

Barrier-Free Theatre: Including Everyone in Theatre Arts—In Schools, Recreation, and Arts Programs—Regardless of (Dis)Ability

Sally Bailey

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Drama is a glamorous profession that attracts and demands the gifted to work as actors, directors, or producers. However, drama can also be an educational tool with therapeutic value which can help students to overcome physical or developmental barriers.

Barrier-Free Theatre is an extensive and invaluable manual for teachers and anyone else responsible for accommodating the special needs of children and adults with disabilities. Sally Bailey's book is divided into twelve chapters with elaborate recommended reading lists, references, and a structural checklist for building accessibility. She covers basic adaptations as well as improvisational classes. She details lesson plans and activities, offering suggestions on how to develop original scripts, and discusses the rehearsal process. An entire chapter is devoted to puppetry. Bailey defines various physical and cognitive disabilities, clarifying and providing advice for those unfamiliar with specific conditions such as cerebral palsy, blindness, ADHD, and Down syndrome.

Bailey has been a registered drama therapist since 1990 and holds multiple degrees in her fields. This award-winner has held artistic and management positions at Richmond's TheatreVirginia and the Folger Library's Shakespeare Theater in Washington, DC. She worked with recovering drug addicts at Second Genesis, a residential rehabilitation facility also in Washington, DC, and was the arts access director at the Bethesda Academy of Performing Arts. She received her MSW from the University of Baltimore in 1998. Since 1999, Bailey has been head of the drama therapy program at Kansas State University in Manhattan and director of the Manhattan Parks and Recreation Barrier-Free Theatre. She's also the author of *Wings to Fly: Bringing Theatre Arts to Students with Special Needs* and *Dreams to Sign*, a text about creating theatre in sign language and voice, casting hearing and deaf actors.

Bailey's latest book explores the performance arts as a specialized aid to teach science, social studies, and language, and how to implement drama as a tool to enhance social interaction and enforce life skills. These techniques are intended to build self-confidence and improve communication. Her goal is to facilitate the arts experience for everyone. With this book in hand, teachers and others can do the same.

JULIA ANN CHARPENTIER (November / December 2010)

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