

**EMPAC**



BY KINETIC LIGHT  
**DESCENT**

**THU NOV 15 / FRI NOV 16**  
**7:30PM / STUDIO 1 - GOODMAN**



# DESCENT

BY KINETIC LIGHT

## SCHEDULE

**4:00 PM**

BOX OFFICE OPENS / LEVEL 7 LOBBY  
EVELYN'S CAFÉ OPENS / LEVEL 5

**6:30 PM**

TACTILE EXPERIENCE AND AUDIO DESCRIPTION DEMOS  
LEVEL 5 — EVELYN'S CAFÉ

**7:00 PM**

EVENT VENUE (GOODMAN - STUDIO 1) OPENS  
LEVEL 5

**7:30 PM**

EVENT BEGINS

***DESCENT PART ONE***

**INTERMISSION (20 MINUTES)**

***DESCENT PART TWO***

POST-SHOW MEET AND GREET WITH ARTISTS  
LEVEL 5 — EVELYN'S CAFÉ

## CURATOR'S NOTE

*DESCENT* reimagines the story of Greek mythical figures Venus and Andromeda as an interracial love story with choreography that conjures the aesthetics of August Rodin's sculpture *Toilet of Venus and Andromeda*. Performing in wheelchairs, dancers Alice Sheppard and Laurel Lawson execute the story's extremely intricate choreography on a stage built with hills and curves, climbing to the summit of the ramp, balancing precariously on its edge, and barreling back down to evoke a wide spectrum of emotional movements. With spectacular lighting and video landscapes by Kinetic Light member Michael Maag and dynamic musical composition by Joan Jeanrenaud, *DESCENT*'s narrative and emotional content and conceptual underpinnings are supported by innovative technical design elements to gesture toward a sense of perpetual motion.

The show's ramp-like stage was specifically designed by Kinetic Light as a sort of "choreographic object," impacting and even demanding qualities of the dancers and their dance. An extremely steep peak in the upstage left corner provides resistance when the dancers move up, and it rapidly assists in increasing their velocity when they move down. Some portions of the ramp assist the duo in maintaining their balance, but other sections demand labor of the dancers to hold themselves in place.

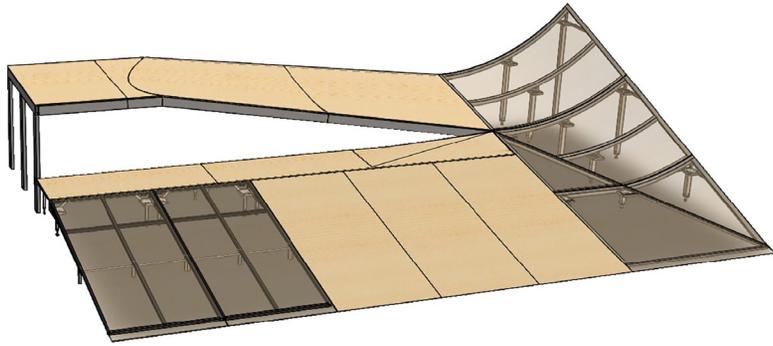
The ramp was originally developed in collaboration with Sara Hendren, Yevgeniya Zastavker and the student team at Olin College, to whom the artists asked the inherently political question: What would happen if a utilitarian accessibility structure was turned into an aesthetic object? Practicality and artistry collided in the answer to this question and began to give shape to *DESCENT*. Due to the ramp's experimental nature, the artists have already begun to imagine RAMP 2.0, a diagram of which is featured in this program. For this next iteration, Kinetic Light worked with engineering students at Georgia Tech, further considering disability as a culture and aesthetic rather than a medical diagnosis that needs to be cured or assisted through design.

In a similar way, Kinetic Light performs for the first time at EMPAC with new custom wheelchairs—the only ones of their kind in the world. This program also features a photograph of these new chairs. Custom designed by Kinetic Light member Laurel Lawson, who performs as Venus in *DESCENT*, the chairs are fitted to the exact specifications of the dancers' bodies, featuring, for example, an elegant camber of the wheels, shaped to back up into the dancers' waistlines. The dancers relate to their wheelchairs as parts of their own bodies, so these design elements have significant impact on the somatic experience of performing the



work's choreography. Their design has the capacity to radically expand or limit movement and partnering potential. In fact, because of this, the way that the dancers perform *DESCENT* itself has shifted from how they choreographed the work in their original chairs. Ultimately, much like the ramp, Kinetic Light considers the chair as much a design object of pleasure as a tool of embodied engineering.

Other design elements featured in *DESCENT* are catered specifically to a disability audience, such as the video projection content that was designed by Maag, also a wheelchair user, to be visually and emotionally felt from the floor of the house. This perspective is typical of where wheelchair and accessibility seating is located in a theater. The perspective shift has beautifully radical implications in the history of theater and performance, where the ideal perspective has traditionally been from the center of the audience house, a convention that dates back to when male aristocrats had the privilege of the best seat in the house. Given that theatrical audience perspective is historically linked to power, Kinetic Light's attention to disability perspective is important to both the aesthetic and political content of their work.



Other accessibility innovations have been built into Kinetic Light's performance practices along these lines. Led by Lawson, as product architect, the company has developed a new web/mobile app called Audimance that enables blind and nonvisual audiences to experience the multi-layered landscape and choreography of *DESCENT* in sound. Like the ramp and the chairs, this media has an artistic quality too. The approach diverges from traditional audio description with dynamic and layered content including poetry, a soundscape, and spatialized recordings of the chairs moving across the stage, the recordings of which the artists worked on while in residence at EMPAC. Some audience members might also notice that live sounds of the dancers and chairs moving through space and on the ramp have been amplified and incorporated into the soundscape of the room to enhance both the auditory and felt-sensory material of *DESCENT*. This too has been a focus of the artists' EMPAC residency, as Kinetic Light continues to develop the artistic content of the work as an immersive and multi-sensory experience for all audience members.

—ASHLEY FERRO-MURRAY, CURATOR, THEATER/DANCE

## ABOUT KINETIC LIGHT

Conceived and directed by Alice Sheppard, Kinetic Light is a collective of disabled artists interested in the intersections of disability, dance, technology, and identity. With the histories of disabled people and people of color at the center of their artistic work, Kinetic Light creates new understandings of the dancing body and moving world. Kinetic Light invites architects and designers to innovate disability technologies for functionality and the aesthetic and pleasurable expression of impairment. They are committed to access as an integral part of our artistic work, not a secondary accommodation.

## ACCESS FOR THIS PERFORMANCE

- Audio description via AUDIMANCE app
- Tactile experience of 3D model of ramp
- ASL interpretation
- Front row dedicated to wheelchair-accessible seating
- Livestream for global disability community (Friday night only)
- Printed program available as sound recording



@WHEELCHAIRDANCR

KINETICLIGHT

SIGN UP TO KINETIC LIGHT EMAIL LIST BY TEXTING 'RAMP'  
TO THE NUMBER 66-8-66

## BIOGRAPHIES



**ALICE SHEPPARD** took her first dance class in order to make good on a dare. After a performance, disabled dancer Homer Avila challenged Alice 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, where she toured nationally and taught in the company's education and outreach programs. Since becoming an independent artist, Sheppard has danced in 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 is intrigued by the intersections of disability, gender, and race. In addition to performance and choreography, Sheppard is a sought-after speaker and has lectured on topics related to disability arts, race and dance.

[AliceSheppard.com](http://AliceSheppard.com)



**LAUREL LAWSON** has been performing since the age of five. She is a dancer with Full Radius Dance, an athlete on the USA Women's Development Sled Hockey team, as well as co-founder and CTO of CyCore Systems, a software architecture & design firm based in Atlanta, Georgia. She has trained extensively with Full Radius Dance since 2004 including international tours to perform in festivals in Italy and Korea. In addition to her role as Venus, Laurel is the product architect for *AUDIMANCE*, the audio description mobile app for *DESCENT*.



**MICHAEL MAAG** has worked with lighting and projections since 1978 in theatre, dance, musicals, opera, and in planetariums from Florida to Washington. Michael sculpts with light and shadow to create lighting environments that tell a story. He has built custom optics for projections in theatres, museums and planetariums. Michael also designs and builds electronics and lighting for costumes and scenery. Michael is currently the Resident Lighting Designer at the Oregon

Shakespeare Festival. His designs and projects have been seen on the Festival's stages for the last 18 years, as well as at Arena Stage, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Utah Shakespearean Festival, Florida Studio Theatre, Henry Hudson Planetarium, Albany, and many other places.

## CREDITS

**ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM** / ALICE SHEPPARD, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

LISA NIEDERMEYER, PRODUCER MARYA WETHERS, TOURING PRODUCER

**CONSULTANTS** / BENVENUTI ARTS, CYCORE SYSTEMS, JOSEPH FUTRAL,  
MARICLARE HULBERT CONSULTING, P.S. 314, INC.

### PRODUCTION CREDITS

**CHOREOGRAPHY** / ALICE SHEPPARD, IN COLLABORATION  
WITH LAUREL LAWSON

**LIGHTING & VIDEO DESIGN** / MICHAEL MAAG

**COSTUME & MAKEUP DESIGN** / LAUREL LAWSON

**PRODUCTION MANAGEMENT** / TIFFANY SCHREPPFERMAN

**LIGHTING SUPERVISOR** / TIM SMITH

**DRAMATURG** / MELANIE GEORGE

**ADMINISTRATIVE ASSOCIATE** / JENÉE STRAND

**RAMP COORDINATOR** / STEPHANIE BYRNES HARRELL

**RAMP DESIGN TEAM** / SARA HENDREN, YEVGENIYA ZASTAVKER, AND KATIE  
BUTLER, DANIEL DAUGHERTY, DUNCAN HALL, ANDREW HOLMES, ERICA LEE,  
SCOTT MACKINLAY, APURVA RAMAN, MARCH SAPER, ALEXANDER SCOTT,  
KIMBERLY WINTER, RACHEL YANG, JINGYI XU, WITH SUPPORT FROM OLIN  
COLLEGE. RAMP ENGINEERING AND FABRICATION ROOSTER PRODUCTIONS LLC,  
A SMALL EMPLOYEE-OWNED SCENE SHOP LOCATED IN MARTINEZ, CA.

### MUSIC SCORE

**COMPOSER AND CELLO PLAYER** / JOAN JEANRENAUD, FROM THE ALBUM VISUAL  
MUSIC WITH PERFORMERS PC MUÑOZ AND WILLIAM WINANT ON DECONET 5  
RECORDS 2016. WITH THE KIND PERMISSION OF THE COMPOSER. JJCELLO.COM

**ADDITIONAL MUSIC** / "SONG OF SONGS" BY KAREN TANAKA, USED BY  
ARRANGEMENT WITH G. SCHIRMER INC. PUBLISHER AND COPYRIGHT OWNER.  
"EMPTY INFINITY" BY COMPOSER AND VIOLINIST CORNELIUS DUFALLO FROM  
THE ALBUM JOURNALING BY INNOVA RECORDINGS 2012. WITH THE KIND  
PERMISSION OF THE COMPOSER.

**MUSIC EDITING** / DAN WOOL

**VIDEO DESIGN PROJECTION** / VIDEO DESIGN AND PROJECTION IMAGES INSPIRED  
BY SELECTED SCULPTURES OF AUGUSTE RODIN AND CREATED BY MICHAEL  
MAAG. ORIGINAL IMAGES PROVIDED BY STANFORD UNIVERSITY'S IRIS AND B.  
GERALD CANTOR CENTER FOR VISUAL ARTS. ADDITIONAL VIDEO COURTESY OF  
EMPAC / ERIC BRUCKER AND RYAN JENKINS.

OFFERS A WAY TO VISCERALLY EXPERIENCE DANCE THROUGH AUDIO.

### AUDIMANCE CONTRIBUTORS

**ADVISOR** / GEORGINA KLEEGER

**APP DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT** / CYCORE SYSTEMS / LAUREL LAWSON

**AUDIO DESCRIPTION** / GEORGE MCRAE

**POET** / ELI CLARE

**SCRIPT** / DAVID LINTON

**POEM SOUND DESIGN** / DYLAN KEEFE

**SPATIAL SOUND** / JM CREATIVE ALCHEMY

**LEAD AUDIO TECHNOLOGIST** / JAVIER MOLINA

**PRODUCER** / CAITLIN ROBINSON

**SOUND DESIGNER** / TK BRODERICK

**SOUND MIXER** / AARON MONTOYA-MORAGA

**VOICES** / ERIN DEWARD, MARY MURPHY ALI SILVA

**TACTILE EXPERIENCE** / LISA NIEDERMEYER

**COVER PHOTO** / JAY NEWMAN / BRITT

**INSIDE PHOTOS** / CHRIS CAMERON / MANCC

**ALICE HEADSHOT** / BEVERLIE LORD

**LAUREL HEADSHOT** / LAURA ROSSINI COURTESY OF FULL RADIUS DANCE

### FUNDING CREDITS

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## STAFF

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**PETER BELLAMY** / SENIOR SYSTEMS ADMINISTRATOR

**MICHAEL BELLO** / VIDEO ENGINEER

**VIC BROOKS** / CURATOR, TIME-BASED VISUAL ART

**ERIC BRUCKER** / LEAD VIDEO ENGINEER

**BRUCE BRYNE** / MASTER CARPENTER

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**GORDON CLEMENT** / MEDIA SYSTEMS INTEGRATOR

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**DANIEL MELTZER** / MASTER ELECTRICIAN

**JOSH POTTER** / MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

**SHARINEKA PHILLIPS** / BUSINESS COORDINATOR

**AVERY STEMPEL** / FRONT OF HOUSE MANAGER

**KIM STROSAHL** / PRODUCTION COORDINATOR

**JEFFREY SVATEK** / AUDIO ENGINEER

**MICHAEL VALIQUETTE** / INTERIM GRAPHIC DESIGNER

**TODD VOS** / LEAD AUDIO ENGINEER