It was a sensory friendly performance. So the light stayed up and the audience could move around if they needed to they were welcome to respond in any way that made sense to them if they needed to vocalize if they needed to move if they needed to leave and come back if

they needed to take a break. All of that was okay. So several of the audience members took advantage of those kind of relaxed theater rules which happened in a sensory friendly performance and Mickey's performance was incredible. He that role is very physical and Mickey is trained as a circus performer. So he was literally hanging off of the set sometimes. I mean it was so cool. So he did an incredible performance and then after and then at the very end of that show if you if you know the end of that show the very last piece of it is the script actually says like be as dramatic as you can possibly be with the last three minutes of this play and so Mickey did the last three minutes of the play on a unicycle.

Nicole:

Yes that's amazing

Talleri:

So after the show, he came out for a Talk Back and he spoke so eloquently and so generously about being an autistic actor about what it was like for him growing up. He spoke about what happens when a theater doesn't have the resources to hire an autistic actor and I thought he spoke about it. So well, he said, you know, if you can't cast somebody with autism in this role, you can really help the autism Community by casting somebody else that is underrepresented that autism is so often represented by white men that if you cast a woman in this role if you cast an African-American if you cast a Latina if you cast anybody with another underrepresented identity marker that helps the Autism Community. He said obviously you want it, you know, you want to support from within inside the Autistic Community if possible and you want to have somebody on your production team that understands autism as a lived experience, but he was also really realistic and he's like, I know that you know not all theaters are going to have that opportunity. So he spoke really well about that and I was just blown away by his generosity. I think he had every right to say you have to cast an autistic actor in this role. I thought it was great that he offered people options. But then my favorite part was that there was somebody in the audience that raised their hand and said so our teacher made us listen to an interview with you on NPR. Mickey was like, yes and the audience member went on to say and you said in that interview that you have a wife and kids and Mickey said yes, and the student said so what's that like? And it was a wonderful moment when you realize that casting a professional actor to represent their own Community has such a deeper resonance than you can even imagine and Mickey's answer was great. Like well I have autism so I'm not great with executive function. So I am living on my own in Indianapolis and I get I get to go with my castmates once a week to go to the grocery store and I pick up like two candy bars and three frozen dinners for a whole week and I'm not good at planning. It's like not my forte. He's like, but when you have a partner your partner can go to the grocery store and your partner can help pay the bills and you can figure out what your strengths are and you know balance that with your partners and then he said and having kids is just silly. It's just wild and wacky do and it's you know, it's just the silliest thing in the world. So that doesn't matter if you have a disability or not, which as a parent with a disability. I also think is true like you're just starting from scratch. And so that made me really, sorry, but there's a lot that's a long way to say that made me fell fell in love with Mickey right seeing seeing him in

that show seeing his performance and his interactions with the audience and his generosity with the audience just made me want to work with him even more. So we stayed in touch and last summer he put out a call on line since that's an accessible space for a lot of us that do professional theater with disabilities. He said what if we started thinking about a National Disability Theater that is in the same tradition as National Theatre of the Deaf and Deaf West right which are two companies that really think about the idea of what it looks like when you interpret a theatrical work through the lens of Deaf culture, right? And he said what if we did that not with specifically Deaf culture, but with disability culture with the umbrella of disability culture and I wrote back and said, oh my gosh, that sounds amazing. I want to be involved. And before I knew it Mickey had like a website and he had a press release and he had like all these things. He's like, okay, so we're gonna we're gonna watch this and make this happen. Now, this is where Mickey and I work together as a team because I am super shy about things like this and if it was up to me, I would still be editing the private version of the website and like picking this one word over the other word and he's like, nope. It's going to press in a week. We're going it's like we're doing this and we both felt a sense of urgency that now is a really good time in the world that people are really receptive to this kind of work that the theater Community is ready for this kind of innovation. And so we felt really that this was a good time to do it. So Mickey's really helping me be brave and and try it. It's a huge experiment and we are standing on the shoulders of some incredible work that's been happening regionally and accessible theater and inclusive theater professional theater for Decades, I mean Denver, Seattle, DC, Chicago. These are all communities that have really exciting work that's already happening. So the idea of National Disability Theater is to offer those places are resource a national resource where all of those Regional practitioners can gather together. Nikki and I are really excited about a Co collaboration model where we partner with existing regional theaters that want to learn more about how they can make changes to their base infrastructure to make it more accessible for actors, designers, directors, employees, and audience members that have disabilities across the board. So National disability theater is really invested in three main things 1 is employing artists and artisans with disabilities, 2 is thinking about how we can tell stories in a theatrical way using disability culture as a lens and 3 is to offer ourselves as a resource in the Arts and disability sector and one example of that is that our vision for our performances is that all of the performances include in someway the standard accommodations that I talked about at the beginning of this call right that all of our performances are sensory friendly that all of our performance is to have either an option for captioning or ASL interpretation that some kind of audio description is available for all of our shows and that that's not an afterthought that is added to the show before it's produced but that that's part of the artistic process so that why doesn't the captioning become part of the projection design for the play? Why isn't the fact that it's sensory friendly just taken into account for the lights and the sound from the beginning because there's a huge range in how you can make something sensory friendly and our view is to make a few changes to that experience as possible to make it accessible to as many people as possible. So that's the latest Venture. It's requiring a lot of bravery and it's a lot of commitment and the biggest thing the sense of responsibility that I have is to really lift up an honor the the

incredible work that's already happening in the world and have National Disability be an additional supportive resource to that work and lift that work up because there's so much theater that already makes the hair on my arms stand up in such a good way. Right that takes my breath away in such a good way and we want to make more of that and we want to let other theater companies know how they can make more of that work.

Nicole:

I'm just so excited for that and I could not be more excited that it's you two doing the work. I just can't I mean I should be enjoying them. So I'm so excited. And so thankful that you guys are doing the work and that you've taken that you guys have taken the time to consider the three things in which you talked about because yes, every place that you go you are going to be you are going to be the image of disability perhaps to to the people even if they have a really good accessibility program, who knows what the patrons are encountering who knows what the other staff are encountering. I just think it's I think you guys are just going to do incredible things and I'm so excited. Well, we're only as good as our advisory committee which includes you so and there's also we're so at the beginning phases of this and we have so much more to learn particularly in the space of intersectionality. We really want to make sure that if we are saying that we are a national disability theater that that represents disability on stages across the country that doesn't look or feel one certain way that there's many many ways that you can engage with your disability identity. And so we as individuals have to be really mindful that we are being as intersectional and as inclusive as possible, which is just an ongoing challenge that we are embracing as best we can

Nicole:

That's awesome. Talleri thank you so so much for joining us today. We so appreciate your time and your wisdom and your expertise for those of you who work and live in a theater space. And if you're looking to make it inclusive, please check out [disarmingdisability.com](http://disarmingdisability.com). We all make sure that we need can filter you write to Talleri and so you can get all the expert information you could ever need again. Thank you to our you for coming in and hanging out with us today everyone.

Talleri:

It was my pleasure.

We want to give special thanks to our Network public-house media for our intro beats Jason Barnes and cybernetics for our logo art Patrice. You can find them at [normal person's.com](http://normalperson's.com) and Matt Meldrum and Ryan Lewis. Our two handed technical team subscribe on Apple podcasts or Public House media.org follow us on Twitter at [disarm disabled](https://twitter.com/disarmdisabled) follow us on Instagram and Facebook at [disarming disability](https://www.facebook.com/disarmingdisability) and check out our website [disarmingdisability.com](http://disarmingdisability.com). See you next week. Bye.