



March 1, 2016

*VSA Vermont uses the magic of the arts to engage the capabilities and enhance the confidence of children and adults with disabilities.*



## New and Cherished Partnerships

VSA Vermont's philosophy is built on forming partnerships and collaborations in order to grow and sustain our work in modeling inclusive communities. As part of a new partnership with the [Community Engagement Lab](#) (CEL), we are offering free drumming classes for individuals who are Deaf or hard of

hearing, as well as helping to promote Dame Evelyn Glennie's three performances across Vermont as part of CEL's "The Heart of Sound" project. In this newsletter, you can read more about the drumming classes, Dame Evelyn Glennie and the scheduled Vermont performances, CEL's work across the state, and our cherished partnership with the Flynn Center for the Performing Arts.

## Free Drumming Classes for Deaf or Hard of Hearing

VSA Vermont is offering two, 6-hour drumming classes to individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing. The classes may be for children who are Deaf or hard of hearing, family groups where one person is Deaf or hard of hearing, or adults who are Deaf or hard of hearing.





[Stuart Paton](#) of [Burlington Taiko](#) will be the instructor, and ASL interpretation and assistive listening devices will be provided at each class. No prior musical or drumming experience is required to participate. We are looking for 10 to 20 participants who want to explore the joy of rhythms and vibrations with a professional drumming instructor.

Participants will explore various percussion instruments, learn different drumming beats, and drum as part of a group. Some of the drums we will be using have a deep tone and rich vibration. There is NO cost to participants; instruction and equipment will be provided.

You can sign up for classes in Burlington or Montpelier:

- **April 4th 6th, and 8th from 6:00-8:00 PM in Burlington** (Burlington Taiko)
- **April 5th and 7th from 5:30-7:30 PM and April 9 from 7:00-9:00 PM in Montpelier**(Vermont College of Fine Arts)

For more information or to express your interest in the classes, please email Toby MacNutt at [toby@vsavt.org](mailto:toby@vsavt.org) or call 802-857-5653. Relay calls are welcome.

## The Heart of Sound

“Losing my hearing meant learning how to listen differently,” says [Evelyn Glennie](#). “Losing my hearing made me a better listener.” In an [essay on hearing](#) she wrote, “My hearing is something that bothers other people far more than it bothers me...Please enjoy the music and forget the rest.”

Evelyn Glennie's unique perspective has led her to become a world-class musician, win three GRAMMYs and 80 other awards, [perform at the opening the 2012 London Olympics](#), and be named a “Dame” of the British Empire — the equivalent, for a woman, of knighthood. She shares her story of having lost her hearing at age 12 and helping people around the globe to learn how to truly listen through the award-winning film ["Touch the Sound"](#) and her [TED talk](#).

Glennie is bringing her award-winning performance to three Vermont venues in April. “The Heart of Sound” will feature Glennie, along with a professional orchestra in performances sponsored by the [Community Engagement Lab](#) (CEL) and [Catamount Arts](#).



CEL provides leadership to design school-based projects that activate students' creativity while deepening their engagement with their community. CEL supports creative school/community partnerships across the state through programs such as the [Vermont Creative Schools Initiative](#) and the [Vermont Creative Teaching Forum](#).



CEL's "Heart of Sound" project began in August 2015, when Glennie first came to Vermont to work with 23 classroom teachers and teaching-artists. It continued throughout the year, as the teachers and artists incorporated their work with Glennie into theater, visual arts, music and dance performances across science, social studies and English curricula. Some of the students' work will be featured at the concerts.

Vermonters will get a chance to enjoy Glennie's music at the upcoming concerts. Tickets are \$10 to \$40:

- **Saturday, April 9: 7 PM: St. Johnsbury School Auditorium.** Tickets available through [Catamount Arts](#); discounts for those with disabilities available by contacting the box office at (802) 748-2600 or [info@catamountarts.org](mailto:info@catamountarts.org)
- **Sunday, April 10, 4 PM: Barre Opera House.** ASL interpreter. Discounts for those with disabilities available by contacting the box office at 802-476-8188 or [bohbox@barreoperahouse.org](mailto:bohbox@barreoperahouse.org).
- **Monday, April 11, 7:30 PM: Flynn Center Main Stage.** ASL interpreter. Discount vouchers for those with disabilities can be obtained by contacting VSA-Vermont at (802) 871-5043 or [info@vsavt.org](mailto:info@vsavt.org).



## Flynn Center for the Performing Arts

In many ways we can be proud of living in an era of greater and greater inclusion. Public practices are beginning to embrace people who in the past might have been marginalized because of their sexuality, disability, body type, or other qualities.

VSA Vermont finds many eager partners in the work of cultural access. A particularly vibrant partnership is with Burlington's Flynn Center for the Performing Arts.

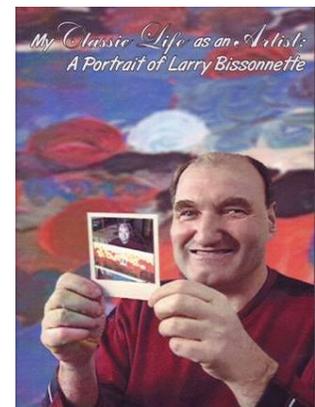


According to John Killacky, the Flynn's Executive Director, "The Flynn exists to present the best performing and visual artists from around the world. We have a long-standing commitment to inclusion, both for audiences with disabilities and for artists with disabilities."

One of the Flynn's recent attempts to be inclusive for audiences with children on the autism spectrum came with a family matinee of "Schoolhouse Rock Live!", which was adapted to provide what Killacky calls a "relaxed performance." To meet the needs of people with sensory sensitivities, houselights were raised and sound levels lowered. A quiet room was provided so children could take a break if needed. Actors and ushers understood that children might be talking or walking around during the play. The result was that everybody, from actors to kids to parents, had a good time. All family matinees at the Flynn are now structured this way.

The Flynn approaches artists with disabilities in multiple ways. In some cases, an artist's disability is the point of their performance. Terry Galloway creates drama around her experience of gaining hearing through a cochlear implant after having been a deaf lip reader. Mat Fraser, born with a thalidomide syndrome of shortened limbs, gave a "burlesque spectacle" with his wife to challenge perceptions of disability and the body. The AXIS Dance Company, a mixed ability ensemble from the Bay Area coming to the Flynn this fall, demonstrates what can be done by dancers some of whom have had amputations or use canes or wheelchairs.

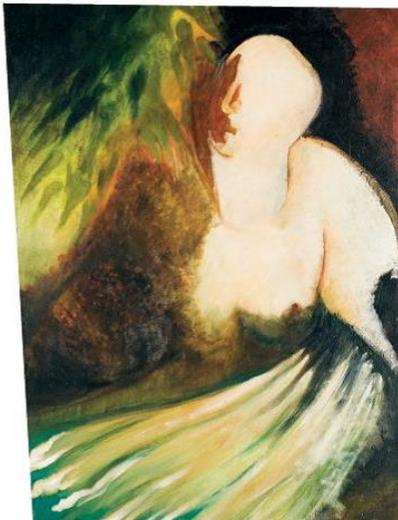
In other cases, the artist's disability fades into the background. At the Burlington Discover Jazz Festival in June, for example, the artist in residence will be the jazz pianist Marcus Roberts. Roberts happens to be blind; but though he may engage while in Vermont with others with limited vision, he is primarily here to make music. Similarly, a show at the Flynn's gallery by the visual artist Larry Bissonnette was all about his art, although Bissonnette was also available to talk about what it means for an artist to be on the autism spectrum. In April, Evelyn Glennie, a percussionist who has been profoundly deaf since the age of 12, will give a concert with members of the Vermont Community Engagement Lab Orchestra.





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VSA VERMONT PRESENTS: Engage



North Kyriak, *Nude Female Nude*, Acrylic, 36" x 24"

A Juried Exhibition of Artwork by Vermont Artists with Disabilities

February 26–April 29, 2012

The Amy E. Tarrant Gallery at the Flynn Center for the Performing Arts  
For gallery hours, please call the Flynn Center for the Performing Arts, 802-652-4500.

Reception: February 26, 2012, 4–6 P.M.

ⓞ Please contact VSA Vermont with accessibility and accommodation requests  
Voice: 802-655-772  
Relay calls welcome: dial 711  
Email: [info@vsavt.org](mailto:info@vsavt.org)  
Visit our website at [VSAVT.org](http://VSAVT.org)



In 2012, VSA and the Flynn collaborated on “Engage,” a juried show of work by Vermont artists with disabilities. Killacky was one of the jurors, and he speaks with pleasure of the way “Engage” broke free from the tendency to identify artists by their disabilities. “Engage” changed that paradigm,” he says, “in that on the jury we were just looking at work – we weren’t told what the disability of the artist was. And I found that freeing and very important.”

The “Engage” show had other impacts as well. According to Killacky, the Flynn changed its gallery practices because of the show. For example, art was hung on the walls several inches lower than usual in order to be easily visible to people in wheelchairs. Audio descriptors were available if requested to provide further access to the gallery’s works. And labels were in fonts large enough to be read by people with low vision. These practices carry over into new shows. Says Killacky, “It was a partnership that really changed us.”

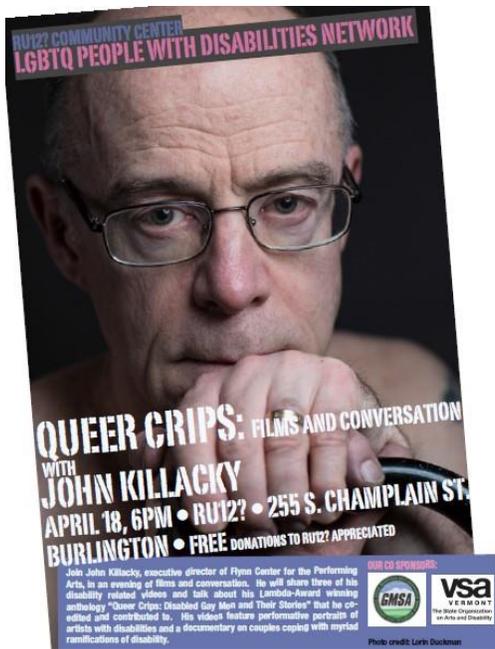
VSA was also involved in the “relaxing” of children’s matinees, an outgrowth of discussions of inclusion practices between VSA and the Flynn. And Judy Chalmer, VSA’s Executive Director, is on a Flynn

advisory board to improve outreach for families with children on the autism spectrum. According to Killacky, “This journey has been completely enriched by VSA Vermont. Whenever we have issues or corrections, our first call is to VSA VT.”

The Flynn provides invaluable support to VSA as well. Teaching artists in VSA’s Arts Connect program, which integrates arts and conventional curriculum in schools, are supported by the Flynn through a grant from the Surdna Foundation. Training for Arts Connect has been held in space provided by the Flynn. The “Engage” exhibition was mounted in the Flynn’s Amy E. Tarrant Gallery. And Killacky can imagine ways in which people in VSA’s forthcoming mentoring program might become volunteer ushers or participate in Flynn internships.



Killacky acknowledges that his own history has informed the ways in which the Flynn has taken inclusion to an exceptionally high level. Twenty years ago, he had spinal surgery that left him quadriplegic. It was many weeks before he could move more than a finger on one hand, and he still depends on a cane. He has described his experience in short films and in two books, “Queer Crips: Disabled Men and Their Stories,” which he co-edited, and last year’s “QDA: A Queer Disability Anthology.” Issues of disability and inclusion are integral to his daily life.



Killacky has written of his experience, “I am extremely grateful that art provided me tools for healing, hope, and reconciliation.” When he regained the use of one finger, he used it to type his story, little by little. Learning to walk again, he found he made the most progress looking in a mirror, his body recalling the hours spent in front of mirrors learning movements when he first became a dancer.

If VSA VT stands for anything, it is to use the arts as tools for healing, hope, and reconciliation in people with disabilities; and Killacky is a powerful example of how this can happen. VSA VT’s alliance with Killacky and the Flynn is a gift from the gods of inclusion.

*Story by David French, VSA Vermont volunteer*

***At VSA Vermont, Art Beats For All!***

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*VSA Vermont is a member of the VSA Affiliate Network,  
a program of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.*

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