Common Senses Festival

We All Move Together

September 13-27, 2026
Omaha, NE

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2025 Impact

The 2025 Common Senses Festival was an incredible celebration of connection, inclusion, and creativity, which included:

35 Days

52 Events

Over **8,996** Attendees

28 Partners

Across 2022 and 2025, the festivals opened up new space for collaboration and conversation, drawing the Omaha community closer to the individuals and families whose lives are shaped by disability.

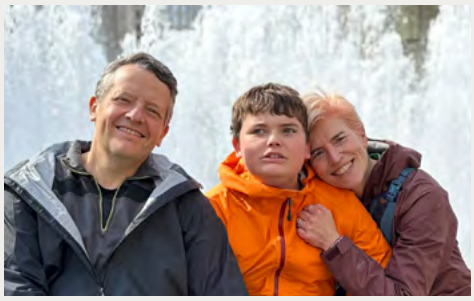
What began in 2022, grew stronger in 2025. With firmer infrastructure and a commitment that now runs year-round, the festival set its sights further: to root the arts in accessibility, to build lasting partnerships with local artists, and to keep its programming responsive to the community it serves. This year's festival is hosted with partners including Studio Susan Marshall, Omaha Performing Arts, MASS Design Group, The Durham Museum, Film Streams, the KANEKO, Nebraska Writers Collective, Great Plains Theatre Commons and others.

To the donors, partners, and volunteers who gave their time and expertise – thank you. Your dedication made 2025 what it was. And to everyone who embraced the vision, our deepest gratitude. This year, we aim to carry that work further: strengthening the bonds within our community and affirming that every way of experiencing the world has a place here.

Welcome Letter

Dear Friends,

When I think back on last year's festival, I don't picture one performance. I picture the people: artists, families, educators, scientists, advocates, neighbors – and the conversations that continued over the past year. *Every Voice Shakes the World* gave Omaha a chance to be exposed to work and ideas that are too often pushed to the edges, and people showed up curious and generous in a way that genuinely surprised me. That response is where this year begins.



From left to right: *Roger, Freddie and Kate Weitz*

Our 2026 theme, We All Move Together, is both an invitation and a responsibility. Moving together doesn't mean moving the same way or toward the same place. It means paying attention to each other; noticing who has been left waiting, who helped design the route, and whether everyone has a real way to take part. You'll find that question in the performances, films, science, and hands-on programs throughout this festival.

The idea is carried through this year's preferred interest, **trains**. If you love trains, you already know how much there is to know, and here, you'll find people who want to hear all of it. That's the whole point! At Common Senses, a preferred interest is expertise, and it's joy. So come for the trains. Come for the art, the science, the disability community, even the future of this city. Come because you're curious and have no idea what to expect. There is a place here for all of you.

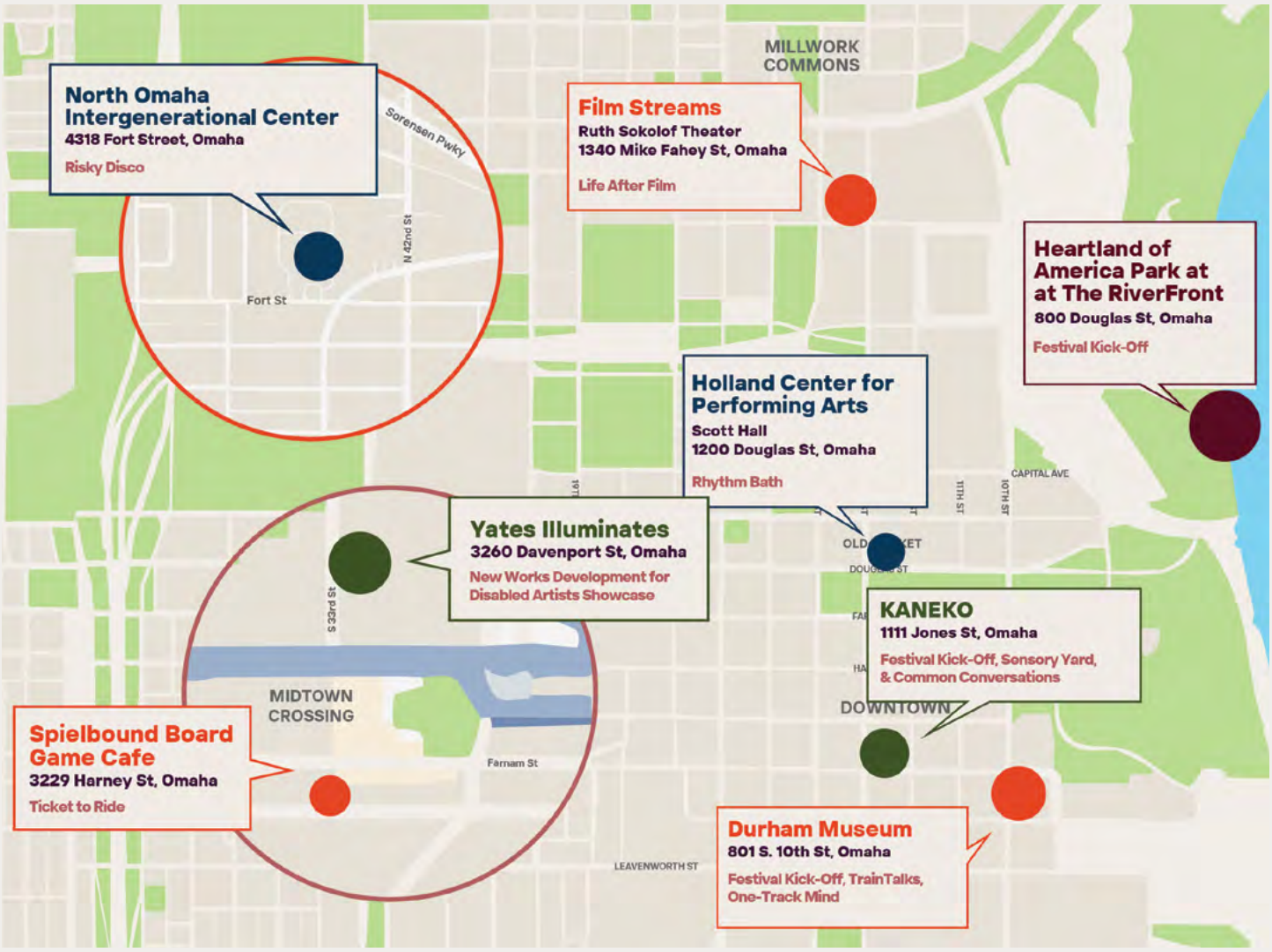
Last year showed what happens when every voice is taken seriously. This year, we go further; a festival, and a community, where everyone is valued for exactly who they are.

Welcome to Common Senses 2026.

With gratitude,
Kate Noble Weitz
Founder & Director, Common Senses Festival

How To Fest

The following pages feature a stunning roster of collaborators participating and performing at this year's Common Senses Festival, from photographers to dancers, artists to allies, and performers to educators, profoundly reimagining their respective fields.



Scan this QR code for our digital program

Festival Tracks

Performing Arts

Common Senses 2026's headliner, **Rhythm Bath**, makes its Omaha premiere at the **Holland Center**, presented in partnership with **Omaha Performing Arts**. Created by choreographer **Susan Marshall** and Tony Award-winning set designer **Mimi Lien**, this innovative dance-installation offers a paradigm shift in theater-going. Back by popular demand after selling out every performance in 2025, Risky Disco returns with **Risky Disco on Wheels**, built around this year's theme of movement.

Science

This year's Science offering explores what becomes possible when innovation begins with access. **The Sensory Yard** blends art, accessibility, and occupational therapy in a groundbreaking modular installation at the **KANEKO**, where audiences will journey through a series of thoughtfully designed sensory spaces.

Film

Once again partnering with **Film Streams**, Common Senses will present films featuring themes and artists connected to the 2026 festival programming. This year's lineup includes **Life After**, the Sundance-winning documentary from disabled filmmaker **Reid Davenport**. The film will feature a select screening followed by a panel discussion for the keynote film, inviting audience members to interact with the film's creators.

Common Conversations

Common Conversations, the discourse arm of Common Senses, includes the festival's keynote address, which will be delivered by **Alex Green**, author of **A Perfect Turmoil: Walter E. Fernald and the Struggle to Care for America's Disabled.** Common Conversations also features a panel discussion with leaders of **MASS Design Group**. As part of the 2026 festival, they will workshop their new endeavor, the **Monument Project**: imagining, and ultimately creating, a national monument recognizing the lives lost at state-run institutions in the United States.

Preferred Interests

In partnership with the **Durham Museum,** Common Senses will invite train enthusiasts to experience various aspects of trains, including engines, schedules, and model trains. Celebrated autistic photographer **Blair Bunting** will showcase his train photography and speak about his two preferred interests: trains and photography.

Risky Disco performers at Common Senses Festival Opening Day 2025
Photo Credit: Debra S Kaplan

Opening Day

Common Senses Festival Kick-Off

Description

Kick off Common Senses Festival 2026 with a model train pop-up and train photography gallery at the Durham Museum, Risky Disco pop-up, food trucks, and games at the Heartland of America Park, then explore the Sensory Yard at the KANEKO. Free UNO shuttles connect at all stops!

Accessibility Features

Sensory Kits
Social Narratives
Accessible Shuttles
Chill Zone

Sponsored By

fnbo

THE DURHAM MUSEUM

KANEKO
OPEN SPACE FOR YOUR MIND

The RiverFront

Performing Arts

Rhythm Bath
by Studio Susan Marshall

Performing Arts

Date & Time

September 19 – 20
3:30 PM & 7:00 PM

September 22 – 25
10:30 AM & 2:00 PM

September 26
3:30 PM & 7:00 PM

September 27
1:00 PM

Location

Holland Performing Arts Center - Scott Hall
1200 Douglas Street
Omaha, NE 68102

Description

This dance-installation offers a paradigm shift in theater-going, in which the audience is free to roam right through the dance. Enter a transporting space of rhythmic music and movement, floating fabric, and glimmering light, where there is no "right" way to be. Sit, lounge, stand, walk, roll on wheeled chairs—move as you need to, come and go as you please. Experience being in the midst of movement happening all around you as the dancing adjusts to wherever you are.

Rhythm Bath by Studio Susan Marshall is what it sounds like: a chance to be surrounded by rhythm—visual, aural, and kinesthetic. Our brains are wired to entrain with rhythm, and to link to others' movements through a neurological process called interpersonal synchrony. Over the course of Rhythm Bath, the movement and music shifts from a pulsing, almost dance party rhythm to one of oceanic calm. Viewers can relax and soak it in quietly, or follow the action and be energized by the surrounding movement.

Accessibility Features

Sensory Kits
Social Narrative
Chill Zone

Dancers react to the floating ceiling during Rhythm Bath 2025
Photo Credit: Ashley Smith, Wide Eyed Studios

Susan Marshall *Choreographer*

Choreographer Susan Marshall has collaborated with visual artists, scientists, composers, and music ensembles on theater productions and gallery installations. As the parent of a son with autism and as a member of a community of families of neurodiverse individuals, Marshall is excited by the increasing access for viewers and participants in the arts and is pleased to be a part of this movement to expand access to cultural events. Among other honors, Marshall is the recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship, Guggenheim Fellowship, and New York Dance and Performance "Bessie" Awards. Her company has performed around the world, and her work is in the repertory of major dance companies. Marshall is a professor and the Director of Dance at Princeton University.

Mimi Lien *Set Designer*

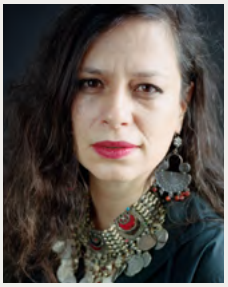
Mimi Lien is a designer of sets/environments for theater, dance, and opera. Selected work includes Natasha, Pierre and The Great Comet of 1812 (Broadway, Tony Award), Sweeney Todd (Broadway), Antony & Cleopatra and Grounded (Metropolitan Opera), Parsifal (Bayreuther Festspiele). Her large-scale public installations include The GREEN (Lincoln Center), PARADE (The Bentway, Toronto), and MODEL HOME (Without Walls Festival, San Diego). Mimi is a recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship, TONY Award, Drama Desk, Lucille Lortel, Outer Critics Circle, American Theatre Wing Hewes Design Award, OBIE Award for sustained excellence. Mimi is a co-founder of the Brooklyn performance space, JACK.

Jeanette Oi-Suk Yew *Lighting Designer*

Jeanette Oi-Suk Yew is an award-winning designer for theater, dance, opera, musicals, music performances, and large-scale immersive installations. The New York Times has described her designs as “clever” and “inventive,” and her dance work as having the “vibrant richness of a Caravaggio painted in neon.” Recent dance credits include Rhythm Bath with Susan Marshall, The March with Tendayi Kuumba, Annie-B Parson, and Donna Uchizono, Wicked Bodies with Liz Lerman, and Chasing Magic with Ayodele Casel. She was Company XIV’s lighting designer from 2014 to 2019. Jeanette is a 2026 USA Fellow and Arts Professor and Head of Lighting Design Training at NYU Tisch Drama.

Christopher Wong *Lighting Assisstant*

Christopher Wong is a New York-based lighting designer for live performance and is thrilled to be working with Jeanette Oi-Suk Yew again. His designs have been seen at Goodspeed Musicals, Museum of Contemporary Art - Chicago, The Bushwick Staar, Timber Lake Playhouse, Penguin Repertory Theatre, A.R.T. / NYC, The Flea, Edison Ballroom, Baruch Performing Arts Center, The 14 Street Y, Ensemble Studio Theatre, New York Live Arts, Maui Arts and Cultural Center, and American Theatre Group. He has been associate or assistant designer on shows on Broadway, Off-Broadway, and regionally. M.F.A. NYU.



Oana Botez *Costume Designer*

Oana Botez is a costume designer working in theater, opera, film, and dance. She is a recipient of the Lucille Lortel, Obie, Henry Hewes, Princess Grace, and Barrymore Awards, and the NEA/TCG Career Development Program. Her designs have been seen at BAM, Public Theater, LCT3, Signature Theater, Playwrights Horizons, Soho Rep, The Kitchen, The Joyce Theater, Arena Stage, Hartford Stage, Wilma Theater, Detroit Opera, The Industry LA; Alice Tully Hall/ Lincoln Center; Minnesota Opera; Glimmerglass Festival; Portland Opera; Pittsburgh Opera; Prototype NY; National Sawdust; REDCAT; BAM; Wolf Trap Opera; NY Philharmonic; and internationally. Botez teaches at David Geffen School of Drama at Yale.

Jason Treuting *Co-Composer*

A founding member of Sō Percussion, composer/percussionist Jason Treuting has performed worldwide. His compositions, noted for their compelling rhythmic language and evocative expressivity, have been performed by Shara Nova, the JACK Quartet, TIGUE, Susan Marshall and Company, and others, at the Lincoln Center Festival, the Barbican, Walker Art Center, National Sawdust, Fast Forward Austin, Kadence Arts Boston, Chatterbird, the Brooklyn Academy of Music's Next Wave Festival and elsewhere. Treuting explores and composes music in collaboration with artists including laptop artist/composer Cenk Ergun; guitarist Grey Mcmurray; and guitarist/composer Steve Mackey.

Dan Trueman *Co-Composer*

Dan Trueman is a musician: a composer, a fiddler, a collaborator, a teacher, a developer of new instruments. Pervading all of his work is a deep curiosity about the creative process, the relationships between musicians and musical instruments/machines, and a desire to discover new music through these relationships that would be previously unimaginable. Dan's work has been recognized by fellowships, grants, commissions, and awards from the Guggenheim Foundation, the Barlow Endowment, the Bessies, the American Composers Forum, the MacArthur Foundation, the American Council of Learned Societies, among others. Dan is a Professor and Chair of the Music Department at Princeton.

Tony Crawford *Production Manager*

Tony Crawford is a production manager and technical director in dance and performing arts; select experiences include: Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival (Operations and Production Manager); Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet (Technical Director); Twyla Tharp Diamond Jubilee Tour (Production Stage Manager); New York City Ballet (Assistant Technical Director); Brooklyn Academy of Music (Production Coordinator). Tony has recently Production-Stage Managed with Aszure Barton at the 92nd Street Y, and for her touring show, A a | a B : B E N D. Tony has a degree in Geographic Information Science, and at home restores mid-century modern furniture.

Jørgen Noodt Skjærvold *Technical Director*

Jørgen Noodt Skjærvold is a designer and technician from Trondheim, Norway. He has been working in theater and making sounds and music since 2005. Recent artists he has worked with include Julio Torres, Half Straddle, Andrew Schneider, Monica Bill Barnes & Company, JoAnne Akalaitis & Philip Glass, Findlay//Sandsmark, Mabou Mines and Shana Moulton.

John Flak *Stage Manager*

John Flak is a theatre artist with an extensive background in Stage and Production Management. An active member of Actors' Equity Association for over 35 years, his stage management highlights include the Arden Theatre Company; Steppenwolf Theatre Company; Weston Theatre Company; Actors Theatre of Louisville; and the Broadway tour of Ragtime in Chicago. John was the Production Manager of Rhythm Bath (Philadelphia Premiere 2023) and A Fierce Kind of Love. John has taught Stage Management at The University of the Arts, Arcadia University, Villanova University, Temple University, and Northwestern University. John is also a photographer, artist, and proud Dad.

Lila Hurwitz *Managing Director, Studio Susan Marshall*

Lila Hurwitz supports artists of all kinds with management, fundraising, communications, and more. Clients include dance artists Susan Marshall, Bebe Miller, Rosy Simas, Kathy Westwater, and others. She is a co-founder of Motion State Arts in Providence, RI, and co-founded Dance Art Group, producers of the Seattle Festival of Dance Improvisation for 18 years. She was formerly graphic designer for Contact Quarterly magazine, and Communications and Associate Director at Seattle's Artist Trust. Lila has performed with Heidi Henderson, Linda K. Johnson, Nina Martin, Karen Nelson, Stephanie Skura, and others. She is a Feldenkrais® Practitioner and taught Authentic Movement for a decade.

Lisa Sonneborn *Access Coordinator*

Lisa Sonneborn (she/her) is Director, Media Arts and Culture (MAC) for the Institute on Disabilities, Temple University CEHD. Her work has engaged communities locally, nationally, and internationally in conversations around the lived experience of disability, the preservation of disability history, and cultural access. As MAC director, Lisa leads teams of artists, people with disabilities, and families through the development and implementation of multi-layered cultural programming. MAC projects have served as models for inclusion, authenticity of voice, and arts accessibility. New work in development: You Caught Me on Your Shoulders, with Kinetic Light and FringeArts (2027).

Rohan Bhargava *Dancer*

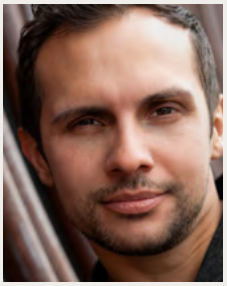
Rohan Bhargava, originally from New Delhi, India, holds his BFA in Dance from NYU Tisch. As Founder & Artistic Director of Rovaco Dance Company, he produces multidisciplinary productions at the intersection of Indianness and queerness. Rohan was awarded a CUNY Dance Initiative Residency from LaGuardia Performing Arts Center in 2017, he received the 2020 Jadin Wong Fellowship in Dance from Asian American Arts Alliance, and he was featured in Dance Magazine's "25 to Watch" in 2021. Rohan currently teaches for Mark Morris Dance Center and Notes in Motion, and he is the Programs Manager for Mare Nostrum Elements' Emerging Choreographer Series.

Ching-I Chang *Dancer*

Born as Ching-I Chang, Anichi Moon is a name lovingly gifted by a beloved grandfather. Anichi walks through life with wonder in heart and songs in soul. Anichi dreams of a world where humans and nature remember they are one; where creation flows freely without borders, separation, or fear. Anichi speaks with trees and listens closely to the wisdom hidden in their dances beneath the sky. When time softens, you can find Anichi singing to the moon, dancing barefoot through ordinary moments, and turning everyday life into a small celebration of being alive. Anichi loves bananas.

Kristin Clotfelter *Dancer*

Kristin Clotfelter co-directs Studio C Projects, a collaborative investigating intersections of movement, design, and performance; is Associate Artistic Director of Barriskill Dance Theater School; and teaches dance at Duke University. Kristin has worked with Susan Marshall since 2011. Additional performance credits include: The Metropolitan Opera, The Santa Fe Opera, State Theater of Kassel in Germany, Yaa Samar! Dance Theatre and Punchdrunk's Sleep No More. She has been awarded residencies through Durham Independent Artists, Tobacco Road Dance Productions, and Dance Omi. Kristin holds a BFA with honors and a minor in Visual Arts from the Ailey/Fordham University program and an MFA from the University of the Arts.

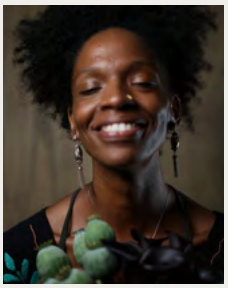


Nico Gonzales *Dancer*

Nico Gonzales (he/him), a Colorado native, started his early dance training at Denver School of the Arts, and under Brian Young and Tami Bing. He received his BFA in Dance from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. In addition to working with Studio Susan Marshall, he performs with Heidi Latsky Dance and is a founding company member of both Rovaco Dance Company and HOLDTIGHT Company (Denver, CO). Nico has also performed with Bryn Cohn + Artists and Periapsis Music & Dance at venues including Jacob's Pillow, Lincoln Center, The 92nd St Y, Bryant Park and Ailey Citigroup Theater.

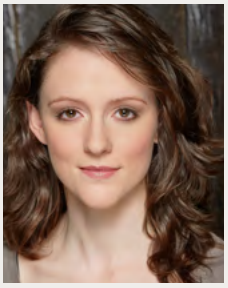
Paul Hamilton *Dancer*

Paul Hamilton is a Bessie-winning dance artist who practices collaboration-based choreography and movement, often in non-traditional spaces. As a dancer, he has collaborated with Ralph Lemon, Reggie Wilson, Jane Comfort, David Thomson, David Gordon, Neil Greenberg, Melinda Ring, Susan Marshall, David Brick, Anna Sperber, Antonio Ramos, and Keely Garfield. Spaces include the PATH World Trade Center Oculus, MoMA PS1, and the intersection of Orchard and Rivington Streets, where he made his choreographic debut in 2021 in Kevin Beasley's Sound of Morning. His choreographic work was most recently seen in Tau Lewis' No one ascends from the underworld unmarked.



Courtney Henry *Dancer*

Courtney Henry is an artist, writer, performer, educator, and mother based in the San Francisco Bay Area. A former principal dancer with Alonzo King LINES Ballet, her interdisciplinary practice spans dance, voice, film, and text. Rooted in improvisation, the interdisciplinary code of spiral, somatic inquiry, and imagination, her work explores the spiral of remembrance between body, story, and place. Guided by the belief that movement remembers what language cannot, Courtney creates performances that invite audiences into deeper relationship with themselves, one another, and the more-than-human world. She is also the author of the forthcoming children's book The Wandering Prince.



Vanessa Knouse *Dancer*

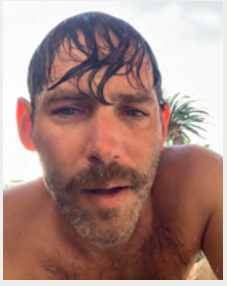
Vanessa Knouse, from Santa Fe, NM, earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts at The University of North Carolina School of the Arts before moving to New York City. Vanessa has performed work with the Merce Cunningham Trust, Cornfield Dance, Bill Young/Colleen Thomas & Co., Ian Spencer Bell, Susan Marshall & Co., Jody Oberfelder Projects, and Douglas Dunn + Dancers. She worked with Kimberly Bartosik/daela and Douglas Dunn as a rehearsal assistant and assisted Patricia Lent staging event versions of Merce Cunningham's work. Vanessa is currently pursuing a Master of Fine Arts at the University of Illinois.

Bryn Elizabeth Luna *Dancer*

Bryn is a dance artist and pediatric/family chiropractor based in Portland, Oregon. After earning her BS in dance and psychology at University of Oregon, she moved to NYC to continue dancing, collaborating, and performing with Michelle Boulé, Susan Marshall, and Sidra Bell among others. In 2018 she founded the physical theater company BIRDHOUSE with artistic director Raven White, curating, teaching, and performing in multidisciplinary performance pieces in NYC. She has performed at Theaterlab (NYC), The Oculus (NYC), LAKES DEJOT (Riga, Latvia), La Mama Downstairs (NYC), Links Hall (Chicago), The Chocolate Factory (NYC), and beyond.

Eileen Thomas *Dancer*

Eileen Thomas is a founding member of Susan Marshall & Co., performing with the company from 1985–2000. She also served as choreographic assistant to Susan on several dance company commissions and was rehearsal director for the Philip Glass Opera production of Les Enfants Terribles. She is thrilled to join these performances of Rhythm Bath. Eileen is a licensed massage therapist, teaches therapeutic yoga and dance/yoga classes for people with Parkinson's. She lives in Brooklyn, NY with her daughter.



Darrin Michael Wright *Dancer*

Darrin Michael Wright, a Brooklyn-based collaboration artist, is a native of Los Angeles, California, where he started tap dancing at the age of six. He received his BFA in Dance from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign in 2002. Darrin teaches master classes in technique, composition and improvisation throughout the country. In 2009, he received a "Bessie" Award for his work with A Canary Torsi's Dark Horse/Black Forest.

Participants of Rhythm Bath 2025 express themselves through dance
Photo Credit: Ashley Smith, Wide Eyed Studio

Audience members enjoy an immersive performance by Rhythm Bath 2025 dancers
Photo Credit: Ashley Smith, Wide Eyed Studio

Risky Disco

Performing Arts

Date & Time

September 14 – 16
September 18
September 21
September 23

10:30 AM & 1:00 PM

Location

North Omaha Intergenerational Center
4318 Fort Street
Omaha, NE 68111

Description

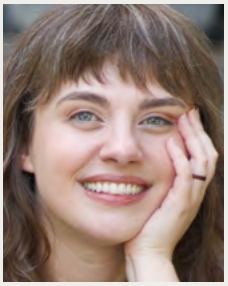
Risky Disco is back...on wheels! Inspired by the atmosphere of an 80's Roller Rink, Risky Disco On Wheels is an electrifying sensory workshop curated for adults with disabilities. At Risky Disco, every individual has the space to explore and connect regardless of their form of communication or movement. Facilitated by a team of experienced Teaching Artists, our VIP Guests will be offered opportunities to dance, roll, and play as they explore a rich array of sensory experiences. Please note that wheels are not required to enjoy this event!

Accessibility Features

Sensory Kits
Social Narrative
Chill Zone

Carrie Nath *Co-Founder*

Carrie A. Nath is a multi-hyphenate theater artist and educator from Omaha. Carrie is currently the Director of Equitable Access at BLUEBARN and has served as Managing Director of The Art of Imagination at Ollie Webb Center, Inc.; Director of Education, Kentucky Arts Council; Associate Director of Education, Seattle Opera; and Education Consultant, Ford's Theater, D.C. Artistic credits include Actor's Theatre of Louisville; Manhattan School of Music; multiple Shakespeare companies; and Washington National Opera. Carrie is an access consultant for Omaha Performing Arts and Nebraska Arts Council (NAC); a member of the Opera Omaha Holland Community Opera Fellows Panel and Opera Omaha Board of Directors; and is on the Common Coalition Board. Ms. Nath is a panelist for NAC and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and recently received her M.A. in Disability Studies from City University of New York School of Professional Studies.



Katy Kepler *Co-Founder*

Katy Kepler is a multidisciplinary theatre artist, neurodivergent self-advocate, and superfan of play and sensory theatre. In addition to co-creating Risky Disco, an inclusive dance party and sensory workshop produced by Common Senses, Katy has championed accessibility in the arts throughout her career. She is the creator of Beatwood Hollow, a sensory theatre piece which premiered through the VROOM! Mobile Sensory Theatre. With experience as a director, performer, production/stage manager, administrator, playwright, devisor, and teaching artist, Katy has been found both onstage and behind-the-scenes across theatres, festivals, and nonprofits. In the classroom, Katy can be found working with students of all ages and abilities. She is the founder of Sensory Squad, a residency for children and siblings staying at the Ronald McDonald House in Omaha, and is part of the Nebraska Arts Council Teaching Artist Roster. Katy is thrilled to be a part of Common Senses, where she finds herself at the intersection of her love of arts, festivals, and advocacy. Katy received her B.S. in Theatre from SUNY Brockport.

Kathleen Combs *Teaching Artist*

Kathleen Combs is a passionate performer and teaching artist. She loves to act, sing, dance and teach creative drama to students of all ages and abilities. Kathleen had the privilege of teaching Creative Drama and Movement throughout Los Angeles, CA and Tokyo, Japan. Currently, she is a Teaching Artist and Managing Director of Kids On The Block, an advocacy puppet program designed to teach elementary students about living with a disability for WhyArts, Inc. Kathleen has appeared in GPTC's New Play Festival, Anastasis Theatre's and GPTC's production of Ways to Win the Woods as Ensemble Puppeteer, Old School Shakespeare's Winter's Tale as Old Shepherd, the OCP Mobile Sensory Theatre's Starshine! (2023-2024) and Beatwood Hollow (2024-2025), the Bluebarn Theatre's More of a Heart as Anne, the Omaha Community Playhouse's The Cake as Della, and with Ollie Webb's Art of Imagination in Dozynki. She also collaborated on a project for the Common Senses Festival called Risky Disco, a pop-up sensory discotheque, which launched to rave reviews in May 2025. Kathleen feels so fortunate to be part of Omaha's thriving arts community!

Karma LiLoLa *Teaching Artist*

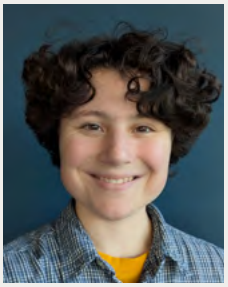
Karma LiLoLa is an Omaha-based performance artist, storyteller, deviser, and community builder. A first-generation Mexican-American trans woman and wheelchair user, she creates immersive experiences blending ritual, theatrical spectacle, movement, audience participation, and emerging technology. Karma holds degrees from Yale University and the University of Nebraska at Omaha, where she studied theatre, performance, dramaturgy, and cultural storytelling. Following a spinal cord injury in 2023, her practice expanded to include wheelchair choreography, sand mandalas, and autobiographical performance. *Magna Karma is a vogue ball for the soul, taking audiences through a rocket launch, a funeral march, and a community disco party.*

Zoella Sneed *Teaching Artist*

Zoella Sneed (she/her) is an Actor, Director, and Teaching Artist, and Arts Leader based in the heart of Omaha, Nebraska. She has recently performed with several theaters in the area such as The BLUEBARN, The Rose Theater, Great Plains Theatre Commons, Anastasis Theatre Company, The Shelterbelt, The Shirley Tyree Theater, Omaha Broadway Bar, and more! When she's not onstage, she's advocating for the impact of the arts in our community & across the state.

Ben Pearson *Teaching Artist*

Ben Pearson is eager to groove again with Risky Disco! He graduated from the University of Nebraska at Omaha with a B.A. in Theatre in 2019. Since then, he has acted in numerous productions with the BLUEBARN Theatre, Bellevue Little Theatre, Old School Shakespeare Omaha, Shelterbelt Theatre, and the Ollie Webb Center. He is also a member of the Kids on the Block puppet troupe, a WhyArts program that helps raise disability awareness for elementary school students. He is especially interested in breaking down barriers and uplifting neurodiverse voices in the world of theatre and beyond!

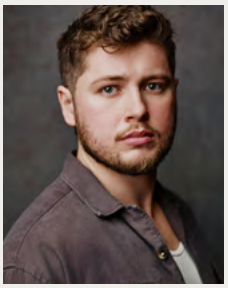


Randall Johanningsmeier *Teaching Artist*

Hello! My name is Randall Johanningsmeier. I am a multidisciplinary artist and teacher living in Omaha. I graduated from Swarthmore College in 2024 with a bachelor's degree in studio art and mathematics. Since then, I have been acting in plays around Omaha, often developing new music and original art for the productions I work on. I love to act, draw, paint, read, dance, make music, sew, and learn new skills, and I can't wait to share my enthusiasm for the arts with you!

DeAnna Williams *Teaching Artist*

DeAnna Williams is a performer, teaching artist, accessibility advocate, and community engagement strategist dedicated to creating experiences in which people feel welcome, valued, and empowered to participate. With a background spanning theatre, education, audience engagement, and inclusive experience design, she believes creativity thrives when barriers are removed and curiosity is encouraged. DeAnna's work centers on belonging, connection, and the transformative power of shared experiences. She is honored to join Risky Disco and support a space where participants of all abilities can explore, create, communicate, and celebrate their unique perspectives through joyful sensory engagement.



Aiden James Poling *Designer*

Aiden James Poling is a professional actor, multi-hyphenate creative, and teaching artist from Shreveport, Louisiana who has centered much of his career around inclusive arts access. Aiden holds BFAs in both Theatre and Studio Art, two areas of study which have helped shape his career across stage, music, film, directing, design, arts education. Since moving to Omaha four years ago, he has served several local arts organizations: RESPECT (Co-Artistic Director), OCP's VROOM Mobile Sensory Theatre, Opera Omaha (HCOF Fellow), and recently joined the Nebraska Arts Council this summer as their new Arts Education Program Manager.

Participants dance with colorful scarves at Risky Disco 2025
Photo Credit: Debra S Kaplan

New Works Development for Disabled Artists Showcase

Performing Arts

Date & Time

September 22
6:30 PM

Location

Yates Illuminates
3260 Davenport St
Omaha NE 68131

Description

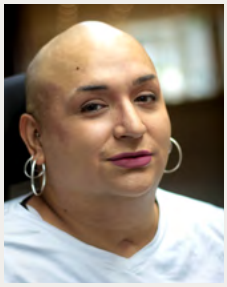
The New Works Development for Disabled Artists (NWD^2A) program is a partnership between Common Senses and Great Plains Theatre Commons. This program is designed to support Omaha–Metro and surrounding artists who identify as having a disability in the next step of developing a new theatrical work in progress. The experience is formatted to be fully accessible, beginning with the GPTC New Play Festival and ending with a showcase at the Common Senses Festival. It is a celebration of artistic expression that supports unique visionaries and their stories, which make our community, and the world, stronger. The evening features excerpts from Abz Cameron's 'Oh, to Be a Kid Again' gallery installation and Karma LiLoLa's 'Magna Karma' ritual of self-discovery through performance.

Accessibility Features

ASL Interpretation
Live Captioning
Sensory Kits
Social Narratives
Chill Zone

Abz Cameron *Artist*

Abz Cameron (they/them) is a neurodivergent, multidisciplinary artist, and self-proclaimed weirdo based in Omaha. A sensory-seeking creator, their work is hands-on and tactile– rooted in play, accessibility, and genuine human connection. With two decades of acting experience, Abz stumbled into visual during Covid-19 and fell in love with yet another language of expression. As a Holland Community Opera Fellow with Opera Omaha and former Artistic Specialist with the Ollie Webb Center, Inc., Abz designs neuro-inclusive programming encouraging ALL to express their own truth, depth, chaos, silliness, and joy!



Karma LiLoLa *Artist*

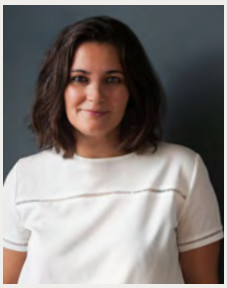
See full bio on page 11

Kevin Lawler *Artistic Director of GPTC/Coach*

Kevin is a poet, playwright, director, designer, actor, and producer. He is the Artistic Director of The Great Plains Theatre Commons, a co-founder of the award winning Blue Barn Theatre, the founder/director of the National Institute For The Lost, and a dad.

Ellen Struve *Community Connector of GPTC/Coach*

Ellen Struve is a playwright, community artist, and educator. She is a Nebraska Arts Council Individual Artist Fellow, Great Plains Theatre Festival and PlayPenn alum, and five-time Omaha Entertainment Award-winner for best original script. Her play *Recommended Reading for Girls* is published with Playscripts, Inc. Her work has been supported by an EST/Sloan award and the Mid-America Arts Alliance. She has degrees from University of Iowa and School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

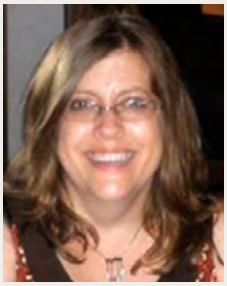


Rachel Adams *Coach*

Rachel Adams is the Chief Curator + Director of Programs at Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts. Previously, she held curatorial positions at the University at Buffalo Art Galleries, Oregon Contemporary, and The Contemporary Austin. Her practice centers on building long-term relationships with artists and developing interdisciplinary projects spanning photography, installation, sound, performance, video, new media, and architecture. At Bemis, she curates exhibitions, directs the international residency program, and oversees LOW END, the organization's experimental sound venue.

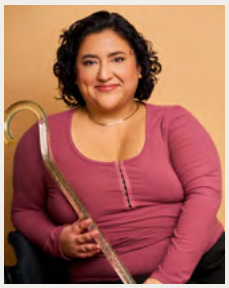
crabrangucci *Coach*

The master of transitions, blends, and reading the dance floor, Chalis Bristol aka dj crabrangucci is one of the most booked DJ's in the area and certainly the go-to for events that want a fresh take on musical curation. With a versatile knowledge of music and an ear for hits, she plays everything: disco, indie dance, Top 40, house/techno, baile funk, Korean pop, and more! As the '21, '22, '24, and '25 Omaha Entertainment & Arts "Outstanding DJ" award-winner, Chalis has played over 500 events in the last five years, everywhere from fundraisers to the College World Series to fashion weeks to Steelhouse to raves and festivals like MAHA. She's also been featured on regional and national radio and podcasts, and even the occasional political rally. If the party is poppin', or the vibe is right, more than likely it's crabrangucci on the decks.



Amy Reiner *Coach*

Amy Reiner joined the BLUEBARN in 2012 as Production Manager and Properties Master. She previously worked for 12 years as Properties Master at The Omaha Community Playhouse. Prior to that, she freelanced in Los Angeles in the fields of film and television. Amy holds a BFA in technical theatre with an emphasis on Scenic and Lighting Design from The University of Nebraska Lincoln.



Makenzie Gomez *Coach*

Makenzie (she/they) is a Mexican-American, queer, dynamically disabled theatre professional and small business owner. Several news outlets covered her video concept piece, Music and the Mirror (& Mobility Aids), in which she adapted the original Broadway choreography from A Chorus Line to her mobility aids. Lavender Magazine put Makenzie on the cover along with a full spread interview.

Creative Adaptations LLC selected credits: adapting movement workshops (NYU; Queens Theatre); Accessibility Coordinator (Butch Wicked); 1:1 client consulting. She hopes that through her work both on and off stage, she can help normalize integrating disabled performers into musicals.

New Works Development for Disabled Artists coach crabrangucci and participant Karma LiLoLa
Photo Credit: Carrie A Nath

Science

The Sensory Yard

Science

Presented By
HOLLAND foundation

Date & Time

September 13 through September 27
Sunday: 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM
Monday: Closed
Tuesday: 10:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Wednesday: 10:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Thursday: 10:00 AM - 7:00 PM
Friday: 10:00 AM - 7:00 PM
Saturday: 10:00 AM - 7:00 PM

Location

KANEKO
1111 Jones Street
Omaha, NE 68102

Description

The Sensory Yard invites visitors into an immersive world where curiosity, movement, rest, and imagination unfold at their own pace. Blending sensory architecture, participatory art, and immersive storytelling, this interactive installation encourages exploration without expectation. Every path is self-directed, every experience optional, creating an environment where wonder and nervous system regulation exist side by side.

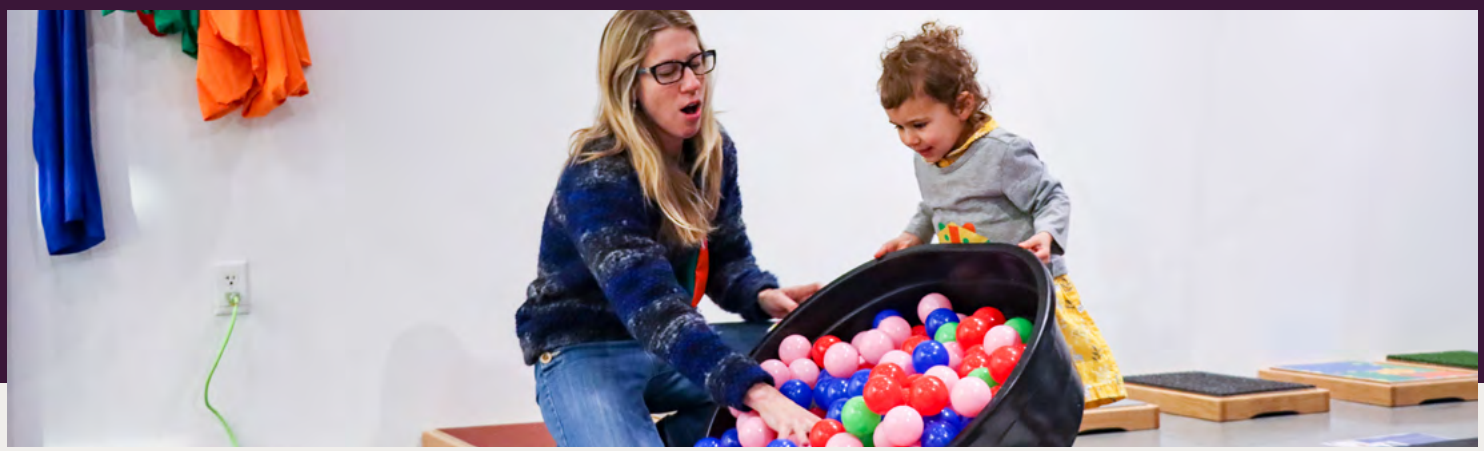
Journey through a series of thoughtfully designed sensory spaces, each offering a unique invitation to engage. Rather than asking visitors to perform or observe, The Sensory Yard offers permission—to pause, play, create, connect, or simply be. Designed with accessibility, emotional safety, and sensory inclusion at its core, the installation celebrates the many ways people experience the world and invites every visitor to discover what they need in the moment.

Accessibility Features

Sensory Kits
Social Narrative
Chill Zone

THE OFFICE performing arts + film

KANEKO OPEN SPACE FOR YOUR MIND



Sensory 101 at Common Senses Festival 2022 *Photo Credit: Debra S Kaplan*

THE OFFICE performing arts + film *Curator*

We are an independent performing arts and film curator and production company based in New York and London that works in ongoing partnerships with festivals, venues, and institutions to create cultural programming that is unique and mission specific. We produce events locally, nationally, and internationally, and consult on programming with organizations ranging from museums to universities to libraries to performing arts centers to philanthropies. We work in both the nonprofit and commercial arts worlds, and we have a special focus on making art happen that has a positive impact on society.

THE OFFICE works with artists across all disciplines who strive in their practice to illuminate and advance causes that move them, and we partner with presenting organizations that bring meaningful (and fun!) work to the public. Our goal in all this is to create spaces for art to do the things it's so good at doing, in our individual lives and our collective life in society as a whole: to uplift and inspire, to explain and reveal, to entertain, to challenge and hold to account, and to act as a catalyst for change.

As creative producers we help artists we love to realize their vision by taking projects through all stages of creation: from concept, creative development, fundraising and commissioning to tour planning, company management, and performance. We are honored to have produced work around the world with William Kentridge, Carrie Mae Weems, Angelique Kidjo, Theater of War, Rithy Pahn, and many others. Social justice and equity, race, gender, sustainability, and democratic ideals are common threads in the projects we help put out into the world.

Julia Noulin-Mérat *Designer*

Julia Noulin-Mérat is an internationally recognized designer, producer, and arts leader whose work spans more than 430 opera, theater, television, and immersive productions. Her practice focuses on creating imaginative environments that invite audiences to explore, interact, and experience stories in unexpected ways. Her projects include Neverland (China Broadway), a $20 million, 50,000-square-foot immersive theatrical experience in Beijing inspired by Peter Pan and directed by Allegra Libonati; Playground for Opera Omaha, an interactive sound sculpture presented at the Joslyn Art Museum in collaboration with composer Ellen Reid; and a TEDx talk exploring site-specific performance and how environments can transform the audience experience. She currently serves as General Director + CEO of Opera Columbus.

Roger Ideishi *Access Consultant*

Roger Ideishi (he/him/Japanese American) is a Professor of Health, Human Function, and Rehabilitation Sciences at The George Washington University. He is co-founder of Philadelphia Chinatown Disability Advocacy Project: supporting disabled immigrants navigate culturally and linguistically inaccessible health, education, and social systems. He served on two presidential disability policy campaign committees and advised 130 national and international cultural institutions. He received the 2017 Philadelphia Art-Reach Cultural Access Impact Award, the 2019 Kennedy Center Excellence in Accessibility Leadership Award, and was recognized in 2022 by the Kennedy Center as a Next 50 honoree for significant impacts on society through the arts.

Jeanette Oi-Suk Yew *Lighting Designer*

See full bio on page 15

Film

Life After

Film

Date & Time

September 23
6:00 PM

Location

Film Streams' Ruth Sokolof Theater
1340 Mike Fahey Street
Omaha, NE 68102

Description

A gripping personal investigation that exposes the tangled web of moral dilemmas and profit motives surrounding assisted dying. In an unfolding matter of life and death, disabled filmmaker Reid Davenport uncovers shocking abuses of power as he amplifies the voices of the disability community and raises the alarm about the "right to die".

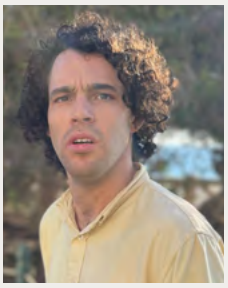
LIFE AFTER brings together the missing voices of the disability community in the ongoing debate about assisted dying. Disabled people continue to face premature death–whether through the horrific case of Michael Hickson, who was left to die by a Texas hospital, or the heart-wrenching choice of Jerika Bolen, a Wisconsin teen who received support from her community to end her life. Davenport's exploration takes him to Canada, where regulations surrounding Medical Aid in Dying (MAID) have been expanded to allow disabled individuals unprecedented access–even when their deaths are not reasonably foreseeable. In Ontario, Davenport meets Michal Kaliszan, a disabled computer programmer who once considered MAID as his only option to avoid entering an institution.

Accessibility Features

ASL Interpretation
Live Captions for panel discussion
Audio Description
Open Captioned film
Sensory Kits
Chill Zone

FILM STREAMS™
RUTH SOKOLOF THEATER
DUNDEE THEATER

A still from the documentary Life After uncovering shocking abuses of power against the disability community *Photo Credit: Photo Courtesy of LA Times*



Reid Davenport *Director*

Reid makes documentaries about disability from an overtly political perspective. Reid's first two feature films, Life After (2025) and I Didn't See You There (2022), both premiered and won awards at the Sundance Film Festival. Life After won a Special Jury Award and I Didn't See You There won the Directing Award. Life After was a *New York Times* Critic's Pick. Richard Brody of *The New Yorker* said Life After was "among the most surprising, insightful, moving, and politically far-reaching documentaries I've seen in a long while," while *Variety* called it "engrossing, moving, and most importantly, confrontational." Life After premiered on PBS's syndicated series Independent Lens in November 2025 and currently has a 100% rating on Rotten Tomatoes.

I Didn't See You There won the True Than Fiction Award at the 2023 Independent Spirit Awards and was nominated for Best Documentary at the 2022 Gotham Awards. It was broadcast nationally on PBS's syndicated series POV. Nick Allen of *Roger Ebert* described I Didn't See You There as "first-person poetry in captivating motion, expressed with a singular, assured artistic voice," while *Vox* called it a "must-see."

Common Conversations

The Art of Inclusion: Education, Movement, and Creative Practice

Common Conversations

Date & Time

September 24
8:00 AM - 12:30 PM

Location

KANEKO
1111 Jones Street
Omaha, NE 68102

Description

Join us for a half-day conference celebrating accessibility, creativity, and inclusion in the arts. Through engaging presentations and conversations, explore how artists, educators, and arts organizations are creating more equitable opportunities for people affected by disability.

Featured sessions include Arts For ME!, sharing innovative approaches to adapted visual arts education; New Works, highlighting the development of original theatrical works by Omaha-area artists with disabilities; and a keynote by Makenzie Gomez, a Mexican-American, queer, dynamically disabled performer whose work champions authentic disability representation and storytelling.

Whether you're an artist, educator, advocate, or arts enthusiast, you'll leave inspired with new ideas, connections, and practical tools for building more inclusive creative communities.

Accessibility Features

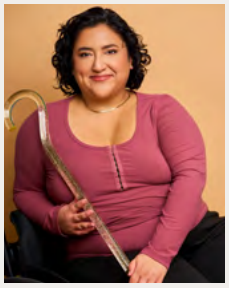
Social Narrative
Sensory Kit
Chill Zone
ASL Interpretation
Live Captioning

Therman Statum *Speaker*

Therman Statom is a sculptor, glass artist, painter, and arts advocate recognized as a pioneer of the contemporary glass movement. Known for life-size glass ladders, chairs, tables, box-like paintings, and small-scale houses, he joins glass plates with adhesive, transforming sandblasted surfaces into vibrant canvases. His work combines influences from Abstract Expressionism and Minimalism with blown glass and found objects. Born in Winter Haven, Florida, in 1953, Statom grew up in Washington, D.C. After studying ceramics at RISD, an experimental glassblowing session with Dale Chihuly inspired his lifelong commitment to glass. He attended Pilchuck Glass School, earned his BFA from RISD in 1974, and later studied at Pratt Institute. His work has been exhibited internationally and installed in prominent public institutions nationwide.

Erin Lunsford *Speaker*

Erin Lunsford is a visual arts teacher and longtime department chair at Westside High School, where she has taught for 20 years. A 2023 recipient of the Schrager Distinguished Teaching Award, Lunsford is known for her innovative, inclusive and student-centered approach to arts education. She was a critical founder of Westside's Arts For Me program, empowering students of all abilities to explore and create art. The program has become a model for adaptive art programs nationwide. With expertise in pottery, photography, drawing, painting and more, Lunsford gives students voice and choice while helping them develop their talents. She also connects students with artists, businesses and cultural institutions through real-world creative opportunities.

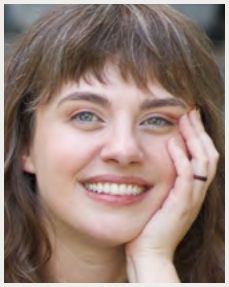


Makenzie Gomez *Keynote Speaker*

See full bio on page 25

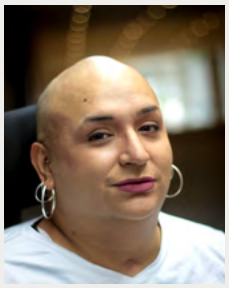
Carrie Nath *Speaker*

See full bio on page 10



Katy Kepler *Speaker*

See full bio on page 10



Karma LiLoLa *Speaker*

See full bio on page 11

Abz Cameron *Speaker*

See full bio on page 25

Shaping Change: Disability History, Policy, & Cultural Change

Common Conversations

Date & Time

September 25
8:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Location

KANEKO
1111 Jones Street
Omaha, NE 68102

Description

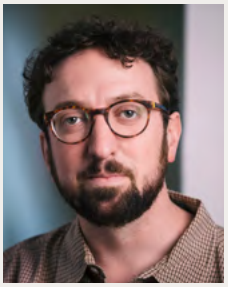
Join us for a day dedicated to understanding the history, law, and policies that have shaped disability rights in America. Featuring keynote speaker Alex Green, author of A Perfect Turmoil: Walter E. Fernald and the Struggle to Care for America's Disabled, this conference offers powerful perspectives on the past while exploring the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

Engage with nationally recognized experts from MASS Design Group, Common Coalition, and Education Rights Counsel as they discuss inclusive design, disability policy, legal advocacy, and systems change. Whether you work in education, healthcare, government, the arts, or community services—or simply want to deepen your understanding of disability history and inclusion—you'll leave inspired with new knowledge, meaningful connections, and practical ideas to advance accessibility and belonging in your own community.

Accessibility Features

Social Narrative
Sensory Kit
Chill Zone
ASL Interpretation
Live Captioning

Daniel Van Sant speaking at Inclusivity Reimagined at Common Senses Festival 2025
Photo Credit: Debra S Kaplan



Alex Green *Keynote Speaker*

Alex Green teaches political communications at Harvard Kennedy School and is a visiting fellow at the Harvard Law School Project on Disability and a visiting scholar at Brandeis University Lurie Institute for Disability Policy. He has piloted a nationally recognized disability history curriculum for high school students, developed and taught the first graduate disability policy course offered at the University of Massachusetts Amherst School of Public Policy, and is the author of legislation to create a first-of-its-kind, disability-led human rights commission to investigate the history of state institutions for disabled people in Massachusetts. He lives outside of Boston. A Perfect Turmoil: Walter E. Fernald and the Struggle to Care for America's Disabled is his first book.

Lisa Sonneburn *Speaker*

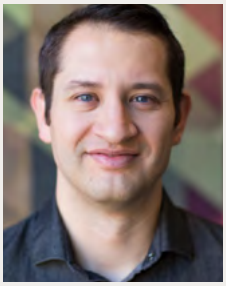
See full bio on page 18

Nicki Pombier *Speaker*

Nicki Pombier is a writer, oral historian, and public artist working at the intersection of disability, language, and place. Her memoir-in-progress, Mother Tongue, traces how her son's disabilities refracted her understanding of language, history, and belonging. Across writing, oral history projects, and public history collaborations, she explores voice beyond speech and the intimate politics of care. Nicki's scholarship has been recognized by the Oral History Association and The New School. From 2020–2025, she taught at Columbia University's Oral History Master of Arts program, where she co-developed Serious Play, expanding oral history through movement, memory, and performance. She is the founding editor of Underwater New York and a longtime collaborator with Temple University's Institute on Disabilities.

Jha D Amazi *Speaker*

Jha D Amazi believes that the narratives upheld in our public realm should be expanded to represent, honor, and celebrate the experiences, histories, and cultures of people who have been historically denied representation in our memorial landscape. As a Principal at MASS, Jha D leads the Public Memory and Memorials Lab, engaging communities to design projects such as the Emmett Till & Mamie Till-Mobley National Monument Project (Chicago, IL), the Gun Violence Memorial Project (Chicago, IL; Washington D.C.; Boston, MA; Detroit, MI), and the Sugar Land 95 Cemetery Revitalization Project (Sugar Land, TX). Beyond her contributions at MASS, Jha D is a spoken word artist, event producer, and SpaceMaker for the LGBTQ+ communities of color. In 2023, she was appointed to the Governor's Advisory Council on Black Empowerment by Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey. Jha D graduated with honors from Northeastern University (B.S. Arch) and the University of Pennsylvania (M. Arch I). Prior to joining MASS, she worked as a Designer at Sasaki and taught studio at the Boston Architectural College.

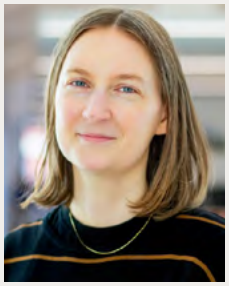


Jeffery Mansfield *Speaker*

Jeffery's personal journey as a deaf individual since birth has inspired him to create spaces that uplift the lived experience and cultural memory of the Deaf community. Jeffrey is a Principal at MASS, where he leads the Landscape Studio with Sierra Bainbridge. He has contributed to the management and design of commemorative spaces for marginalized communities, including The Precursors—We Are Texas East Mall and the Louise B. Miller Pathways and Gardens in Washington, D.C. As the Director of MASS's Deaf Space and Disability Justice Lab, Jeffrey is currently studying the formation of Deaf and Disability spaces as expressions of cultural resistance. Jeffrey received the Ford and Andrew W. Mellon Foundation's Disability Futures fellowship and was a John W. Kluge Fellow at the Library of Congress. He has taught design studios at the University of California Berkeley, the University of Michigan, and the Harvard Graduate School of Design. He co-authored The Architecture of Health, which was published by the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum. Jeffrey holds a Master of Architecture from the Harvard Graduate School of Design and a Bachelor of Architecture from Princeton University.

Regina Chen *Speaker*

Regina Chen sees design as a catalyst for restoration. She brings a multidisciplinary background in architecture, engineering, planning, and research to understand how the built environment can transform the legacies of inequity into opportunities for abundance. At MASS, Regina serves as a Senior Principal and Managing Director of Process and Learning. Since 2013, Regina has fostered a culture of learning and mutuality both at MASS and in the field at large, developing processes that champion accountability and push the bounds of design excellence. Her diverse body of work, spanning community engagement, research, narrative development, and process design, is marked by the capacity for deep listening and for guiding partners towards asking the questions that drive meaningful impact. As the Principal-in-Charge of the Restorative Justice Design Lab and the Gun Violence Memorial Project, Regina maintains a deep commitment to community engagement and creating space for truth-telling, healing, and collective action. Regina studied Civil Engineering and Architecture at Princeton University, and received her Master in Urban Planning from the Harvard Graduate School of Design.



Morgan O'Hara *Speaker*

Morgan O'Hara is a cultural historian of the built environment. She has worked at MASS since 2018, where she supports the Public Memory and Memorials Lab through research, engagement, and interpretation. Her backgrounds in cultural anthropology, public history, and collaborative design have informed her approach to socio-spatial research to develop human-centered histories of built spaces and infrastructure. For the Fringe Cities project, Morgan conducted longitudinal analyses of small cities in the United States that participated in mid-century urban renewal, and while at the Hudson Valley Office, she was embedded in the public engagement work necessary to craft meaningful community design solutions in Poughkeepsie. Her passion lies in elevating creative and community-driven expressions of lesser-known histories in public space. Morgan studied anthropology at Reed College, graduated from Columbia with a Masters in Historic Preservation, and intermittently co-teaches Studio II in Historic Preservation at Columbia GSAPP.

Disability Advocacy Day at the Nebraska State Capitol Building *Photo Credit: Aaron Zavitz*

Wendy Andersen *Speaker*

Wendy Andersen is the Executive Director of Common Coalition, a sister organization to the Common Senses Festival dedicated to protecting the civil rights of individuals with disabilities. A mother of three, including two children with disabilities, Wendy's personal experiences navigating disability systems led her to a career in advocacy and community leadership. She is passionate about bringing people together, building inclusive communities, and creating meaningful change for individuals with disabilities and their families. Wendy holds a Bachelor of Science in Education from Concordia University and a Master of Arts in Exercise Physiology from the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Lauren Micek Vargas *Speaker*

Lauren Micek Vargas is the CEO and co-founder of Education Rights Counsel, a Nebraska-based nonprofit dedicated to advocating for children's education rights, transforming systems, and ensuring legal accountability. A former special education teacher, public defender, and lifelong education advocate, Lauren brings a unique blend of classroom and courtroom experience to her work. Her career has been rooted in improving educational outcomes and expanding legal access for ALL children.

Preferred Interest

One-Track Mind

Preferred Interest

Date & Time

August 29 through
October 4
Sunday: 12:00 PM - 4:00 PM
Monday: Closed
Tuesday: 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM
Wednesday: 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM
Thursday: 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM
Friday: 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM
Saturday: 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Location

The Durham Museum
801 S. 10th St
Omaha, NE 68108

Description

One-Track Mind is a stunning photography exhibition celebrating the artistry, power, and history of railroads through the lens of internationally acclaimed photographer Blair Bunting. Featuring images of trains from a wide variety of locations and rail systems, the collection captures everything from the iconic BNSF Golden Swoosh to Omaha's own Union Pacific traincars in breathtaking landscapes.

A lifelong passion for both photography and trains has made railroading one of Blair's favorite subjects. *One-Track Mind* offers a personal look at that passion, showcasing the beauty, engineering, and character of trains from around the world. Whether you're a railroad enthusiast, a photography lover, or simply appreciate striking visual storytelling, this gallery invites you to experience the world of trains from a unique and captivating perspective.

Accessibility Features

Sensory Kits
Social Narrative

One Hundred Miles *Photo Credit: Blair Bunting*

Blair Bunting *Photographer*

Blair Bunting is an American photographer whose work explores portraiture, aviation, the automobile, and the relationship between light and storytelling. Over the past two decades, he has photographed many of the world's most recognizable athletes, celebrities and cultural figures while creating award-winning campaigns for leading brands around the world.

Known for his cinematic approach to lighting, Bunting is the only photographer to have been sponsored by three major camera manufacturers—Nikon, Hasselblad, and Canon. He is also recognized for completing the world's first commercial photo shoot at the edge of space, a project that pushed both the technical and creative boundaries of the medium.

When the pandemic brought commercial productions to a standstill, Bunting turned his attention to the railways of the American West. What began as a way to stay sharp behind the camera evolved into a long-term body of work, using passing trains as an opportunity to study light, weather, timing, and composition with the same discipline he brings to commissioned assignments.

His work has been recognized by Communication Arts, Lürzer's Archive, Graphis, and the William Randolph Hearst Foundation, as well as receiving an Emmy nomination. Whether photographing a world-renowned public figure or a solitary freight train crossing the desert, Bunting's work is united by a fascination with light and the stories it reveals.

Ten Days in September *Photo Credit: Blair Bunting*

Bridge Train *Photo Credit: Blair Bunting*

Ticket to Ride: Demo & Gameplay

Preferred Interest

Date & Time

September 14
6:00 PM - 8:30 PM

Location

Spielbound Board Game Cafe
3229 Harney Street
Omaha, NE 68131

Description

All aboard for an evening of trains, strategy, and friendly competition! Join us at Spielbound Board Game Cafe to learn and play Ticket to Ride, one of the most popular gateway board games of all time.

We'll begin with a beginner-friendly demo that teaches the rules, game flow, and basic strategies, making it easy for first-time players to jump in. No prior experience is needed—just bring your enthusiasm!

After the demo, everyone will break into groups to play a full game of Ticket to Ride. Whether you're completely new to the game or already a seasoned conductor, this is a great opportunity to meet other players, sharpen your skills, and have a fun evening of board gaming.

Come claim your routes, connect cities, and see who can build the greatest rail network! Demo begins at 6:00 PM; regular gameplay begins at 7:00 PM.

Accessibility Features

Sensory Kits
Social Narrative

The box cover and game play of the strategy board game Ticket to Ride

TrainTalks: A Creative Writing & Performance Series

Preferred Interest

Date & Time

Workshops

August 19
6:00 PM - 7:30 PM

September 2 & 16
6:00 PM - 7:30 PM

Showcase

September 17
5:00 PM

Location

The Durham Museum
801 S 10th Street
Omaha, NE 68108

Description

All aboard! Do you have a burning passion, a fascinating hobby, or unique knowledge you've always wanted to share? Whether you are a lifelong train enthusiast or want to write about an entirely different track that sparks your interest, this inclusive, four-part workshop series is for you!

Designed for individuals affected by disabilities, TrainTalks is all about finding your voice, fueling your creativity, and getting your stories moving in the right direction. No prior writing or public speaking experience is required—we will help you move your ideas from the platform to your destination.

Accessibility Features

ASL interpretation at showcase
Live captioning at showcase
Captioning via Zoom for workshops

Poet and activist Lateef McLeod at the Voices Untethered Poetry Showcase as part of the Common Conversations 2025 *Photo Credit: Debra S Kaplan*

Bridgit Kuenning-Pollpeter *Coach*

Bridgit Kuenning is a writer, mom, and sometimes performer who lives at the intersection of creativity and woo-woo. Her work has appeared in the Omaha World Herald, the Insider, Hippocampus Magazine, the Random Sample Review and elsewhere. Her play "Disability is not a Dirty Word" was produced by Anastasis Theatre Co in 2023. You can find her on Instagram and YouTube talking about life, writing, and tarot.

Angélica Perez *Coach*

Angélica Perez is a Core Teaching Artist with the Nebraska Writers Collective, where she supports teaching artists and young poets, helps to run monthly open mics and slams in Omaha, and leads poetry workshops with incarcerated people throughout Nebraska. Perez is also a faculty member of The Naturalist School. Her work there is rooted in creative ecology; she leads workshops on nature writing, native seed collecting, and tree planting. You'll often find her in a tree or on her longboard, trying to add to her collection of bumps, bruises, and bug bites.

Common Senses 2025-26 programming: Going Up 2.0, Common Conversations, Believe In Science, Relaxed Screenings *Photo Credit: Debra S Kaplan, Onpxl*

Common Senses Programming Year-Round

Common Senses offers sensory-friendly, engaging programming that creates accessible experiences on a year-round basis. **Relaxed Screenings**, presented with **Film Streams**, provide sensory-friendly film experiences with adjusted sound, lighting, and freedom of movement. The quarterly **Believe in Science** series brings leading experts together to explore issues at the intersection of disability, health, science, and society while addressing misinformation. Special programs like **Going Up 2.0: The Elevator Experience** celebrate the interests of the autism community through immersive and memorable events throughout the year.

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Share your experience!

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Common Senses Festival

Thank You For Coming

See You In 2027!