

Pass It On®...

How To Be Free.

Eliza Zenger teaches dance, music and arts to adults with disabilities. Their performance is the most beautiful you will ever see.

In an attention-seeking world where perfection is the constant pursuit, one group finds the truest form of pure emotion. At a performance of Utah's LEADD (Learning and Engaging through Arts Discipline and Development) Adaptive Dance, Eliza leads a small ensemble of adults with disabilities in a performance that features musical instruments, dance, poetry and a choir.

The stage is matte black, with curtains pulled to the side and colored spotlights pooling on the floor. The accompanist is a Juilliard graduate who volunteers because she loves the authentic reaction to the music. The performers wear matching T-shirts and tights; they sit nervously together, hugging each other for support.

"I hope I remember everything," Annie says, squeezing her mother.

"You will."

Educators of those with disabilities have learned that self-expression through the arts connects their students in profound ways, opening pathways of trust and receptivity to learning.

"What is really beautiful is the relationships they build with each other and the connections they make with teachers and volunteers," says Eliza. "I really love them. There is so much honesty and humanity."

They dance to "You've Got a Friend in Me," letting all that emotion out in both choreographed and spontaneous movements, personal interpretations of the words. They are not in sync with the music, but they are in sync with their emotions. There are hugs during the dance, and tears in the audience.

A reading of Shel Silverstein's "The Giving Tree" leaves one young woman crying as she recites the last line. She bows her head and is consoled by two of her classmates. They sing a medley of songs, letting the words express what's in their

hearts. Not everything is on key, but the sentiment is in perfect pitch.

"They feel every emotion at a much deeper level than we do," Eliza says. "Happy and sad."

If you are looking for perfection, you find it in the lives of imperfect people. They dance to the tune of their own souls and sing straight from the heart.

"These are just beautiful human beings," Eliza says. "And they have so much to give, so much to teach all of us." It's as if negative circuitry has been disabled, and if that's a handicap, we should all be limited in such a way.

In a world of influencers, let's take a step back and feel the true rhythms of life resonating from those who were born with far less pretense or prejudice than most of us may be susceptible to. Joy is the gift they share. Encouragement is what they offer. Love is the space they live in.

Joy...PassItOn.com

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