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"The combination of confronting my own assumptions about accessibility in the arts and inquiring into those assumptions by co-creating a work with a stellar, multi-disciplinary crew of artists has been nothing short of transformative." - Eric Hirsh, Composer

"As a collaborator ... I wasn't prepared for how successful and stunning it would be to inhabit the performance both as a blindfolded audience member and a blindfolded participant, and felt feelings and a level of empathy that I previously couldn't even conceive." - Lucia Del Vecchio, Text Designer

"After immersing myself with a blindfold as a participant in the piece, I have grown fascinated by what we miss when our eyes are in good working order, that is out there to be sensed, and felt. To paraphrase Gil Scott Heron, the revelation will not be televised, but it will be on stage at ADF in June." - Jeremy Kumin, Lighting Designer

"Working on enVISION has been such an amazing experience. It has drawn me in so many different directions to bring the motion of sound to the audience. It has been incredible working with those impacted by the ability to participate in movement freedom, and the joy I have witnessed has been an amazingly uplifting experience." - Erik Ramquist, Sound Designer

“enVISION challenges every preconceived notion we have of dance, sight, and perception. It’s a bold exploration of empathy. It challenges the dancer and the dance, the audience and the stage. It’s about time.” - Kayla Lynn Oelhafen, Company Manager

**As part of The American Dance Festivals 89th Season,
ShaLeigh Dance Works proudly presents
*enVISION: Sensory Beyond Sight***

An immersive performance that does not require a viewer’s vision

June 3-5, 2022
at The Fruit

ABOUT

Durham, NC - As one of 25 dance companies invited to perform at the 2022 American Dance Festival (ADF), ShaLeigh Dance Works is excited to unveil the world premiere of *enVISION: Sensory Beyond Sight* co-commissioned by ADF. *enVISION* is an immersive and inclusive performance that does not require the viewer’s sight, but rather all their other senses. “ADF is coming back strong with our first full season in three years. We are looking forward to bringing everyone together again safely to be immersed in a full season of live performances from over 25 dance companies both indoors and outdoors,” said Executive Director Jodee Nimerichter.

enVISION: Sensory Beyond Sight was inspired from a previous collaboration between Artistic Director ShaLeigh Comerford and Co-Director Davian Robinson. In 2019, ShaLeigh was commissioned by Arts Access, NC’s only non-profit organization dedicated solely to making the arts accessible, to create a new work with Davian who lost his sight as a child and is breaking ground in innovative dance practices for people with low vision and blindness. “We saw an opportunity to research, design, and create movement practices around the goal of identifying and removing barriers to providing all people, regardless of ability, opportunities to access their full potential both as artists and as audience members,” ShaLeigh said.

The multi-phase project brought together a team of collaborators around a single challenge: to tell a story through dance and theatre beyond their visual dimension. The creative team included five community members with low-vision and blindness. “Our goal was multifaceted and included providing paid opportunities, access, inclusion, and visibility. Access itself has shaped this work. Through devising a creative process with access in mind from the very beginning, we aimed to challenge preconceptions of the nature of blindness as well as assumptions about how we connect to dance,” ShaLeigh continued.

The forty-five minute work is forged by the elaboration of new atmospheres and through a close interaction between the performer and the audience. 6 audience members will ultimately be guided through the performance by a performer into the setting of the work, over a specific journey that tells a collective story through textures, movements, sounds, music, scents, storytelling, and audience participation. Participatory audience members who are sighted will wear a banner on their eyes as they enter the work from the beginning to the end of the performance allowing both sighted and unsighted people to share the experience. “This work is

important because it allows us to bring increased awareness and empathy to the sighted audience. It helps us to give a voice to the voiceless while shedding light on understanding people of difference, particularly people with blindness and low-vision,” Davian said. “it’s not our difference of ability that makes us unique or special, but it is our willingness to empower the masses through the arts,” Davian continued.

enVISION: Sensory Beyond Sight is directed by Artistic Director ShaLeigh Comerford and co-directed by Davian Robinson in collaboration with SDW’s company members. The premiere commissions NC-based sound design engineer Erik Ramquist and composer Eric Hirsh, a 2012 recipient of the North Carolina Arts Council Composer Fellowship and a four-time winner of the Herb Alpert Young Jazz Composer Award. Costume design is by Christine McInnis. Lighting design is by *Bamboo Wind* and *The In-Between* efficianando Jeremy Kumin. Stage design is by Nicholas Jackson. Text design is by Lucia Del Vecchio.

enVISION: Sensory Beyond Sight by ShaLeigh Comerford is co-commissioned by The American Dance Festival with support from the Doris Duke/SHS Foundations Award for New Works and is supported in part by The National Endowment for the Arts, MAP Fund, the Mary Duke Biddle Foundation, the Durham Arts Council’s Annual Arts Fund and the North Carolina Arts Council, a division of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. www.NCArts.org

We would also like to thank our invaluable community partners Arts Access, Vision InSights, Dark Room Ballet, InSightful Visionaries, and The Fruit.

CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

As part of American Dance Festival’s 89th Season, ShaLeigh Dance Works presents *enVISION: Sensory Beyond Sight*, an immersive and inclusive performance that does not require a viewer’s vision. June 3 through 5 at 7:30pm and matinees on June 4 and 5 at 2pm. Doors open 45 minutes before show time for pre-show experiences and cocktails. The Fruit, 305 S Dillard Street, Durham NC.

As part of ADF’s 89th Season, ShaLeigh Dance Works presents *enVISION: Sensory Beyond Sight* June 3rd-5th
Friday, Saturday, & Sunday at 7:30pm and matinees on Saturday & Sunday at 2pm
Doors open 45 minutes before showtimes for pre show experiences
The Fruit
[305 S. Dillard St](http://305.S.Dillard.St), Durham NC 27701

TICKETS

Single tickets and group tickets will go on sale to the general public on April 26, 2022. Tickets will be available for purchase online at americandancefestival.org or through the [Duke University Box Office](http://DukeUniversity.BoxOffice) at 919-684-4444 Tuesday & Thursday 11 am–5 pm.

ARTIST WEBSITE

shaleighdanceworks.com

ABOUT THE COMPANY

ShaLeigh Dance Works (SDW) is a nonprofit, dance-theatre company dedicated to inspiring people of all abilities, social backgrounds, cultures, and generations with the transformative power of dance. Under the direction of Founder and Artistic Director ShaLeigh Comerford, SDW is recognized for its socially conscious works, expansive movement language, and commitment to community action. Since 2005, ShaLeigh has had a dedicated practice of creating and producing work within the fields of dance and theatre and began programming full seasons in NC in 2017. Their success has since taken them from performances and creative residencies in NYC to Germany, England, Israel, and Japan. From inspiration to world premiere, SDW annually commissions composers to create original new music for their programs. With a focus on artistic excellence, nurturing artists, and designing programs to empower those impacted by marginalization, SDW aims to provide a concrete example of how dance can transform people's lives and enrich society. SDW is based in Durham and honored to be celebrating their sixth season in NC.

Each year, ShaLeigh Dance Works creates programming at the intersection of art, culture, and social change to enrich our communities. The company also offers multiple performances that bring mixed-ability movers to professional stages and panel discussions on making dance inclusive to people with disabilities. SDW's engagement practices are an integral part of their work and include partnerships with The Reality Center, Arts Access, Vision Insights, InSightful Visionaries, and Dark Room Ballet to provide advocacy, opportunities, and access to the arts for all people.

Known for commissioning a diverse collaborative artistic team of performers, designers, composers, and creators, SDW has had the privilege of receiving commissions, residencies, and most recently their third NYC tour since landing in NC. Their 2020 premiere of *The In-Between* received standing ovations and critical acclaim. The Fruit's venue owner Tim Walter called it "a sound experience that's among the best I've ever heard in dance — or any performance. Truly, this is a work in which all the elements combine in ways that captivate an audience." Triangle Arts Review called their sold-out 2019 premiere of *Bamboo Wind* "sensual, engaging and breathtakingly beautiful." Their 2018 premiere of *I Promise* was listed by Byron Woods of criticalfragilistic.blogspot.com as one of "Five exceptional dances from 2017," and their ADF Here and Now: NC Dances premiere of *Dedicated to [] because of [] (and vice versa)* was hailed by Kate Dobbs Ariail of the CVNC.org as "a marvelous surprise ... with its mix of Gaga-style freedom of movement and balletic elegance ... well suited to the complex balance of dance theatre." SDW has received national recognition and awards including from the Tokyo Metropolitan Foundation for History and Culture for their international research and performance collaborative spanning artists in the US, Germany, London, and Holland on the relationships between language, movement, and sound.

LOCATION

enVISION: Sensory Beyond Sight will be staged at The Fruit, a 15,000 square foot warehouse space that has been converted into an Art Space and Creative Playground in the Heart of Downtown Durham, located at [305 S. Dillard St.](#) The venue is accessible to individuals using wheelchairs and equipped with restrooms sufficient to accommodate large crowds. Accessible Parking spaces are allotted next to the ramped entryway. Parking is available free of charge

(after 6 PM during the week and throughout the day on Saturday and Sunday) in the parking lot for Durham Health and Human Services located at E. Main St. and S. Dillard St.; the entrance to the lot is off of S. Dillard St. Additionally, there is nearby street parking on Ramseur St. and S. Dillard St.

Find us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#). #ShaLeighDanceWorks

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PRESS REVIEW TICKETS/PHOTO PASSES/INTERVIEW REQUESTS

Contact Deseree Tuttle, PR & Marketing Director, ShaLeigh Dance Works, at desereetuttle8@gmail.com

IMAGES

Available by request. Photo courtesy of Slater Mapp.