



ELECTRONIC PRESS KIT

# KINETIC LIGHT

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**Kinetic Light** is an internationally-recognized disability arts ensemble. Working in the disciplines of art, technology, design, and dance, the company creates, performs, and teaches at the nexus of access, queerness, disability, dance, and race.

Kinetic Light is led by disabled artists; disabled artists create, design, and perform the work. The work speaks to and emerges from disability aesthetics and disability culture, and it is connected to the rich traditions and exciting contemporary conversations of disabled artists in all artistic fields. In Kinetic Light's work disability is not a deficit, it is a powerful, intersectional creative force that is essential to artistry. Access is integral to the art and creative process.

Founded in 2016 under the direction and artistic leadership of Alice Sheppard, Kinetic Light artists include Laurel Lawson, Michael Maag, and *Wired* artist Jerron Herman. The performing company is supported by a team of administration and production professionals who work behind the scenes and a roster of additional artists join us to contribute on a project basis. For more information: [kineticlight.org](http://kineticlight.org).

## **Image Descriptions:**

Cover: Three dancers face each other onstage. Jerron Herman, a Black man with blonde hair, stands boldly facing the others, his body tense with energy. His fist flies overhead as silver barbed wire cascades from head to feet. Alice Sheppard and Laurel Lawson are stacked and lean in toward Jerron with concentrated expressions. Alice, a multiracial Black woman with coffee-colored skin and short curly hair, hovers in the air. Laurel, a white dancer with cropped hair, balances beneath her; she grips Alice's wheels while tilting on one wheel. Photo Robbie Sweeny / Kinetic Light.

This page: Laurel Lawson balances above Alice Sheppard with arms spread wide, wheels spinning. Alice opens her arms wide to receive her in an embrace. A hug ramp fills the stage behind them and starry sky fills the background as moonlight glints off the rims of their wheelchairs. Photo by BRITT / Jay Newman.

# ACCESS



**Kinetic Light focuses on equity in every part of an artistic experience.** We know disability is a creative force, essential to our artistic process, and we treat accessibility as an aesthetic of the work. For us, access is a relationship and a culture, not a retroactive accommodation. We want audiences to experience art, not a description of it.

At Kinetic Light, we have gathered a team of disabled artists and culture-makers, ASL interpreters, audio describers, and disability aesthetic experts that works together to create the many entry points into the work. Access is developed as part of the creation of each work, and it continues to develop as the ensemble moves into touring and receives feedback from audiences.

Access is not a checklist of things to do; it is a way of making art and being in relationship with audiences and community. Access is a process, a conversation, a way of growing together.

**Image Description:** Laurel Lawson, a white person with cropped hair, bounds toward the camera: wheelchair high off the ground, arms open and reaching. A mask of delicate gold wire and lustrous pearls covers half her face. The stage floor below her is drenched in blue light; the same light gives her pale skin a light violet glow. A strand of silver barbed wire appears, close up, in the upper corner. Photo Robbie Sweeny / Kinetic Light.

# PRESS

“Kinetic Light, a disability arts ensemble whose work is made by and for disabled people, has an ethic and aesthetic of access that is exceptionally thoughtful and thorough.”

Brian Seibert, *The New York Times*

“Sheppard and Lawson are remarkably precise, electric performers.”

Eva Yaa Asantewaa, Dance Critic

“DESCENT 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.”

Kevin Gotkin, *Dance Magazine*

“Kinetic Light allows disability to transform everything about the working process and the product.”

Emily Watlington, *Art in America*

“This ensemble of disabled artists is on the rise”

Brian Seibert, *The New Yorker*

[“Access As An Ethic: Giving Dance Myriad Points of Entry”](#)

Margaret Fuhrer, *The New York Times*

[“Kinetic Light’s Wired Worldmaking”](#)

Candice Thompson, *Fjord Review*

[“Kinetic Light Takes Disability to New Heights”](#)

*If Cities Could Dance, KQED*

# CURRENT TOURING WORKS



## ***Wired***

*Wired* is a passionate and potent aerial and contemporary dance experience that tells race, gender, and disability stories of barbed wire in the United States. The dancers of Kinetic Light trace the fine line between “us” and “them” as they explore the contradictions, dangers, and beauty of barbed wire.

Immense and intimate, *Wired* meditates in sound, light, and movement as it questions and ruminates on power, belonging, abolition and deinstitutionalization, sexuality, art, community, and connection—all through the powerful lens of disability as creative and cultural force.

**Image Description:** Alice Sheppard hovers high in the air, tipping sideways in her wheelchair and reaching toward the ground: a long tangle of wire spills from her hands and extends toward the floor. Jerron Herman kneels below Alice facing forward with an intense expression. He extends his arm to the side, grasping firmly at the tangle of wire. Photo Heather Cromartie / The Shed.

# CURRENT TOURING WORKS



## ***DESCENT***

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 challenges cultural assumptions of what disability, dance, and beauty can be.

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. The sensuality of this work is palpable, and risk is interwoven throughout as wheelchair wheels fly precariously at the edge of the ramp.

### **Image Description:**

Laurel Lawson and Alice Sheppard hold each others' forearms, chins lifted as they extend the other curved arm to the side, in a counterbalance turn. Alice is a Black multiracial woman with blonde curly hair and coffee colored skin; Laurel is a white person with cropped teal hair. They both wear gray leggings and leatherlike sleeveless tops that resemble armor or petals. Projected illustrated figures dance across the purpleish stage as a mountain range appears, silhouetted in the sunset, in the background (design by Michael Maag). Photo Jaqlin Medlock / Rutgers University.

# CURRENT TOURING WORKS



## *Under Momentum*

*Under Momentum* is a duet that celebrates the joys of continuous motion, the allure of speed, and the beautiful futility of resisting gravity. Laurel Lawson and Alice Sheppard perform on a series of ramps designed by artist and design researcher Sara Hendren, creating a world of exhilaration, sensuality, and play.

**Image Descriptions:** Alice Sheppard zooms up a wooden ramp in her chair, curved arms extended behind her and hair flying from the momentum of the movement. Alice wears a shimmery sleeveless costume. Another ramp sits expectantly behind her.



Laurel Lawson balances in her wheelchair at the top of a wooden ramp. She stretches her arms in a wide V and arches to the side; the shadows of her wheel and elongated arms mirror her body. Laurel wears a shimmery sleeveless costume.

Photos by Christopher Duggan / Lincoln Center.

# BIOS



**Alice Sheppard** (she/her) is the Founder and Artistic Director of Kinetic Light, as well as a choreographer and dancer in the company.

She studied ballet and modern dance with Kitty Lunn and started her career performing with Infinity Dance Theater and AXIS Dance Company. In 2016, Alice founded Kinetic Light, a disability arts ensemble featuring herself, Laurel Lawson, Michael Maag, and *Wired* artist Jerron Herman. In addition to performance and choreography, Sheppard is a consultant and speaker who has lectured on topics related to disability arts, race, design, and dance. Her writing has appeared in *The New York Times*, academic journals, and the anthology *Disability Visibility*, edited by Alice Wong. She is delighted to have been recognized with a Bessie and as United States Artists, Creative Capital grantee, and Disability Futures Fellow.



**Laurel Lawson** (flexible pronouns) is a choreographic collaborator, dancer, designer, and engineer with Kinetic Light.

She also designs the wheelchairs that she and Alice Sheppard use in performance, in collaboration with Paul Schulte, lead engineer for Top End. Laurel is the product designer and lead for KL access and technology initiatives, including Audimance, the company's approach to audio description, and Access ALLways, a holistic approach to disabled-led equitable access.

Laurel began her dance career with Atlanta's Full Radius Dance. In her independent and transdisciplinary practice, housed at Rose Tree Productions, her work includes both traditional choreography and novel ways of creating art through technology and design. Her work has been recognized with a Dance/USA Artist Fellowship, funded by Doris Duke Foundation, and Creative Capital. Lawson is also CTO and co-founder of CyCore Systems, a boutique engineering consultancy.

**Image Descriptions:** Alice is a multiracial Black woman with coffee-colored skin and short curly hair. She smiles softly at the camera; her crimson lip color and coral tank top pops. Laurel is a white person with cropped hair. Her chin is lifted and her gaze directed upwards with a slight smile; her blue eyes compliment her gauzy blue tank. Photos by Robbie Sweeny.



# BIOS



**Michael Maag** (he/him) is the scenographer and Artist + Production Lead for Kinetic Light.

Maag is an award-winning designer of lighting, video, and projection for theater, dance, musicals, opera, and planetariums. He sculpts with light and shadow to create lighting environments that tell a story, believing that lighting in support of the performance is the key to unlocking audiences' emotions. Maag has built custom optics for projections in theaters, museums and planetariums; he also designs and builds electronics and lighting for costumes and scenery. Maag is passionate about bringing the perspective of a disabled artist to technical theater and design. He is currently the Resident Lighting Designer at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. His designs have been seen on the Festival's stages for the last 20 years, as well as at theaters across the country. He has spoken at several theater and architecture conferences on the importance of access for the disabled artist in the technical theater field.



**Jerron Herman** (he/him) is a dancer and choreographic collaborator for *Wired*.

Jerron Herman is a disabled artist working in dance and text to facilitate welcoming. He has premiered pieces at Danspace Project, Performance Space New York, and The Whitney Museum. His work *VITRUVIAN* premiered at Abrons Arts Center while Herman was an Artist in Residence and will tour 2023-2024 on the Mid-Atlantic Arts roster. He began his training as a company member with Heidi Latsky Dance from 2011-2019 and is a collaborating artist for Kinetic Light's *Wired*. Jerron Herman is represented by Candace Feldman's INTERIM, a boutique management consortium for disabled artists that includes Molly Joyce and Christopher Unpezverde Nunez. Learn more at [jerronherman.com](http://jerronherman.com).

**Image Descriptions:** Michael is a white man with flowing white/blonde hair and a short beard. He wears wire rimmed glasses and a dark blue collared shirt as he smiles warmly. Jerron is a dark-skinned Black man with a big smile, dark mustache and bright blonde hair; he wears a soft yellow t-shirt. Photos by Robbie Sweeny.

# CONTACT



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**Image Descriptions:** Alice and Laurel fly through the air. They look small amidst the large, dark performance space. Barbed wire extends and crosses between them, creating a big X, as their chairs and the tall metal truss that surrounds them shine in the theatrical light. The expansive ceiling above them is speckled in blue projection. Photo Heather Cromartie/ The Shed.