

People with Severe Disabilities Enjoy Culture Too — Independent Living Solidarity and London Record Realize Cultural Rights Through Accompanied Musical Outing

David Joung · March 8, 2026

AI summary

"From Departure to the Journey Home: Full Cultural Enjoyment Made Possible Through One-on-One Accompaniment" Solidarity for Independent Living of People with Severe Disabilities (hereafter "Independent Living Solidarity") and the musical theater company London Record have joined hands to successfully complete an accompanied performance outing aimed at realizing the right of people with severe disabilities to enjoy culture. Six volunteers provided close, hands-on support throughout the entire pro...

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Solidarity for Independent Living of People with Severe Disabilities (hereafter "Independent Living Solidarity") and the musical theater company London Record have joined hands to successfully complete an accompanied performance outing aimed at realizing the right of people with severe disabilities to enjoy culture. Six volunteers provided close, hands-on support throughout the entire process, from the point of departure to the journey home, for Independent Living Solidarity members made up of five service users with disabilities and one non-disabled staff member, presenting an exemplary case of full social participation that goes beyond simply attending a show.



Cultural Rights for People with Disabilities Are a Right, Not a Favor

Cultural participation by people with disabilities is a fundamental right explicitly guaranteed by international human rights norms. Article 30 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) stipulates that "States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to take part on an equal basis with others in cultural life," and makes taking appropriate measures to this end an obligation of the state (United Nations, 2006, Art. 30). In reality, however, people with severe disabilities in Korea have been structurally excluded from cultural life by a combination of barriers, including restricted mobility, inadequate accessibility facilities, and insufficient personal assistance (Kim, 2012, p. 47).

Through his "minority model," Hahn (1986) emphasized that the exclusion experienced by people with disabilities stems not from individual functional limitations but from failures in the design of the social environment, and that guaranteeing accessibility is itself the realization of rights (p. 128). This event was a case of putting exactly that principle into practice on the ground.

Event Overview: Seamless Accompaniment from Departure to the Journey Home

The outing began with a meeting at Solidarity for Independent Living of People with Severe Disabilities at 5:10 p.m., followed by the musical performance from 7 to 9 p.m. and seeing participants off on their way home afterward, spanning roughly four to five hours in total. A total of 12 people (five service

users with disabilities, one non-disabled staff member, and six volunteers) took part, with travel, viewing, and meal support seamlessly linked together.

Travel support before the performance was tailored to each user's mode of transportation and circumstances. Participants with disabilities who had no difficulty using public transportation were each matched one-on-one with four volunteers and traveled to the venue by subway. Participants with limited mobility used a dedicated call taxi service for people with disabilities, with two volunteers accompanying them and assisting with boarding.

Support during the performance was provided through one-on-one seating. Volunteers assisted with ordering and eating food during the meal time held in the course of the show, and stayed right beside users to look after their safety whenever they needed to leave their seats, including trips to the restroom.

Support for the journey home after the performance was likewise carefully tailored to individual circumstances. Some participants traveled by subway together with two volunteers, while for those with limited mobility, two volunteers confirmed on site that they had boarded their disability call taxis, helping ensure they got home safely.



Where the Independent Living Movement and Cultural Rights Intersect

Independent Living Solidarity, the organizer of this event, is an organization that puts into practice the ideals of the Independent Living (IL) movement. The IL movement centers on the philosophy that

people with disabilities should be able to live in their communities with the power to make their own decisions, without depending on the care of institutions or their families (DeJong, 1979, p. 435). Cultural participation is one of the core elements of independent living; Mactavish and Schleien (2004) empirically confirmed that participation by people with disabilities in community leisure and cultural activities contributes directly to building social capital, enhancing self-efficacy, and improving quality of life (p. 131).

Integrated cultural participation alongside non-disabled people, as in this event, is particularly meaningful in that, unlike segregated disability-only programs, it is a tangible realization of social inclusion. Hall (2009) reported that integrated cultural participation has positive effects in strengthening a sense of community belonging among people with disabilities and reducing social stigma, analyzing it not merely as an accessibility issue but as a key indicator of social integration (p. 222).



The Potential Demonstrated by Private-Sector Collaboration

This event is noteworthy as a case of voluntary collaboration between a disabled people's organization and a private performing arts company, rather than an initiative led by the national or local government. While support from public institutions has institutional limitations, voluntary solidarity in the private sector can respond far more flexibly to the individual needs of users. The careful individualization of each user's mode of transportation, number of companions, and way of returning home at this event is concrete evidence of that flexibility.

Putnam (2000) argued that social capital is formed more abundantly through horizontal civic solidarity than through vertical institutions (p. 19), and the cooperative structure among Independent Living Solidarity, London Record, and the volunteers can be interpreted as an example of this in practice.



Remaining Challenges

For a single successful accompanied outing to lead to structural change, institutional support is needed. Under the current personal assistance service system for people with disabilities, the allocation of assistance hours for cultural and leisure activities is markedly limited compared with support for medical care and daily living (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2023, p. 14), and competition for advance reservations of disability call taxis and the shortage of vehicles in operation have also been pointed out as ongoing problems (Lee, 2019, p. 88).

It is hoped that this event will spur more active public discussion so that cultural enjoyment for people with severe disabilities can take root as an everyday right rather than a one-time event.

This article was written based on event materials provided by Solidarity for Independent Living of People with Severe Disabilities and the London Record theater company.

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