



presents

LIVED FICTION



DANCING

Developed as part of
DANCING, a European
Research Council funded
project exploring how EU
law can promote cultural
participation for people
with Disabilities as artists
and audiences





Lived Fiction

11-12 April 7pm

Project Arts Centre, Dublin

Developed as part of DANCING, a
European Research Council Funded
project at Maynooth University
School of Law and Criminology

Premiere performance on 11th April,
followed by a post-show Q&A with
Stopgap and members of the
DANCING research team

Show Duration: 90 minutes,
including a 15-minute intermission



Welcome message from Prof. **Delia Ferri**, Principal Investigator of 'Protecting the Right to Culture of Persons with Disabilities and Enhancing Cultural Diversity through European Union Law: Exploring New Paths (DANCING)'

Good Evening,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the premiere of *Lived Fiction* by Stopgap Dance Company, which was developed as part of DANCING, a European Research Council funded, interdisciplinary research project exploring how European Union (EU) law can advance the right to culture for people with disabilities, based at the Maynooth University School of Law and Criminology.

Lived Fiction challenges barriers that continue to make both performing and attending dance (as other cultural events) more difficult for people with disabilities. Stopgap have developed an exciting piece of contemporary dance and one where accessibility is considered artistically, not as an afterthought but intrinsic to a creative vocabulary that combines choreography with audio description, captioning, tactile elements, and responsive sound-design.

Tonight's premiere of *Lived Fiction* showcases how DANCING facilitates exchange between researchers and artists that lead to artistic innovation but also enable artists who work inclusively to support current developments in EU law and policy. We are pleased to welcome to tonight's event legal scholars, policymakers, representatives from organisations of people with disabilities and those working in the arts, particularly those involved in inclusive practice. We hope that *Lived Fiction* will continue to spark conversations between those working in different disciplines long after the house lights have dimmed. This is characteristic of how DANCING aims to disrupt conventional approaches to EU law scholarship, combining legal, empirical and arts-based research to understand the extent to which the protection of the right to take part in culture of people with disabilities and the promotion of cultural diversity intersect and complement each other in the EU legal order.

Having previously trained as a dancer and worked in the arts, I am keenly aware of the enrichment that cultural participation brings. DANCING is premised on the idea that cultural exclusion of people with disabilities has not only engendered their marginalisation but has also entailed a loss for society as a whole. To address this, DANCING supports the implementation of Article 30 of the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which recognises the right of persons with disabilities to take part on an equal basis with others in cultural life. DANCING's findings so far have shown that the persistence of barriers for people with disabilities means that inclusion continues to be denied to many. We believe that dialogue between artists, policymakers and people with disabilities is fundamental to bring about inclusion for all, as exemplified in tonight's performance by Stopgap.

Delia Ferri
Principal Investigator of DANCING

Statement by **Lucy Bennett**, Choreographer of *Lived Fiction* and Co-Artistic Director of **Stopgap**

“...It’s sharing and caring and finally chairing conversations about the mainstream or our own stream that we can slip down to our own big fat we don’t give a damn about being invited to the table, we invite you to ours instead...”

—Lived Fiction Text

Stopgap Dance Company wants everyone to experience an inclusive world where diversity is not just accepted, but pursued. We are a choreographer-led company that specialises in devising inclusive dance productions collaboratively. For *Lived Fiction*, our latest performance developed as part of project DANCING, we wanted to invite non-disabled people into the culture of Disabled creatives, together evolving a new way of experiencing dance.

In developing *Lived Fiction*, we wanted to go beyond reasonable accommodation for Disabled audiences and embrace Integrated Creative Access, considering access as an artistic element to the work itself. As a collective of Deaf, Disabled, neurodivergent and non-disabled allies we regularly break from the past and the traditional and thrive on the creativity and potential of an alternative way of doing things. We are inspired by the thrill of reinvention, upcycling and translating dance and theatre and for us creative access is just that, bringing everyone closer to the intentions, beauty and passion of dance.

One of the questions we revisited within the creative process was: ‘How can we balance access for audiences and the aesthetics of the choreography?’ We would take a long time as a team trying to resolve the question scene by scene only to realise, we needed to take in the whole production holistically to be able to truly answer that question. It was a constant dance between being up-close to the details of the work and experiencing the feel and pace from a distance. Every seemingly small change in the choreography would create a ripple effect for collaborators working to embed creative access throughout.

Our involvement with the DANCING research team meant at certain points in the process we could open rehearsals to Deaf, Disabled, neurodivergent and non-disabled stakeholders outside of Stopgap. We nervously prepared for huge changes in direction but found instead insight and clear solutions borne out of the lived experience of participants. This bolstered our course and gave us permission to keep pursuing creative access alongside inclusive choreography. The insights we gleaned, however, are not something we can just add to our ‘to-do’ list when making a show. To stay relevant, we need to continue to evolve through feedback from a diverse range of patrons.

Stopgap has employed Disabled performers for over twenty years and in this time, we have been disturbed by the lack of Disabled talent being developed by cultural institutions, dance organisations and local dance schools worldwide. We too must own up to a lack of diversity in our audiences. To change this, maximum effort is needed. In developing *Lived Fiction*, we have come to realise that Integrated Creative Access is not about simply ‘helping people who face barriers’ but helping everyone. The experience has taught us so much about how we receive and perceive dance. Through this, our practice has evolved and is now more original than ever. It is only now, at the end of the process and the start of a tour, that we understand how inviting diverse audiences into our dance world through creative access has broadened cultural participation in all directions. We hope *Lived Fiction* will ignite a passion for experiencing dance in new and diverse audiences worldwide.

Lived Fiction Credits

Lived Fiction was conceived, written and devised by Stopgap's Deaf, Disabled, neurodivergent and non-disabled creatives. The process was facilitated by Stopgap's Co-Artistic Director Lucy Bennett.

Cast and Creatives	Christian Brinklow, Monique Dior Jarrett, Emily Lue-Fong, Jannick Moth, Lily Norton (Audio Describer), Nadenh Poan, Hannah Sampson and Dan Watson (Voice of Dan)
Director and Co-Writer	Lucy Bennett
Access Artist and Co-Writer	Lily Norton
Rehearsal Director	Amy Butler
Composer and Sound Designer	Dougie Evans
Creative Captions and Projection Art	Ben Glover
Lighting Design	Jackie Shemesh
Costume Design	Ryan Dawson Laight
Prop Designer	Colin Holden
Access Guide	Lauren Trim
Production and Stage Manager	Ethan Duffy
Production Manager	Emma Henderson
Technical Manager	Francois Langton
Lighting Associate	Joe Hornsby
Costume Associate	Rosie Whiting
Consultants for Creative Access	Kelsie Acton, Angela Bettoni, Lucy Clark, Martin Glover, Andrew Loretto, Anne McCarthy, Lesta Woo, Sofia Young-Santamaria, Ada Eravamo, Maria Oshodi



Project Manager	James Greenhalgh
Access Workers	Abbie Thompson & Laurel Flatley
General Manager	Charlotte Mackie
Administrator	Amy Owen
Co-Artistic Directors	Laura Jones & Lucy Bennett
Executive Producers	Sho Shibata & Lucy Glover

Stopgap Dance Company is driven by a diverse creative team who uses dance as a movement for change.

Stopgap's mission is to create an inclusive world where diversity is not just accepted but pursued, a world where no one is limited by prejudice against Deaf, Disabled, or neurodivergent people.

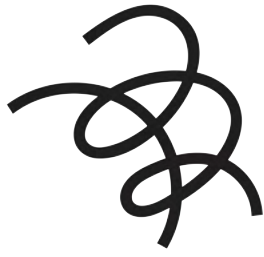
Working with an artform shaped by human touch and energised by the spark of connectivity, Stopgap's work demonstrates the compelling power of diversity and inclusivity. Stopgap's artists move together to create a remarkable experience that transforms society's perceptions of difference and dismantle the inequity of privilege, in dance and in all aspects of living, collaborating, and creating together as humans.

Stopgap's work is both focused on and born out of the company's rigorous investment in equity and inclusive culture. They are committed to removing barriers to dance, nurturing the talents of dancers born into any body and any mind. Stopgap are in coalition with a wave of organisations moving towards a better representation of diversity on our stages and in society.

Stopgap are a global leader of disability access in dance and continuously examine best practice. They actively advocate for the industry and the wider world to become more inclusive.

Discover more about Lived Fiction on our website:
www.stopgapdance.com/lived-fiction

Twitter/X: **@stopgapdance**



DANCING

Protecting the Right to Culture of Persons with Disabilities and Enhancing Cultural Diversity through European Union Law: Exploring New Paths (DANCING) is an interdisciplinary research project, funded by the European Research Council (ERC) and based at Maynooth University, under Principal Investigator Professor Delia Ferri.

DANCING combines legal, empirical, and arts-based research methods to investigate the extent to which the protection of the right to take part in culture of people with disabilities and the promotion of cultural diversity intersect and complement each other in the EU legal order. This approach involves:

Identifying and analysing features of cultural access experienced as exclusionary by people experiencing different types of disability.

Exploring how the EU has used and can use its competence to combat discrimination to ensure the accessibility of cultural activities. This includes promoting disability identities, while achieving cultural diversity. In doing so, DANCING bridges the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

Retheorising the legal concept of cultural diversity, stemming from the intersection of different sources of law to encompass the protection of the rights of people with disabilities. In doing so DANCING promotes a new way of understanding the right to participate in cultural life within the EU legal order.

DANCING believe that **everyone** has a right to take part in the cultural life of the community and to enjoy the arts.

DANCING looks at the right to participate in culture in a comprehensive way that has individual and collective dimensions and encompasses:

Participation in culture, such as the right to access cultural activities, goods and services.

Active involvement in culture, including creating cultural goods, services and activities.

Recognition and protection for cultural communities, as well as the right to enjoy and make use of their cultural heritage and cultural expressions.

DANCING are committed to engaging in broader dialogue with artists, the academic community, organisations of persons with disabilities and society at large. DANCING provides platforms for collaboration and discussion of emerging findings, through conferences, workshops and public conversations with artists, legal scholars and key stakeholders. DANCING is also collaborating with an accessibility designer and artists with disabilities to raise awareness of the project through outputs accessible to a diverse range of people.

You can find out more about our activities , including an archive of resources, academic papers and previous events on our website:

<https://ercdancing.maynoothuniversity.ie/>

For news of upcoming events and activities we are involved in, follow us on Twitter/X:

@DancingErc

Lived Fiction and the arc of creative access

Performers and audiences revelling in a shared-experience of an inclusive theatre space

Stopgap Dance Company explain their multifaceted approach to embedding access in the creation of Lived Fiction

To make dance accessible to the widest possible range of audiences, *Lived Fiction* places the aesthetics of access at its core. This is an approach which seeks to address barriers to art whilst also recognising the enormous artistic potential of access. *Lived Fiction* integrates audio description, creative captioning and a relaxed environment with world class choreography, allowing each element its own artistic voice so that dance takes on a new form that resonates with all audiences. Our success hinged on deconstructing dance in its purest form and reconstructing it in collaboration with creatives and advisors with lived experience of deafness, disability and neurodivergence. This collaborative approach to accessibility began right at the beginning of our creative process and was not an afterthought.

We want to avoid describing *Lived Fiction* as 'universally accessible'. To make every minute of a full-evening's work accessible to everyone would assume all access needs are the same and disregard personal preferences and unique perspectives. Instead, *Lived Fiction* has an arc, where the balance of artistry and accessibility ebbs and flows, offering audiences an understanding of how different people might meaningfully experience dance and the wider world.

Creative Audio Description

We are integrating both live and pre-recorded audio description, delivered by our on-stage audio describer and the dancers. The majority of scenes place emphasis on audio description and spoken word, supporting blind and visually impaired audiences with access to the choreography. This also presents opportunities for sighted audiences to engage with dance work in a new way. In some scenes text and description is pared back, leaving space for the music, sounds of the dancers, the space, and the costumes to do the descriptive work.

Creative Captions

We feel that the work is visually rich and engaging for Deaf audiences, supported by creative captioning and digital projections working together to artistically express the choreography, spoken word and music. Through consultation with our Deaf, Disabled, neurodivergent and non-disabled collaborators and creatives, we made a collective decision to not incorporate sign language interpretation during the performance. However, we will work with host venues to provide sign language interpreters for any pre or post show talks and announcements.

Relaxed Performances

We warmly welcome Learning Disabled and neurodivergent audiences to *Lived Fiction* and are committing to core elements of Relaxed Performances. Our Access Guide will be working with Project Arts Centre's Front of House staff to implement this, ensuring a committed shared approach to access.

We welcome voluntary and involuntary noise and movement in the auditorium.

We will have the house lights on at a sufficient level and leave the auditorium doors open throughout the performance, and we welcome audiences entering and exiting the auditorium at any time.

For our performances at Project Arts Centre, a Quiet Space is available before, during, and after the performance.

There is an Access table outside in the foyer of the Project Arts Centre, where audiences will be able to access resources, alternative format programmes and sensory supports such as ear defenders and sunglasses.

There will be no specific adjustments to the sound or lighting during the show. The show uses text, music and soundscapes, with varying levels of noise. When available, please take a look at our visual and sonic stories which share more about the sound levels. In particular, the eight-minute scene called 'Tight Textures' in the middle of act one has loud bass-filled music and bright moving lights. We will provide an in-show warning before 'Tight Textures'. This will allow people to prepare for the scene and potentially leave the auditorium temporarily if they wish to.

Alternative Formats

A Visual Story is available for this performance and braille versions of the programme and visual story are both available at our Access table.

A Note on Language

The dialogue between Stopgap and DANCING is a productive and enabling one that transcends boundaries between disciplines. Stopgap use 'identity first' language (i.e. disabled person) while DANCING use 'person first' language (i.e. person with a disability) in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the human rights model of disability.



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ENGLAND**



Lived Fiction was developed as part of the research project DANCING: Protecting the Right to Culture of Persons with Disabilities and Enhancing Cultural Diversity through European Union Law: Exploring New Paths, led by Delia Ferri, Professor of Law at Maynooth University

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