

Philip Dallmann: Hello, inclusion believers, and welcome to the Access Champions Podcast. I'm your host, Phil Dallmann, for this week's journey into the galaxies, of diversity, accessibility, and inclusion. Excited to, uh, share a- another interview this week, um, that we got in our public studio down in Atlanta at the Kennedy Center LEAD Conference.

Philip Dallmann: Um, we have Jaehn Clare this week from the Alliance Theatre Institute, um, who- who's a teaching artist down in the Atlanta area, um, doing great work, but also just being a great representative of inclusion and setting precedents in her work, uh, for inclusion. Um, so a really fun conversation, um, and, uh, as we're, we're whittling down th- the last of our, our interviews ... Um, I think we have a handful or so more, um, from our time in Atlanta ... it's really exciting to, to hear these again a- and, and realize what wonderful, uh, exciting, and invigorating conversations were happening, um, during that week down in Atlanta. Uh, so were just overall, um, just happy to share those with you guys.

Philip Dallmann: Exciting bit of news: Uh, the Access Champions Podcast is officially, uh, incorporated as a non-profit here in the state of New York. Um, so we are, we are there. We are in the process of finalizing, uh, our 501(c)(3) status, but, uh, we are officially a non-profit organization. I don't have the stats on how many other non-profit podcasts there are out there.

Philip Dallmann: Um, I have to think we are one of the few (laughs), uh, but we were excited, uh, to, to join, uh, however many non-profit podcasts there are out there doing, uh, just, just trying to spread the word of, uh, accessibility, diversity, and inclusion, um, and, and share the information, um, that exists, uh, and share the, uh, exciting work that is being, uh, done across, uh, this country, a- and really across the world. So, I'm really, really happy, um, to have taken that s-, that next step, um, with this podcast.

Philip Dallmann: I do want to thank all of you out there who, who do subscribe. Um, I challenge you all to share the podcast with your friends, with your colleagues. Uh, we have potentially some e-, other exciting things happening going forward, um, and the more subscribers, the more shares, the more likes, obviously, uh, that will help us. So, if you enjoy the show, um, if you enjoy the conversations that are happening here, please, please do share, uh, with your friends and fam.

Philip Dallmann: Um, and the more, you know, more followers, more, uh, subscribers we have, uh, frankly the happier our champion intern, Ms. Kelsey Rose Brown, is. But also just, uh, as we move forward with some other potential opportunities, uh, those things will help us. So, uh, we are @AccessChampion on Twitter and Instagram, The Access Champion Podcast on Facebook, um, and The Access Champion Podcast on iTunes, Google Play, Stitcher, TuneIn, et cetera. Still not on Spotify, but, uh, we've applied, so, don't really know what the holdup is over there.

Philip Dallmann: Uh, and that's all the business we have, uh, to take care of at the top of the show (laughs). And, uh, actually, I do want to take a second and thank, uh, all of our listeners out there. I had a really incredible, uh, positive response to, uh, the intro last week, um, regarding, uh, some of the, uh, hate-filled language that we were receiving after our interview with Marc Molinaro. Um, and, uh, it was really affirming that, one, the people that were using that language don't actually listen to the podcast, um, a- and two, that our listeners are second to none.

Philip Dallmann: So, um, thank you all out there. Um, thank you to everyone who reached out, especially, uh ... You know, at my previous employment in TDF, uh, I used to, uh, annoy some folks. Uh, I always describe myself as a beacon of positivity, um, a forever optimist, um, and, uh, it's great to see that our listeners, uh, mirror that. Um, so, thank you all. Uh, and now, without further ado, Access Champion Jaehn Clare.

Philip Dallmann: All right, and now we are back at our pop-up studio here at the LEAD Conference in Atlanta, and we are joined by, uh, Jaehn Clare, uh, from the Alliance Theater Institute here in Atlanta. How's it going, Jaehn?

Jaehn Clare: It's going really well.

Philip Dallmann: Uh, so how many LEAD Conferences is th-, is this for you?

Jaehn Clare: This is actually my first time-

Philip Dallmann: Number one.

Jaehn Clare: ... attending a LEAD Conference.

Philip Dallmann: All righty.

Jaehn Clare: I've known about it for years.

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jaehn Clare: I live here in Atlanta. So, when I learned it was going to be in Atlanta, I thought, "Ooh, I don't have to travel or book a hotel room. I'm totally there."

Philip Dallmann: Yeah, that's fantastic.

Jaehn Clare: Yeah.

Philip Dallmann: Um, so, uh, how many days have you been here?

Jaehn Clare: I, uh, have been here ... I actually was at the Intersections Conference as well-

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Philip Dallmann: Okay.

Jaehn Clare: ... so I'm conferencing all week long, literally.

Philip Dallmann: Ooh. All right (laughs).

Jaehn Clare: Yeah.

Philip Dallmann: Um, is there anything that, any sessions you've been in or ideas that have been put in front of you that were really exciting so far?

Jaehn Clare: Well, I was not able to attend a session, because I ... Sometimes it's really hard to choose which ones to go to.

Philip Dallmann: Oh, absolutely.

Jaehn Clare: I was very delighted to see a session specifically about universal design-

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jaehn Clare: ... as in the built environment, universal design and cultural institutions and arts inst- institutions.

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jaehn Clare: And I thought, "Good. Starting to have that conversation."

Philip Dallmann: Absolutely.

Jaehn Clare: My peeps. Yay.

Philip Dallmann: It's, uh, it's such an interesting concept. And, actually, one of our previous mini-episodes that we were doing today, um, uh, the comments was made about how, um, well laid out the botanical garden was last night, um, and that it felt pretty seamless walking around. I never clocked a ramp, but I also ... Like, uh, when we were walking-

Jaehn Clare: Didn't see any barriers, did you?

Philip Dallmann: Yes. At some point I was like, "Oh, there's, uh, some stairs"-

Jaehn Clare: Right.

Philip Dallmann: ... and that just seemed terrible.



Philip Dallmann: Uh, but it was, it was fantastic. And I was like, "What a great example of just thinking, (laughs) you know-

Jaehn Clare: Exactly.

Philip Dallmann: ... about all your constituents.

Jaehn Clare: [crosstalk 00:07:03] the full menu.

Philip Dallmann: Yes. Oh, it was absolutely stunning.

Jaehn Clare: Right. A lot of families go there-

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jaehn Clare: ... so there are a lot of parents with strollers-

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jaehn Clare: ... and then parents with young children that have little, short legs.

Philip Dallmann: Yeah.

Jaehn Clare: And when your legs are little and short, stairs can actually be tough-

Philip Dallmann: Yeah. Yeah (laughs).

Jaehn Clare: ... you know, for a two-year-old.

Philip Dallmann: And, wh-, you don't want to tire out your three-year-old, because then that turns, that can turn ugly (laughs).

Jaehn Clare: That can be hard on parents.

Philip Dallmann: Yeah (laughs).

Jaehn Clare: We're parents.

Philip Dallmann: Yeah, absolutely. So, what's going on at the, the Alliance Theater Institute right now?

Jaehn Clare: Well, I'm very proud to say that I am not the only staffer from the Alliance Theatre or the Woodruff Arts Center that is here at this conference.

Philip Dallmann: Fantastic.

Jaehn Clare: Several of my colleagues o-, are here: Olivia Aston Bosworth is here. I believe I saw Nicole Cromartie-

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jaehn Clare: ... and, um, Kate McLeod from the High Museum of Art-

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jaehn Clare: ... in Atlanta is also here. So, I'm, I'm very proud to be with, working for, and with, and employed by a leading Atlanta cultural institution that, um, has made a very definite and evident commitment to inclusion and access. So, I'm like, "Yay."

Philip Dallmann: (laughs).

Jaehn Clare: "We've got [inaudible 00:08:16]."

Philip Dallmann: (laughs) Yeah.

Jaehn Clare: I just believe that the really large arts institutions and cultural organizations, um, need to be the leaders-

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jaehn Clare: ... and need to be the organizations that are helping push the boundaries and demonstrate that, while it may be difficult, it's also possible, and you can do things in phases, and you can start with one effort and get that really well-established and then expand and reach out to another community or bring in another level of access or accommodation. As a wheelchair user myself-

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jaehn Clare: ... it's, uh, both a personal and a professional issue for me-

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jaehn Clare: ... in terms of, um, people with disabilities of different sorts-

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jaehn Clare: ... being welcome and included in our cultural life. And for me it's particularly, um, personal, in that I was not born with a disability. I acquired a disability howderdada years ago.



Jaehn Clare: Yes. Howderdada? Yes, highly technical term. Um, and I, uh, I acquired my disability as a theater arts major in a theater working on a play-

Philip Dallmann: Okay.

Jaehn Clare: ... when I fell from a ladder and survived a spinal cord injury.

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jaehn Clare: So, um, it's all kind of tangled up and connected for me.

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jaehn Clare: And so now, as a teaching artist at the Alliance Theatre Institute, which is part of the education division, I work in residencies with classroom teachers and young learners, primarily pre-K, K, and 1st grade students. And this past school year, the 2017-2018 school year, I finally had the chance to work with more than one inclusive class that included students with and without disabilities.

Jaehn Clare: Every year when my administrators start talking to me about my residency assignments for the year, I always say, "And, of course, I'm always interested in the, both the self-contained classes and the inclusion classes. If there are any at this school, and they're interested, I want to be with my peeps."

Philip Dallmann: Right. Yeah.

Jaehn Clare: This year I, I even got to work with a self-contained class of five lads, all of whom were on the autism spectrum.

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jaehn Clare: And that, that was just really fascinating work for me to experiment with and explore: How can arts integration strategies serve that classroom teacher and engage those students?

Philip Dallmann: Absolutely.

Jaehn Clare: So, it was like ... Ooh, it just gave me chill bumps all over my body.

Philip Dallmann: Yeah. That's, uh, fantastic. Um, is there anything else this week that you're excited about, uh, learning?

Jaehn Clare: Well, I am really excited to be here this year and to hear it's the 19th year-

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jaehn Clare: ... this conference has happened and that there are more than 450 people here.

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jaehn Clare: And hearing Betty's anecdote about the first year there were about 25 people, and in less than 20 years, that's grown, you know, hundreds of percent.

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jaehn Clare: And it just, um, it really gives me hope that, that we are pushing forward and beginning to find sort of the edges of what we've already done, and, okay, what have we not done yet? What can we do better? and keep reaching out. Um, it's also really delightful, um, to be in a setting where I know I'm with my peeps-

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jaehn Clare: ... and that when I share with people ... One of my mantras is, "All the arts, all the people, all the time, period"-

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jaehn Clare: ... and that when I say that, instead of people turning their head a little sideways and seeing questioning eyebrows, I, people nod their heads, and they're like, "Well, yeah, yeah, yeah."

Philip Dallmann: I, uh, I often describe LEAD as coming home.

Jaehn Clare: Yeah.

Philip Dallmann: I, uh, uh, it's my ... I look forward to it every year. Uh, I've been coming now, I think, six years.

Jaehn Clare: Excellent.

Philip Dallmann: Um, and it, uh, I, it's my favorite time of year. And it was o- one of the reasons I founded this podcast, is because I wanted that feeling all year.

Jaehn Clare: Oh, yes.

Philip Dallmann: I wanted to hear from people about the amazing work they're doing, just like you just described, and, uh, I wanted to have time to say thank you, which I, I want to say thank you for the work that you're doing, uh, at Alliance and, uh, with these students. It's tremendous work. Uh, it's needed work. Um, and with your story and your journey, I think you're a tremendous representation also for many people-

Jaehn Clare: Thank you.

Philip Dallmann: ... uh, to, to, to look at as a role model, something to aspire to, and to also understand about giving back to the community-

Jaehn Clare: Yes.

Philip Dallmann: ... um, which is amazing. So-

Jaehn Clare: And that, that is what it's about. I mean, when I acquired my disability in 1980, and I was in rehab and rehabilitation, I knew that I wanted to go back to the university and finish my BA in theater arts-

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jaehn Clare: ... but I, I was looking around, and I didn't feel like I had any role models. I wasn't seeing people in wheelchairs or people with other kinds of disabilities in print media, on TV, in the movies, et cetera, and I was kinda disturbed by that. I remember thinking, "Can I do this? Could it, can I be a theater artist from a wheelchair? Do I need to go become a veterinary technician or something?"

Jaehn Clare: And one day I just, I got, I got kinda angry and snarky and decided, "Well, I'm just gonna be my own role model."

Philip Dallmann: Hey.

Jaehn Clare: And one of my prayers was that I could be a role model, I mean, even if it was just one young person or child across a career. If I can make a difference for one kid with a disability who was trying to figure out, "Uh, you know, I wanna be a theater designer. I wanna be an actor, or playwright, or producer, director, whatever, all of the above," I wanted them to feel like they had someone that they could say, "Well, she did it. Maybe I could do it."

Philip Dallmann: Yeah.

Jaehn Clare: Because sometimes that's all it takes, is one image of what might be possible.

Philip Dallmann: We were just ta- ... A few weeks ago on the podcast ... I guess more than a few weeks ago now ... we, we talked about that as it relates to, um, superheroes-

Jaehn Clare: Yes.

Philip Dallmann: ... um, and how, you know, obviously we live in a time ... and as a comic book fan, uh, exciting time ... of explosion of superheroes in media. Um, but if you are a person with a disability, um, you are wildly underrepresented-

Jaehn Clare: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Philip Dallmann: ... in there. And so you do not have that, that, that thing that, as ... And I always say, I always acknowledge, as a straight white male, uh, without a disability, uh, I've never had this issue.

Jaehn Clare: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Philip Dallmann: Everything was made for me.

Jaehn Clare: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Philip Dallmann: And it wasn't until ... I don't know ... too late in life that I went, "Oh, you didn't have that."

Jaehn Clare: Mm. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Philip Dallmann: I looked on the screen and was like, "Oh, yeah, I could, I can be a superhero. I could be Superman."

Jaehn Clare: Sure. "I can be anything"-

Philip Dallmann: "I want."

Jaehn Clare: ... "I wanna be."

Philip Dallmann: Exactly. But not everyone has that. And I think we have to have people like you that are like, "You know what? I'm just gonna be the role model for the next generation, and I'm gonna force this, and, uh, dare you to say no, dare somebody to say no." You know? So, thank you so much for being on Access Champion-

Jaehn Clare: Thank you.

Philip Dallmann: ... and thank you for taking time to sit down with us.

Jaehn Clare: Absolutely. Thanks for doing the blog so the word can get out to more people-

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jaehn Clare: ... and reach across time, and space, and around the globe.

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jaehn Clare: Thanks.

Philip Dallmann: Thanks again to Jaehn for joining us, uh, this week on the podcast and, uh, well, joining us a, a, a few weeks ago, uh, in the pop-up studio down in Atlanta. Um, a great conversation, um, and thank you for all the work that you are doing.

Philip Dallmann: Again, please, uh, if you haven't already subscribed on whatever platform you listen to podcasts on, and please, uh, you know, like us on all the social media channels. We, we promise not to overwhelm you with content. We will not fill up your feed. And anything that we do put out there ... Um, and by we I mean Ms. Kelsey Rose Brown, our champion intern ... uh, is always quality. So, please give us a follow: @AccessChampion on Twitter and Instagram and The Access Champion Podcast on Facebook.

Philip Dallmann: Uh, thank you again to our producer, Matt Kerstetter, uh, for making us sound great each and every week. Thank you to Eric Walton Music for that, uh, tremendous theme song and, uh, the previously mentioned Ms. Kelsey Rose Brown for being the greatest intern in the history of interns.

Philip Dallmann: Uh, we'll be back again next week. And remember, inclusion believers, never stop running through that brick wall.