

# **Twin Cities Ballet of Minnesota**

Approved by its Board of Directors: April 4th, 2020 — Access Coordinator: Rick Vogt

## **ADA ACCESS PLAN**

### **I. ORGANIZATIONAL POLICIES**

- A. **Nondiscrimination Policy:** Twin Cities Ballet of Minnesota (TCB) prohibits discrimination against any employee, applicant for employment, or patron because of race, color, national or ethnic origin, age, religion, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, veteran status or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal, state, or local law. All personnel who are responsible for the development and implementation of the organization's programs or activities are charged to support this effort and to respond promptly and appropriately to any concerns brought to their attention.
- B. **Access Policy:** Twin Cities Ballet of Minnesota (TCB) is committed to providing equal access and reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities. TCB's immediate goal is to clearly communicate available accommodations to promote readily achievable integration of individuals with disabilities into its ongoing programs, and will continue to plan for improved access to public events, employment, and facilities, and to increase awareness of access issues and practices among staff, employees, board members, and audience.
- C. **Inclusion framework:** TCB situates its work to provide access for people with disabilities as a strategy in the broader effort of inclusion for people of all backgrounds to participate in its programs.
- D. **Decision-making:** TCB is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization that operates under the oversight of its Board and leadership of its Artistic Directors. Structural and significant budgetary changes must be approved by the Board. TCB leadership works with the board to define accessibilities priorities, make programmatic changes regarding access and inclusion, and implement improvements as resources permit.

### **II. ADA ACCESS PLAN DEVELOPMENT**

- A. Past policy development: TCB has previously adopted non-discrimination policies and has provided reasonable accommodations for various programs for both audience members and participants as requested. Physical accessibility has always been a priority, and all rehearsal facilities (Rehearsals are housed at Ballet Royale Minnesota) and performance venues (mainly the Lakeville Area Arts Center and Ames Center in Burnsville, along with other smaller professional performance venues, senior centers, nursing homes, and schools) meet ADA requirements for physical accessibility. Recently, TCB staff attended an ADA Access Plan training workshop with an access consultant in order to improve and clarify our commitment to providing access to our programs for people with disabilities, and to create a plan for future improvements to increase participation of people with disabilities.
- B. Role of Leadership: TCB's Board of Directors holds ultimate responsibility for the organization's compliance with ADA requirements. Leadership and teaching staff are empowered to communicate about, implement, evaluate, and recommend accessibility strategies. A designated Access Coordinator has the responsibility for tracking progress on accessibility goals. Progress toward accessibility goals will be achieved by attaching specific timelines and Board/staff responsibility to action items.
- C. Annual revision: The Access Coordinator will ensure the ADA Access Plan will be revisited annually, and any revisions approved by the appropriate decision-making body, based on the recommendation of staff and leadership.

### **III. CURRENT ACCESSIBILITY EFFORTS**

- A. Planning & Resources
  - 1. Staff: TCB complies with the legal requirement to have a named Accessibility Coordinator, which shall be the Associate Artistic Director. It has an employment nondiscrimination policy in place and will make reasonable accommodations for employees as requested.
  - 2. Budget: A budget for access services is provided out of TCB's general operating funds and through special fundraising efforts (such as grant writing) when needed. Current efforts include earmarking funds for starting a sensory-friendly

performance series, starting with a sensory-friendly performance of *A Minnesota Nutcracker* at the Ames Center in December 2020. TCB is applying for an Access Improvement Grant through the Metro Regional Arts Council to help support the launch of this new program series.

3. Best practices: The organization makes efforts to learn about and determine the feasibility to implement best practices for including people with disabilities in its programs and services through engaging outside experts and developing internal staff knowledge.

#### B. Physical & architectural access

1. Rehearsal facility approach and entrances: The sidewalk outside TCB's rehearsal facility includes curb cuts. Accessible parking is available in the attached parking lot. The main entrance is accessible to all participants with a level entrance without stairs, and leads to clear direct paths into the facility. Carpeting is low-pile and tightly woven, providing a stable, flat, and firm surface.
2. Rehearsal facility Dance Studios: All the custom sprung dance studio floors are countersunk in order to keep all floors on the same level. The floor surface is a flat vinyl material that is stable, slip resistant, and firm. Doors are at least 36" wide into all program areas. Seating during performance events at the studio is completely removable and adjustable (through the use of folding chairs) enabling easy accommodation of any access needs, such as wheelchairs or other mobility devices. Service animals are permitted full access to facilities.
3. Rehearsal facility Restrooms: Restrooms include accessible stalls with appropriate grab bars and floor clearance.
4. Performance venues: All performance venues provide accessible parking in attached or nearby parking lots or parking garages, curb cuts, elevators in order to access the upper level of auditorium seating, and reserved seating areas for audience members with disabilities. Performance spaces are audited by the accessibility coordinator in order to identify any barriers and put into place any readily achievable accommodations. Accessible seats are removable at Ames Center; restrooms are fully accessible including a dedicated family restroom; an elevator and wheelchairs are on site.

### C. Communications & outreach

1. Outreach: TCB is developing relationships with the Autism Society of Minnesota (AuSM) and Shriner's hospital in order to increase awareness and participation of people with disabilities. TCB staff recently underwent training with a consultant from AuSM in order to learn about best practices for developing our **sensory-friendly program series**. TCB will also donate free performance tickets to participants in Ballet Royale Minnesota's adaptive dance program, *Ballet Beyond Barriers*, in spring 2020.
2. Website: TCB's website currently does not include information on screen reader accessibility, available accommodations, or descriptive text for images. This is an area of readily achievable improvement.
3. Box office: TCB's contracts with performance venues (mainly the Lakeville Area Arts Center and the Ames Center) include facilitating ticket sales. Both venues host regular box office hours where patrons can make ticket purchases in-person or via phone, and both also provide an online ticketing website that includes the ability to purchase wheelchair-accessible seating.

### D. Accessible program services

1. Disability-focused programming: There are existing efforts to provide discounted or free tickets to students with disabilities to attend TCB's school shows through relationships with special education programs in the area. TCB also brings educational workshops to nursing homes 2-3 times per year. Students with a variety of different disabilities (severe scoliosis, Autism, ADHD) currently perform or have performed in Twin Cities Ballet productions, and TCB dancers have collaborated with Ballet Beyond Barriers, an adaptive dance program for students of all abilities developed by our affiliate school, Ballet Royale Minnesota. **TCB is currently developing a new sensory-friendly performance series, designed to increase participation and support for a more neurodiverse audience.**
2. TCB has not received requests for other types of assistance, such as ASL interpretation or audio description, but is currently conducting research in order to make these options available.

#### IV. **SHORT-TERM GOALS FOR ACCESSIBILITY** - To be completed within 3-18 months

##### A. Planning:

1. **Access Coordinator:** Identify and codify the tasks of TCB's Access Coordinator and create a uniform job description. Integrate topics on working with and providing services for individuals with disabilities into standard staff and volunteer training. Train all program staff, especially instructors, on access policies and accommodations.
2. **Promote and enforce policies:** Include written nondiscrimination policy into job postings and hiring processes. Establish a written grievance procedure at the patron and staff level.
3. **Website:** Create a prominent web page within TCB's website with details on screen reader accessibility and describing what accommodations are available; create a clear procedure on how to contact the accessibility coordinator to request any additional or specific accommodations; and write descriptive text for images.
4. **Budget:** Seek project funding (through grant writing) to support development of a sensory-friendly program series, and other accessibility efforts as able.
5. **Launch the sensory-friendly program series,** beginning with a performance of *A Minnesota Nutcracker* at the Ames Center. People with Sensory Processing Disorders and disorders such as Autism experience massive barriers when it comes to attending dance performances, due to the unfamiliarity of the setting, unexpected loud music, noises, or bright lights that can cause discomfort. Normal performance etiquette, with the expectation of sitting quietly throughout the performance and not disrupting other audience members, can also cause barriers for participants with SPDs or other disabilities such as Autism. The implementation of a sensory-friendly performance series would allow people with SPDs to experience a dance performance in a more comfortable setting by eliminating the barriers that cause discomfort. Accommodations will include, but are not limited to: providing a social narrative to increase audience members' comfort and independence because they know what to expect;

providing a quiet zone and lifting normal performance etiquette, allowing movement and the freedom to enter and exit the theater as needed; providing noise-canceling headphones, limiting the volume of music and eliminating unexpected sounds; modulating the lights, etc.

6. Evacuation procedures: Define evacuation plans that include patrons with disabilities.

#### B. Physical and architectural access

1. Facility approach and entrances: Encourage parents or drivers of participants to avoid dropping off dancers in the accessible parking spaces. Consider installing automatic door openers, particularly at external doors.
2. Restrooms: Create signage for patrons who may be hypersensitive to sound, indicating that there are loud automatic hand dryers and how to request paper towels if needed.

#### C. Communications & outreach

1. Publicity & marketing: Develop and use consistent promotional language about program accessibility in all channels, including website, press releases, playbills, e-blasts, social media, and printed material, using appropriate symbols and person-first language. Proactively promote the availability (and process to request) of access services for available programs, including ASL interpretation, audio description, assistive listening devices, and adapted printed materials in large print and/or Braille. Consider a special, prominent accessibility page on the website to which other pages can link. Promote the sensory-friendly performance series, and reach out to other groups such as the Autism Society of Minnesota to create listings on their websites.
2. Website & box office: Learn about website accessibility and begin ensuring image descriptors are available for all images, links are descriptive, and use of headers is consistent.

#### D. Accessible program services

1. Program materials: Make season brochures and any other printed materials available as enlargeable documents on the website. Make available large print and Braille programs.

2. Discounts: Consider offering discounts specific to people with disabilities. It is best practice to also provide a complimentary ticket to a patron's required personal care attendant (PCA).
3. Sensory Friendly performance series to be launched December of 2020.

V. **LONG-TERM GOALS FOR ACCESSIBILITY** - To be completed within 18-36 months

A. Planning

1. Create an annual opportunity for Board members to participate in discussion of access plans and services to provide feedback and guidance on where to invest energy. Engage in more formal audits every 3-5 years to ensure compliance with changing rules.
2. Promote the ongoing improvement of services through continuing education for staff and volunteers, particularly the in-depth training for the Accessibility Coordinator.
3. Work to include more people with disabilities in the organization as staff, Board, and volunteers.

B. Physical & architectural access

1. Consider accessibility in all future facilities and performance venues, particularly with regard to providing easy emergency evacuation for individuals with disabilities, above-ground studios and fully accessible backstage spaces for performers.

C. Communications & outreach

1. Optimize the website for accessibility during any major redesign.
2. Continue to develop relationships with disability social and service organizations to integrate new patrons with disabilities into regular programming. Continue to explore new tactics and best practices (most communications accommodations are considered short-term or readily achievable goals).

D. Accessible program services

1. Make a commitment to producing programs that include, celebrate, and involve the active participation of people with disabilities.
2. Regularly provide access services so it becomes a regular part of program planning.

3. Continue to explore new tactics and best practices (most program service accommodations are considered short-term or readily achievable goals).

## VI. EVALUATION

- A. Evaluation Policy: TCB will assess its achievement of accessibility goals by tracking the following metrics and reviewing trends annually as part of its advisory processes
- B. Internal metrics - Data indicating TCB's internal decisions and activities that are largely under its control.
  1. Number of access advisors/completion of annual reviews/audits
  2. Number of events with wheelchair-accessible seats/assistive listening devices/audio description/captioning
  3. Funding allocated for accessibility services and improvements
  4. Number of active outreach contacts
- C. External metrics - Data reliant on an external response to TCB's activities.
  1. Number of requests for wheelchair-accessible seats/assistive listening devices/audio description/captioning
  2. Funding awarded for accessibility efforts/following accessibility improvements
  3. Number of active outreach partnerships

## VII. APPROVALS

This ADA Access Plan was last updated on 4/3/20 and adopted by TCB's Board on 4/4/20.