

KINETIC LIGHT

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SUMMER 2018: ALICE SHEPPARD AND KINETIC LIGHT APPEAR AT JACOB'S PILLOW DANCE FESTIVAL, THE WHITNEY, LEAD CONFERENCE *Sheppard Featured on the Cover of July Dance Magazine*

JULY 18, 2018 (New York, New York) – Following a sold-out run at New York Live Arts and performances at San Francisco's Fresh Meat Festival, choreographer and disability arts innovator Alice Sheppard and the Kinetic Light collaborative announce a summer schedule that includes a debut appearance at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival's Inside/Out series; a performance at The Whitney Museum in NYC; a talk at the 2018 Leadership in Arts and Disability (LEAD) Conference in Atlanta, GA, and more.

Another highlight of this summer: Sheppard is featured on the cover of *Dance Magazine's* July edition, becoming one of very few disabled artists to appear in this prominent spot. Disabled dancer, choreographer, and educator Homer Avila was featured fifteen years ago, along with his dance partner Andrea Basile. The cover story is authored by disability arts writer and educator Kevin Gotkin. He writes, "Sheppard's work models a truth that is rarely understood among dance audiences: Disability does not signify incompleteness. In fact, it offers novel pathways to several movement styles, each of them whole and generative of unique choreographic forms."

"To appear on the cover of *Dance Magazine* is a great honor and marks a moment to be collectively shared with the entire disability arts community," comments Sheppard. "It is deeply meaningful to know one of the last disabled dance artists to be featured was Homer Avila, in 2003. Homer was the one who dared me to take my first dance class and started me on this

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career path. As this issue goes out into the world, it brings me pure joy to imagine who else will picture themselves on the cover in the future.”

JACOB’S PILLOW PERFORMANCE

On August 1, 6:15-7pm, Sheppard and Laurel Lawson, Sheppard’s dance partner and Kinetic Light collaborator, will perform at Jacob’s Pillow Dance Festival in Becket, MA, as part of the Inside/Out series. They will present a mixed program of solo and duet works celebrating wheeled movement, using wooden ramp wedges designed by Massachusetts artist and design researcher Sara Hendren. The program includes a restaged duet from *DESCENT*, the evening-length work that celebrated a sold-out run at New York Live Arts in March 2018. Inside/Out performances are free and presented on the Pillow’s beautiful outdoor stage overlooking the Berkshire Hills.

Jacob’s Pillow is an internationally-renowned dance festival, the oldest and longest-running in the United States. As a leader in the dance and disability arts fields, Kinetic Light works with presenting partners to build new audiences for dance and establish an audience engagement goal of at least 20% disabled attendees. The Pillow is embracing this approach. The organization will enhance accessibility along main pathways and around the Inside/Out performance space and an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter will be present for Kinetic Light’s welcome remarks and post-show talk. Golf carts are also available to transport attendees from the parking lot to Inside/Out.

UPCOMING EVENTS

For details regarding upcoming events, visit <https://alicesheppard.com/events/>

July 5 & 6: Alice Sheppard performs and speaks at the Gardiner Museum; Toronto, Canada

July 27: Kinetic Light performs at an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) celebration at the Whitney Museum; New York, NY

August 1: Kinetic Light performance at Jacob’s Pillow Dance Festival (Inside/Out); Becket, MA

August 7-11: Alice Sheppard speaks at the 2018 Leadership in Arts and Disability (LEAD) Conference; Atlanta, GA

November 5-14: *DESCENT* residency at EMPAC (The Curtis R. Priem Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center); Troy, NY

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November 14-16: *DESCENT* performances at EMPAC; Troy, NY

ABOUT DESCENT

Performed on a custom-designed architectural ramp installation with hills, curves, and peaks, *DESCENT* explores the pleasures of wheeled movement and reckless abandon. Brian Schaefer of *The New York Times* comments, “Ms. Sheppard has been an innovator in disability arts, and this work illustrates just how much she’s expanded the notion of physicality in dance.”

This new evening-length duet takes audiences on a transformative ride, obliterating cultural assumptions of what disability, dance, and beauty can be. Inspired by the sensual writings and art of French sculptor Auguste Rodin, Alice Sheppard gives the mythological characters of Venus and Andromeda new life as interracial lovers in *DESCENT*. Sheppard and fellow dancer Laurel 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 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. Sheppard and Hendren collaborated to make the ramp 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 in the process of booking a 2018-2020 national tour of *DESCENT*, with support from NEFA’s National Dance Project.

ABOUT ALICE SHEPPARD

Kinetic Light’s founder and artist lead, Alice Sheppard, saw Homer Avila, a disabled dancer, perform in 2004. Avila dared her to take a dance class; she did, and she loved moving so much that she resigned her academic professorship at Pennsylvania State University in order to begin a career in dance. She studied ballet and modern dance with Kitty Lunn and made her debut with Infinity Dance Theater. After an apprenticeship, Sheppard joined AXIS Dance Company, an Oakland-based company where she toured nationally and taught in the company’s education and outreach programs. Since becoming an independent artist, Sheppard has danced in

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projects with Ballet Cymru, GDance, and Marc Brew Company in the United Kingdom and Full Radius Dance, Marjani Forté, MBDance, Infinity Dance Theater, and Steve Paxton in the United States.

As an emerging, award-winning choreographer, Sheppard creates movement that challenges conventional understandings of disabled and dancing bodies. Engaging with disability arts, culture, and history, she attends to the complex intersections of disability, gender, and race by exploring the societal and cultural significance of difference. In addition to performance and choreography, Sheppard is a sought-after speaker and has lectured on topics related to disability arts, race, and dance. For more information visit alicesheppard.com.

ABOUT KINETIC LIGHT

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. Through rigorous investment in the histories, cultures, and artistic work of people with disabilities and people of color, Kinetic Light transforms understandings of the dancing body thereby enabling new, powerful understandings of the moving world. The collective seeks to showcase freedom of movement as a pathway for others to understand how mobility—literal, physical, and conceptual—is fundamental to participation in civic life and to our understanding of American identity. For more information visit kineticlight.org.

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