

1

00:00:00 --> 00:00:03

:KQED sonic ID

[AD] K-Q-E-D logo animation white letters on black background

2

00:00:04 --> 00:00:14

[AD] Captions available open and closed. Top right is the A-S-L interpreter, a deaf Southeast Asian woman. For more accessibility options visit KQED.org/kineticlight

3

00:00:14 --> 00:00:19

[AD] Together two women in their wheelchairs Alice, Black and Laurel, white, fly overhead.

:Short piano notes blend with electronic and orchestral textures to evoke a sense of hope and movement

4

00:00:19 --> 00:00:23

[Alice] Hi. Welcome to *If Cities Could Dance*.

5

00:00:23 --> 00:00:24

We're Kinetic Light

6

00:00:24 --> 00:00:28

and we've been working in
the San Francisco Bay Area.

7

00:00:28 --> 00:00:32

[AD] Jerron, a Black man, dances on the beach, and Ed Roberts Campus.

8

00:00:32 --> 00:00:36

We're here to share some of our perspectives on disability arts

9

00:00:36 --> 00:00:38

and our creative process.

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00:00:38 --> 00:00:41

[AD] Alice traces wires projected on a stage floor.

11

00:00:41 --> 00:00:45

[Laurel] We are disabled artists making work

12

00:00:45 --> 00:00:48

that nobody else would make for us.

13

00:00:48 --> 00:00:53

[AD] Dancing in barbed wire, Jerron turns to face Alice and Laurel who embrace inverted in their wheelchairs.

:Music slows to be more reflective

14

00:00:53 --> 00:00:56

[Alice] Work that has implications

15

00:00:56 --> 00:01:00

for how we understand intersections of race,

16

00:01:00 --> 00:01:05

gender, disability, technology, design, access.

17

00:01:05 --> 00:01:11

[AD] As Laurel bounces, Michael, a white man, watches intently.

18

00:01:11 --> 00:01:14

[Michael] The audience is the most important member of our troupe,

19

00:01:14 --> 00:01:17

and in particular other disabled people.

20

00:01:17 --> 00:01:20

So when we present our work,

21

00:01:20 --> 00:01:22

it's a two-way conversation.

22

00:01:22 --> 00:01:26

[AD] Jerron rises, his palsied arm rested on his chest.

23

00:01:26 --> 00:01:29

[Jerron] Kinetic Light, it's a beautiful intervention.

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00:01:29 --> 00:01:31

And I love that we use that word, because

25

00:01:31 --> 00:01:35

it signals that we might be obsolete in a decade.

26

00:01:35 --> 00:01:37

We might not be necessary.

27

00:01:38 --> 00:01:39

And we shouldn't.

28

00:01:39 --> 00:01:43

[AD] If Cities Could Dance.

29

00:01:43 --> 00:01:48

[AD] San Francisco Bay Area / Disability Arts.

:Light ethereal soundscape.

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00:01:48 --> 00:01:53

[AD] An aerial view of a building with long ramps.

:Bright synths and piano chords evoke curiosity.

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00:01:53 --> 00:01:55

[Alice] We're at Z Space,

32

00:01:55 --> 00:02:01

and we are tucked up in the thing that people are calling

33

00:02:01 --> 00:02:05

bubble residences, a pandemic concept.

34

00:02:05 --> 00:02:11

[AD] The group enters. In the theatre, technicians prep cable rigging.
Tiffany Schrepferman, Production Stage Manager.

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00:02:11 --> 00:02:14

[Tiffany] Alice, if you could go from splat

36

00:02:14 --> 00:02:17

and then lightly mark your flying pathway.

37

00:02:17 --> 00:02:27

[AD] Alice Sheppard Artistic Director, Kinetic Light.

Alice practices, suspended in her chair. Descending she leans and tucks. Then as she halts, her arms jut out. Michael watches.

38

00:02:27 --> 00:02:31

[Alice] We are working on the final creative

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00:02:31 --> 00:02:34

and technical processes for *Wired*.

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00:02:34 --> 00:02:38

[AD] The women spin in the air. On the stage floor sits a realistic theatre prop of barbed wire.

41

00:02:38 --> 00:02:41

:Trickling percussion and hesitant strings evoke tension and curiosity.

42

00:02:41 --> 00:02:46

Wired tells the race, gender, and disability stories

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00:02:46 --> 00:02:48

of barbed wire in the United States.

44

00:02:49 --> 00:02:53

[Jerron] It is a heightened, dangerous, exciting work.

45

00:02:53 --> 00:02:58

[AD] Jerron Herman, Dancer, Kinetic Light.

Airborne dancers stretch barbed wire elastic cord.

46

00:02:58 --> 00:03:00

[Laurel] You're dangling 20 feet in the air

47

00:03:00--> 00:03:03

from a rather thin metal cable.

48

00:03:03 --> 00:03:07

And once you leave contact
with the ground,

49

00:03:07 --> 00:03:10

you may have very little control.

50

00:03:10 --> 00:03:15

[AD] Laurel Lawson, Dancer Kinetic Light.

She and Alice break and swing like pendulums.

51

00:03:15 --> 00:03:19

[Alice] As I fly, I am experiencing my body:

52

00:03:19 --> 00:03:22

the power, the lightness.

53

00:03:22 --> 00:03:26

This body is giving me so much joy.

54

00:03:26 --> 00:03:31

[AD] Alice and Laurel spin in the air stretching the elastic prop.

55

00:03:32 --> 00:03:32

[AD] Berkeley, California. An Aerial view.

56

00:03:34 --> 00:03:38

The Bay Area is where I first
grew into disability culture.

57

00:03:38 --> 00:03:45

[AD] Inside the Campus building, on a 180 foot long 6 foot wide red spiral ramp, Alice and Laurel sail down side by side and arm in arm.

:Tender acoustic guitar, piano, and electric guitar reverb evokes warmth and reflection

58

00:03:45 --> 00:03:48

:Whoosh of wheels hitting floor

59

00:03:48 --> 00:03:50

The independent living movement

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00:03:50 --> 00:03:52

took its roots here in the Bay.

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00:03:52 --> 00:03:56

[AD] They dance under the ramp.

62

00:03:56 --> 00:03:58

The idea that disabled people

63

00:03:58 --> 00:04:02

are not medicalized bodies to be warehoused,

64

00:04:02 --> 00:04:04

to be closed away.

65

00:04:04 --> 00:04:08

That disabled people have a right

66

00:04:08 --> 00:04:12

to live in non-institutional spaces.

67

00:04:12 --> 00:04:16

[AD] They arch up. Jerron, wide stanced sweeps an arm up.

68

00:04:16 --> 00:04:18

[Jerron] Growing up, that sense of independence

69

00:04:18 --> 00:04:20

was a strong through line.

70

00:04:20 --> 00:04:26

[AD] He bends at the waist reaching forward.

71

00:04:26 --> 00:04:30

And it's still a point of
pride to be from the Bay Area.

72

00:04:33 --> 00:04:36

To dance in a place

73

00:04:36 --> 00:04:40

that heralds the actors, the organizers.

74

00:04:40 --> 00:04:44

It feels like the past is moving through me.

75

00:04:44 --> 00:04:47

[AD] Historical photos of civic action (on a mural wall).

76

00:04:47 --> 00:04:51

[Judy] Every time you raise issues of separate but equal,

77

00:04:51 --> 00:04:55

the outrage of disabled individuals across this country ...

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00:04:55 --> 00:04:57

[AD] Judy Heumann, a white woman.

[Judy] is going to continue,

79

00:04:57 --> 00:04:58

it is going to be ignited.

80

00:04:58 --> 00:05:01

There will be more takeovers of buildings.

81

00:05:01--> 00:05:02

:Pulsing piano keys build tension.

82

00:05:02 --> 00:05:04

[AD] 504 sit in participant. News footage.

:Supporters clap.

83

00:05:04 --> 00:05:07

[Laurel] In 1977, the 504 protests,

84

00:05:07 --> 00:05:10

the disability community moved in and occupied

85

00:05:10 --> 00:05:13

the federal building in San Francisco.

86

00:05:13 --> 00:05:15

[AD] Crowds and protest signs.

87

00:05:15 --> 00:05:17

[Protestors] What do we want?

Human rights!

88

00:05:17 --> 00:05:22

[Laurel] Federal legislation, which protected disabled people from discrimination.

89

00:05:22 --> 00:05:23

[Protestors] Sign 504!

90

00:05:23--> 00:05:28

[Laurel] After four long years of negotiation and compromise,

91

00:05:28 --> 00:05:31

Jimmy Carter's administration

92

00:05:31 --> 00:05:33

decided to throw those regulations out.

93

00:05:34 --> 00:05:39

[Protestors] (Singing) I'm not gonna let nobody turn me around,

94

00:05:39 --> 00:05:43

(Singing) turn me around...

[AD] Dennis Billups 504 Sit in participant. A Black man with a cane.

95

00:05:43 --> 00:05:45

[Dennis] The more we learn about all of our disabilities

96

00:05:45 --> 00:05:47

inside of our own coalition,

97

00:05:47 --> 00:05:51

learning sign language, learning braille,

98

00:05:51 --> 00:05:54

learning about hidden disabilities,

99

00:05:54 --> 00:05:56

we will become a tighter and firmer group.

100

00:05:56 --> 00:06:10

[AD] A hand painted "victory" sign. A crowd standing and sitting in their wheelchairs. News headlines "Disabled protesters win some points from H-E-W" and "Califano Signs Regulations to Ban Discrimination Against Disabled."

:Supporters clap and cheer on the protesters

101

00:06:10 --> 00:06:12

[Laurel] This was the point in history

102

00:06:12 --> 00:06:16

that cemented the movement as a national power.

103

00:06:16 --> 00:06:21

[AD] Jerron juts his fist. The ramp with the wall of photos behind it. The women wheel up it.

104

00:06:21 --> 00:06:23

:Rhythmic pushing up the ramp

00:06:27 --> 00:06:29

Light, playful echoing synths

105

00:06:23,549 --> 00:06:27,720

[Laurel] We are at home physically, in a way we are in so few other places.

106

00:06:27 --> 00:06:29

[AD] They roll all the way down smiling.

107

00:06:29 --> 00:06:32

The Ed Roberts Campus in Berkeley,

108

00:06:32 --> 00:06:35

it's among the great ramps of the world.

109

00:06:35 --> 00:06:38

A ramp as a thing of beauty,

110

00:06:38 --> 00:06:43

not constructed as a functional object alone.

111

00:06:44 --> 00:06:45

:Whoosh of wheels gliding down ramp

112

00:06:45 --> 00:06:59

[AD] In line, Alice and Laurel start back up the ramp then release and slide downwards and twist. They face each other and hold hands in a spin. Straight backed they send an arm upwards, slow and open their chests. They smile.

113

00:06:46 --> 00:06:52

:Piano arpeggio with solo violin and cello evokes tenderness and love

114

00:07:00 --> 00:07:04

Places where somebody thought about me

115

00:07:04 --> 00:07:06

when they were designing this.

116

00:07:06 --> 00:07:08

That sparks joy.

117

00:07:08 --> 00:07:19

[AD] From above, they dance surrounded by the curve of the ramp. Jerron joins them and slides through their joined and up stretched arms.

118

00:07:19 --> 00:07:28

[AD] An aerial view of San Francisco Oakland Bay bridge onto Yerba Buena island. Then settling onto the Z Space building.

119

00:07:28 --> 00:07:39

[AD] In the theatre, Laurel dives and sways over a mound of barbed wire and reaching arms wide, brings them in to her as she turns.

:Rich warm vocals soar above sparse strings

120

00:07:39 --> 00:07:44

[Laurel] Access as an aesthetic, it challenges us.

121

00:07:44 --> 00:07:52

True artistically equitable
accessibility expands the art form.

122

00:07:52 --> 00:07:56

[AD] She swims in dark blue light.

123

00:07:56 --> 00:07:58

For someone who is primarily non-visual,

124

00:07:58 --> 00:08:01

what does that dance sound like?

125

00:08:02 --> 00:08:04

[Michael] When we put all of that into the work,

126

00:08:04 --> 00:08:06

the work gets better.

127

00:08:06 --> 00:08:10

[AD] Michael Maag, Video Projection and Lighting Designer, Kinetic Light.

:Playful marimba tones intertwine with dreamlike beats

128

00:08:10 --> 00:08:14

[AD] Jerron in a sparkly gold and purple bodysuit hovers on cables in patterned light.

129

00:08:14 --> 00:08:16

[Michael] When I start working with the audio describers

130

00:08:16 --> 00:08:19

and they see something poetic

131

00:08:20 --> 00:08:24

in a movement and the way the light falls across someone's face,

132

00:08:27 --> 00:08:30

that informs me, what I've created,

133

00:08:30 --> 00:08:32

and often leads to changes.

134

00:08:32 --> 00:08:39

[AD] As she propels backwards with arms outstretched, Alice skims the floor. Then, flies.

135

00:08:35 --> 00:08:39

:Deep and expansive electro ambience with sparse piano

136

00:08:39 --> 00:08:43

[Alice] For us, access — it is a creative force.

137

00:08:43 --> 00:08:51

[AD] Alice dives to the ground and rebounds.

138

00:08:51 --> 00:08:53

Once you commit to imagining

139

00:08:53 --> 00:08:57

a disabled audience as primary and not as incidental,

140

00:08:57 --> 00:09:01

it changes the understanding of the work, the insiderness.

141

00:09:01 --> 00:09:04

It changes the resonance.

142

00:09:04 --> 00:09:16

[AD] Jerron with a wide smile, twirls in midair. Grounded he propels across the stage in turning steps and arms wrapped in wire.

143

00:09:16 --> 00:09:17

[Jerron] Being a part of *Wired*

144

00:09:17 --> 00:09:20

has stretched me entirely as a performer.

145

00:09:20 --> 00:09:23

[AD] Jerron moves deliberately, tangled in barbed wire.

:Haunting synth sirens repeat with dissonant string and horn accents

146

00:09:24 --> 00:09:27

The barbed wire is reminding me that I am unsafe.

147

00:09:30 --> 00:09:35

So, I have to find relief and exuberance

148

00:09:35 --> 00:09:39

and comedy and joy and struggle in that.

149

00:09:39 --> 00:09:58

[AD] Jerron, Alice and Laurel kneel on stage costumed in black and wrapped in wire. Then similar choreography continues on the beach, they kneel with the bay at their backs. They bow to the ground. Passers by look on.

150

00:09:51 --> 00:10:00

:Ocean waves hitting shore; fog horn

151

00:09:58 --> 00:10:15

[AD] Jerron looks up then sweeps an arm up. He bends at the waist reaching forward. Alice smiles and with eyes shut traces an overhead circle with straight arms. She locks arms with Jerron and all three arch back with a craned neck and eyes open.

152

00:10:16 --> 00:10:21

[AD] The red top of the golden gate suspension bridge pokes through the clouds which partly obscure it's vertical cables.

153

00:10:22 --> 00:10:31

[AD] The theatre marquee of Z Space changes to the stage where Alice and Laurel lift off in tandem flight.

154

00:10:24 --> 00:10:32

:Introspective, ethereal piano melody; dark bass drone, entrancing synths

155

00:10:33 --> 00:10:37

[Alice] We have been deeply careful to think through

156

00:10:37 --> 00:10:44

how our bodies in chairs, without chairs for Jerron, fly.

157

00:10:49 --> 00:10:53

Not to use the air as an escape,

158

00:10:56 --> 00:11:00

but to really dig into the air

159

00:11:00 --> 00:11:05

as places to find queerness, disability, and race.

160

00:11:05 --> 00:11:35

[AD] In slow motion, they all spiral. Alice and Laurel hold hands midair and Jerron drifts upside-down tracing a white spiral which is projected on the stage. The women in their chairs drift in circles, their arms grazing the ground as the light dims to darkness.

161

00:11:37 --> 00:11:39

[Laurel] Thanks for coming along on this journey with us today,

162

00:11:39 --> 00:11:41

and we really hope you've enjoyed

163

00:11:41 --> 00:11:43

this little peek into our process

164

00:11:43 --> 00:11:46

and our work in progress, *Wired*.

165

00:11:47 --> 00:11:49

Everyone please remember, stay safe out there.

166

00:11:49 --> 0:12:38

Credits:

KINETIC LIGHT

ARTISTS

Jerron Herman, Laurel Lawson, Michael Maag, Alice Sheppard

WIRED PRODUCTION TEAM

Will Knapp, Tiffany Schrepferman, Jordan Wiggins, Catherine Nelson, Latania Brown

WIRED DESIGN

Conception and Direction

Alice Sheppard

Choreographed in Collaboration

Jerron Herman, Laurel Lawson, Alice Sheppard

Lighting, Video, Projection & Scenic Design

Michael Maag

Original Music Composition

LeahAnn Mitchell (Laurel Lawson solo)

Ailís Ní Ríain (Barbed Wire Floorwork)

Costume & Makeup Design

Laurel Lawson

Scenic & Prop Design

Josephine Shokrian

Shot on location at
Z Space, 450 Florida Street, San Francisco, CA;
The Ed Roberts Campus, Berkeley, CA

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Disability Dance Works, LLC dba Kinetic Light

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