

The festival was an apt moment to reflect on VSA's history as an advocate of access to the arts for all.

# a v s a



## 1963

President John F. Kennedy signs the Maternal and Child Health and Mental Retardation Planning Bill, the first major legislation to address and uphold the rights of persons with mental illness and intellectual disabilities.

## 1974

VSA is founded as National Committee, Arts for the Handicapped.

## 1975

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act is passed, providing children with disabilities equal access to quality education.

## 1978

Congress passes Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act prohibiting discrimination based on disability in federal assistance programs.

The National Council on Disability is established as an advisory board within the Department of Education.

## 1979

VSA sponsors its first national festival in Washington, D.C.

## 1984

VSA creates the Henry Fonda Young Playwrights Project to foster student playwrights while teaching about disability; in 1997 it is renamed the Playwright Discovery Program.

The Itzhak Perlman International Scholarship Competition is started to provide musicians with disabilities career and performance opportunities; in 1990 it is renamed the International Young Soloists Program.

The 1984 festival included international participants from over 60 countries and delegations from 50 states.

## 1985

VSA changes its name from National Committee, Arts for the Handicapped to Very Special Arts, reflecting changing language about disability.

The VSA U.S. Affiliate Network is formally created to provide coordinated programming nationwide.

## 1989

More than 1,000 delegates from 50 countries and 50 states participate in the International VSA Festival in Washington, D.C.

## 1990

Congress enacts the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The VSA Artists Registry is launched to maximize exposure for artists with disabilities.

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act is reauthorized and renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

## 1992

The United Nations declares December 3 the International Day of Disabled Persons.

# timeline



1994

The International VSA Festival is held in Brussels, Belgium.

1996

The UN adopts the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

1998

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is enacted, improving the use of technology for people with disabilities.

1999

The International VSA Festival is held in Los Angeles.

VSA adopts the name *VSA arts*, indicating a further evolution of the language of disability.

2002

*Expressing Freedom*, the first VSA exhibition hosted by the Smithsonian Institution, debuts at the S. Dillon Ripley Center.

VSA begins a partnership with Volkswagen Group of America, Inc., to present an annual exhibition identifying emerging visual artists with disabilities.

2004

The International VSA Festival takes place in Washington, D.C.

The first VSA Arts in Education Conference is held as part of the International Festival.

2005

VSA becomes an affiliate of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

VSA launches the annual Start with the Arts Festival in Washington, D.C.

VSA and MetLife Foundation launch Arts Connect All to encourage arts organizations to create or enhance inclusive education programs.

VSA launches *Infinite Difference*, an online literary journal showcasing the creative writing talents of middle and high school students.

2006

VSA sends its first apprentice to the Williamstown Theatre Festival.

2007

VSA begins a partnership with CVS Caremark as part of the CVS All Kids Can program to present an annual exhibition of children's art, as well as artists residencies and community events with VSA affiliates.

2009

VSA revises its brand to become VSA, The International Organization on Arts and Disability, underscoring VSA's role as an international leader in the arts and disability community.

2010

Over 2,000 artists, educators, students, and affiliate delegates from 67 countries attend the fifth International VSA Festival in Washington, D.C. Audience participation exceeds 15,000 in 47 events at 14 venues.