

# DESCENT BY KINETIC LIGHT

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**KINETIC LIGHT ANNOUNCES FALL 2019 TOUR**  
**-- DESCENT and other works to be performed in Miami, Wilmington,  
Atlanta, and Burlington --**

August 8, 2019 (Los Altos, CA) – The renowned disability arts ensemble Kinetic Light announces its Fall 2019 tour, including the evening-length work *DESCENT* at the Flynn Center in Burlington, VT, Wilson Center in Wilmington, NC, and Ferst Center for the Arts in Atlanta, GA, and the duet *Under Momentum* at the Forward Motion Festival in Miami, FL. Working in the disciplines of art, design, architecture, and social justice, Kinetic Light creates, performs, and teaches at the intersections of disability, dance, and race. Members include founder/choreographer Alice Sheppard, dancer, technology lead, and choreographic collaborator Laurel Lawson, and lighting, video, and projection designer Michael Maag.

The first half of 2019 is already marked with achievements for Kinetic Light. The Bessie committee recently awarded its 2019 Juried Award to Sheppard, “for boldly and authentically inventing new movement vocabularies full of supercharged physicality and nuanced detail.” *DESCENT* won a production design award and was featured at the recent USITT Design Expo and Prague Quadrennial, with Maag in attendance. Dance/USA, the national service organization for professional dance, recently announced that Lawson is among the inaugural group of their Fellowships to Artists (DFA), which includes funding to 31 dance artists addressing social change through their work. Lawson and Sheppard are featured in the short dance film *REVEL IN YOUR BODY*, which will screen in NYC, Washington, DC, and Philadelphia in the coming months, and the ensemble is working on *WIRED*, a new work which will premiere at The Shed in 2020.

“Kinetic Light is having a thrilling year, and we cannot wait to share some of our ground-breaking work with audiences around the country,” commented Sheppard. “I am also deeply honored to receive this year’s Juried Bessie Award. Since 2015, there has been tremendous recognition of physically integrated dance companies and explosive growth in the work of independent disabled artists. Disability-related work used to be thought of as niche work primarily about the lived experience of impairment. Now the field is coming to understand

disability as process, aesthetic, culture, politic, and identity. Because disability is generative, I know there will be more for us to learn soon.”

### **FALL 2019 TOUR & TICKET DETAILS**

*Under Momentum* at the Forward Motion Festival

Miami, FL

Saturday, September 28

Tickets: <https://www.karenpetersondancers.org/forwardmotion-performance>

*DESCENT* at The Flynn Center

Burlington, VT

Wednesday, October 30

Tickets: <https://www.flynncenter.org>

*DESCENT* at The Wilson Center

Wilmington, NC

Friday, November 15

Tickets: <https://cfcc.edu/capefearstage/>

*DESCENT* at the Ferst Center for the Arts

Atlanta, GA

Saturday, November 23

Tickets: <https://tickets.arts.gatech.edu/Online/default.asp>

### **PROGRAM INFORMATION**

Featuring Sheppard and Lawson, *Under Momentum* is a flexible work that celebrates the joy of being in continuous motion, the allure of speed, and the beautiful futility of resisting gravity. Performed on and around a set of exquisitely engineered ramps that were designed by Sara Hendren, this program of solos and duets ranges through explorations of balance, stillness, and falls as Kinetic Light’s disabled dancers release into the forces of acceleration, gravity, and torque. Extraordinary partnering facilitated by the combination of slopes and wheels reveal the power of trust and the compelling relationships between bodies and technology. *Under Momentum* has been performed at the Whitney Museum in New York City, Jacob’s Pillow Dance Festival as part of the Inside/Out Series, and the Oregon Shakespeare Festival.

Performed on a custom-designed architectural ramp installation with hills, curves, and peaks, *DESCENT* explores the pleasures of wheeled movement and reckless abandon. Combining dance, architecture, design, and technology, this evening-length work obliterates cultural assumptions of what disability, dance, and beauty can be. *DESCENT* has been performed at New York Live Arts, the Curtis R. Priem Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center (EMPAC) at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and the BRITT Music & Arts Festival. In 2018, *DESCENT* was also voted the year’s most moving performance by the readers of *Dance Magazine*.

Inspired by the sensual writings and art of French sculptor Auguste Rodin, *DESCENT* gives the mythological characters of Venus and Andromeda new life as interracial lovers. Sheppard and Lawson perform in and out of the wheelchairs they use in life and performance, showing an entire spectrum of beauty and opening up new movement possibilities. The sensuality of this work is palpable, and risk is interwoven throughout as wheels fly precariously at the edge of the ramp.

The ramp installation is nearly six feet tall and spans 24 by 15 feet of stage space. It is more than a set piece: it offers an entire alternate universe for Venus and Andromeda to explore and inhabit. The ramp was designed by Sara Hendren, a Massachusetts-based artist, design researcher, and writer, along with physics professor Yevgeniya Zastavker and a team of first-year engineering students from Olin College. Hendren ensured that the ramp would be a work of art by designing for beauty and wheeled movement potential, not simply for ADA (Americans for Disabilities Act) compliance and essential mobility needs.

Kinetic Light is the first ensemble led entirely by professional disabled artists. Sheppard has been traveling the world dancing professionally for over a decade, performing with such companies as AXIS Dance Company from Oakland, CA, and Marc Brew Company in the UK. She started making her own work in 2012, and founded Kinetic Light in 2016. Sheppard appeared on the July 2018 cover of *Dance Magazine*, the first disabled artist to be featured since 2003. Laurel Lawson, Kinetic Light dancer, co-choreographer, and technology lead, is a dancer with Full Radius Dance, a sled hockey athlete, and a software engineer. She has trained extensively with Full Radius Dance since 2004 and is one of the only performers well matched for partnering with Sheppard in the adventurous athleticism demanded by Kinetic Light's work. Michael Maag, an accomplished lighting designer and disabled artist, has served as Resident Lighting Designer at The Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF) for over 15 years; he was also pivotal in the building of OSF's new accessible outdoor stage. In *DESCENT*, he performs more than 300 responsive light and video cues.

## **ACCESS AS ART**

All *DESCENT* performances include AUDIMANCE, a custom-designed app which offers an entirely new kind of equitable and sonic dance experience. Featuring specially-developed audio content, Audimance enables a choice-centered rich auditory experience for users who are blind or nonvisual. While many theaters in the U.S. comply with the minimum accessible seats required by ADA standards (ex: six seats are required for houses of 300-500 seats), Kinetic Light works with presenting partners to make available at least 20% of seating for disabled audience members. Kinetic Light offers an audio version of the in-house program for those who have a visual impairment, American Sign Language interpreters are present at every show, and the ensemble works with presenters to employ accessible marketing strategies such as captioned videos and photos. A tactile lobby experience offers audience members an entry point into understanding *DESCENT*'s ramp installation as a landscape of physics and can be experienced through sight and also through touch. The artists also offer access training and engagement programming for theater staff as part of learning curve to welcoming Kinetic Light fans.

## **ABOUT KINETIC LIGHT**

Under the direction and artistic leadership of Alice Sheppard, Kinetic Light is a project-based ensemble of three disabled artists committed to intersectional disability aesthetics and culture and accessibility as central parts of the art and creative process.

Working in the disciplines of art, technology, design, and dance, Kinetic Light creates, performs, and teaches at the nexus of access, disability, dance, and race. In the ensemble's work, intersectional disability is an aesthetic, a culture and an essential element of their artistry.

Through rigorous investment in the histories, cultures, and artistic work of people with disabilities and people of color, Kinetic Light promotes disability as a creative force enabling them to create visceral transformative art that engages critical contemporary questions.

In 2018, Kinetic Light made its Jacob's Pillow debut (as part of the Inside/Out Performance Series), performed at the Whitney Museum, and produced sold-out runs of *DESCENT*, the ensemble's first evening-length work. Also in 2018, the readers of *Dance Magazine* voted *DESCENT* the year's most moving performance. 2019 includes a U.S. tour, the release of the dance film *REVEL IN YOUR BODY*, and numerous awards for Kinetic Light. For more information visit [kineticlight.org](http://kineticlight.org).

## **FUNDING CREDITS**

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