



PRESS RELEASE

PHAME Artists with Developmental Disabilities Are Making Collaborative Videos Spotlighting Their Experience

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Creativity and connection are continuing to thrive this summer at PHAME Academy, a nonprofit that empowers adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities through arts education and performance. After the initial stay-at-home order in March, the organization closed its campus and pivoted to providing classes and meetups online. Now, as the risks related to the Covid-19 pandemic continue to disproportionately threaten people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, PHAME has developed more ways for students to remain connected online while continuing to practice social distancing.

In addition to offering online hangouts, skill-building classes, free meditation sessions, and free video tutorials this summer, PHAME is offering specialized classes where students are creating collaborative video projects. These video projects emphasize the creativity, dedication, and rigor of artists with developmental disabilities—artists who are often left out of the spotlight.

The first video project will combine hand drawn animation with poetry, multi-disciplinary music, and voice-over acting. The project includes a partnership with Portland Opera, whose Manager of Education and Community Engagement Alexis Hamilton is teaching the Poetic Storytelling class. Hamilton worked with PHAME students in 2018 to write the libretto for *The Poet's Shadow*, and students in this summer's class will create the script for the collaborative video.

This summer's projects also include a Mega Choir class where students will be recording a song for a virtual choir video, as well as a music video featuring dance and percussion. Students in all three of the project classes will be exploring their own creativity and gaining new artistic skills, while also building digital literacy—an increasingly valuable tool in today's world.

PHAME has traditionally used the summer months to mount ambitious theatre projects. Recent productions have included a rock and roll rendition of *The Wizard of Oz* (2016), a philosophical original play called *In a Single Breath* (2017), and most recently, *The Poet's Shadow* (2019), a rock opera produced in collaboration with Portland Opera and designed, written, and performed by artists with disabilities. This summer's collaborative video projects will give students the opportunity to share their voices and talents once again, while bringing joy and beauty to our community when they are needed most.

"These projects are going to take a lot of hard work and dedication from PHAME students, and also from the professional artists we're bringing in to collaborate," says Director of Arts &

Education Matthew Gailey. “There are a ton of moving parts, and it’s all going to be happening at the same time—composing the music, writing the story, learning the dance. But our students know how to be nimble and work together to get things done, and I really think it’s going to be awesome.”

PHAME Academy is a fine and performing arts academy serving adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Portland, OR. PHAME’s arts-based classes empower students to learn new skills, take artistic risks & build relationships with people who share their experience of disability. PHAME offers online classes, so wherever you are, you can be creative—and connected—at PHAME. www.phamepdx.org

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