Beyond Sight: The Making of enVISION

(55 minutes)

Written, Directed, Shot & Edited by Michael I. Washington

Interviews	Jonh Blanco, Joshua Bottoms, ShaLeigh Comerford, Dan Ellison, Hillary Ensminger, Eric Hirsh, Jeremy Kumin, Hannah Nicole Marr, Lexi Ovenden, Erik Ramquist, DJ Robinson, Brice Smith, Myra Weise
Underscore	Michael D. Jones, Damien Bynum, and Eric Hirsh
Additional Footage	Bria Washington
Virtual Premiere Videography	Palani Mohan
Artistic Director	ShaLeigh Comerford
Co-Director & Performer	Davian Robinson
Audio-Describer	Jan Tu
Choreography	ShaLeigh Comerford in collaboration with the artistic team
Narration	ShaLeigh Comerford and Davian Robinson
Performers	Jonh Blanco, Mauri Conners, Kate Gupton, Hannah Nicole Marr, Lexi Ovenden, Jessica Wooten, and Alex Velez
Audience Activators	Kevin Higgins, Marco Orellana-Portillo, Cindy Pan
Creative Collaborators	Elvira Basnight, Janie Desmond, Hillary Honig Ensminger, Chemae Mebane, and Brice Smith
Original Compositions	Eric Hirsh
Live Musicians	Eric Hirsh and Omar Ruiz-Lopez

Sound Design	Erik Ramquist
Script	ShaLeigh Comerford in collaboration with Davian Robinson and Creative Collaborators
Text Design Consultant	Lucia Del Vecchio
Lighting Design	Jeremy Kumin
Costume Design	Christine McInnis
Wardrobe Supervisor	Iris Lloyd
Scenic Design & Sound Board Operator	Nicolas Jackson
Props Master	Lexi Watkins
Stage Manager	Cheryl Edson
Performance Venue Manager	Tim Walter
Marketing Manager	Deseree Tuttle
Development Director	Kayla Lynn Oelhafen
Consultant & Pre Show Experience Audio Description	Arts Access & Pearl Jan
Creative Consultant	Krishna Washburn

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PROGRAM NOTES

"Beyond Sight: The Making of enVISION is a one of a kind documentary that showcases the creative process behind ShaLeigh Dance Works' newest masterwork. Told by the artists themselves, Beyond Sight is an unflinching look at what it takes to push boundaries and change the landscape of live performance forever," says filmmaker Michael Washington. The documentary follows the process of making an immersive and inclusive performance that does not require the viewer's sight, but rather all their other senses. "This is our fourth project with Argyle Rebel Films founder and CEO Michael Washington. His passionate artistry as a writer, director and producer has always centered personal stories that uplift the historically disenfranchised. His art meets his activism in a purely unique way from concept to execution," ShaLeigh said.

Specifically conceived with and for individuals who are low-vision and blind, enVISION: Sensory Beyond Sight proposes a new sensorial experience of dance and theater. The work brought together a team of collaborators around a single challenge: to tell a story through dance and theater beyond their visual dimension. From June 3rd-5th, ShaLeigh Dance Works premiered enVISION: Sensory Beyond Sight to live audiences opening the 89th American Dance Festival's Season with five sold-out performances at The Fruit in Durham, North Carolina. Talented videographer Palani Mohan captured the show with high-quality multi camera shoots of the live performance which will premiere Virtually September 17th. While creating this collaborative dance-theatre work, filmmaker Michael Washington of Argyle Rebel Films added another layer of collaboration: he documented the process.

SPECIAL THANKS

enVISION: Sensory Beyond Sight by ShaLeigh Comerford is co-commissioned by ADF 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

ShaLeigh Dance Works would also like to thank their invaluable community partners Arts Access, Vision InSights, Dark Room Ballet, InSightful Visionaries, and The Fruit.

ABOUT

SHALEIGH DANCE WORKS (SDW) is a nonprofit, dance-theater 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. The company was founded with a premiere at the 4th annual Greensboro Fringe Festival in 2005. Since receiving a standing ovation at their NYC debut at Judson Church two years later, a whirlwind of performances launched SDW into recognition as an emerging dance-theater company. Their success has taken them from performances and creative residencies in NYC to Germany, England, Israel, and Japan.

SDW 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. 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.

BIOGRAPHIES

SHALEIGH COMERFORD (ARTISTIC DIRECTOR) ShaLeigh Comerford is an Irish & Native American choreographer and the artistic director of ShaLeigh Dance Works. Her work is driven by a desire to uplift powerful stories and voices that address the human condition in relation to inequalities and forces of erasure. Her work stresses our instinctive human need to connect regardless of race, class, age, ability, or gender. She is a graduate of Hollins University with a Master's degree in Visual and Performing Arts. ShaLeigh began her formal dance training on scholarship with the Roanoke Ballet Theatre and the American Dance Festival and continued her training in NYC and at P.A.R.T.S in Brussels, Belgium. In 2011, she was personally invited to

train in the Gaga movement language with Ohad Naharin and the Batsheva Dance Company in Tel Aviv, Israel for their inaugural teacher training program.

As a young performer, she made her professional stage debut in musical theatre at the age of ten as the lead in Mill Mountain Theatre's musical production of *Alice in Wonderland*. She later starred as lead in Roanoke Children's Theatre's premiere production and touring version of *Charlotte's Web*. She has choreographed over a dozen musical theatre productions for regional and community theatres, most notably *Spring Awakening* directed by Jenna Worsham at the Lime Kiln Theater and *Teen Brain* directed by Doug Zschiegner at The Dumas Center.

ShaLeigh was a principal dancer with the Roanoke Ballet Theatre where she performed and toured with the company from 2000-04. She performed leading roles with the Virginia Ballet Academy and guest roles with the Carolina Ballet and Cirque USA. She has also apprenticed with the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company and has performed with Keigwin & Company, Tina Croll & Company, the Dendy Dance Theater, Carolina Ballet, Martha Clarke, Rosie Herrera, as well as a restaging of Batsheva Dance Company's *Minus Sixteen* and an Official Music Video for *Blind* by Christian Loffler.

ShaLeigh's choreography and commissions have been presented throughout the United States and abroad. She has been a showcased artist of Judson's Church, Dixon Place, The Flea Theatre, American Dance Guild, Chen Dance Center's NewSteps Series, Durham Independent Dance Artists, the North Carolina Presenters Consortium, North Carolina Dance Festival, and Booking Dance Festival at Jazz at Lincoln Center.

ShaLeigh is a recipient of the 2018 Ella Pratt Fountain Emerging Artist Award and an awarded winner in the 2013 Tokyo Experimental Festival of Sound, Art & Performance to design a performance installation at the Institute of Contemporary Art and International Cultural Exchange. The performance installation toured to the Noguchi Room at Keio University (MITA) and Comerford was invited to perform at The Week of Foreign Female Dancers in Tokyo at Roppongi Stripe's Space. Her ADF commissioned work *Meadow Dance* was named Best of 2021 for Outstanding Choreography by Chatham Life and Style. ShaLeigh currently serves as Adjunct Instructor of dance at Elon University and as Assistant Professor at Washington & Lee University. She is also Founder and practitioner of ShaGa Movement.

DAVIAN ROBINSON (CO-DIRECTOR & PERFORMER) Davian Robinson, born in Hickory, NC, is a dancer, choreographer, Paralympic athlete, and motivational speaker. Currently living in Durham, NC, Davian graduated from UNC Charlotte in 2020 with Bachelor degrees in both Science and Art. He attended Governor Morehead School for the Blind in Raleigh, NC from 2004 - 2011. Davian has performed at Orsolina 28 and The Palace of Venaria in Italy, UNC Charlotte, MOVE Dance Alliance, Loose Leaves Showcase, and Reactions of Resistance. Notably, he was selected to perform in Adidas "Impossible is Nothing" spec commercial, produced by Sugar Pop Productions in 2018. Davian founded and leads Sensory Beyond Sight: dance workshops which invite participants to experience movement without the use of their sight. His workshops have been presented at the Alexander Technique National Conference. He

currently works with Camryn Watson and Inspire Inclusion Dance as a dance teacher. Davian has been a Guest Artist and Collaborator with ShaLeigh Dance Works since 2019 and officially joined the company in 2021.

JAN TU (AUDIO-DESCRIPTION) Jan is a semi-professional ballet and ballroom dancer. Her dance journey started more than 3 decades ago. Just over 2 decades ago, ballet led to theater which led to [when she learned of the lack of access for people who are blind and low vision to the arts that she loves so much] audio description. Jan has described scores of live plays, dance performances, and conventions of all sizes. She is a describer of choice for audio description training. More recently she has described artwork for local galleries, the NC Museum of Art, and has assisted in training at the Nasher Museum at Duke University. Jan strives for accuracy and evocativeness. Jan is an advocate for removing barriers to all art forms whether visual, tactile, aural, or kinetic. Jan's side hustles have included edu-tainment [factual science and history education presented with humor], leading back roads tours of China, and designing jewelry. Jan is currently 'over the moon' being a grandma.

ARTS ACCESS Arts Access is a nonprofit organization, founded in 1984 to bridge the cultural arts and disabilities communities in North Carolina. Arts Access's mission is to enable children and adults with disabilities to have full access to and participate in the arts and cultural life of our community. Our vision is that arts organizations will operate with inclusion as a core value, provide programs and events that are barrier free and provide equal access to people with disabilities.

ELVIRA BASNIGHT (CREATIVE COLLABORATOR) Elvira Basnight was born and raised in New York, but has called Durham home for more than thirty years. She has been totally blind since her freshman year of high school. She received a Bachelors of Science in business administration from Mount Olive college. Elvira has been employed in the medical arena for almost forty years and is currently employed in the private sector at Duke University Hospital. Elvira enjoys a very active lifestyle including traveling, cross-country skiing, parasailing, jet skiing, tandem cycling, snowshoeing, yoga, pilates, ballet, conditioning, swing dancing, two stepping, line dancing and hiking. She loves visiting new places and exploring the great outdoors. Her love for music and dance reminds her she is alive and moving. The desire to move happens as soon as she hears the music whether real or imagined. If she is moving, she is happy with a smile on her face.

JONH BLANCO (PERFORMER) Jonh Blanco is a Filipinx-American undisciplined artist from Norfolk, Virginia. A 2020 Pivotal Fund awardee, a 2019 Visiting Lecturer of Art Foundations at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and a 2016 Volunteer Arts Teacher at Reality Ministries in Durham, NC. Recognized as an activist-gardener-student-survivor of childhood domestic and sexual violence, space artist, and a good neighbor. However defined, their creative practices are described as critically whimsical, courageous, and authentic. They received their BFA in Interdisciplinary Studies at the San Francisco Art Institute and an MFA in Studio Art at UNC-Chapel Hill. Jonh works at the Pullen Arts Center, is a company member of

ShaLeigh Dance Works, co-creator at BASEMENT art space, and volunteers at H.E.L.P. (Health Equipment Loan Program, Durham, NC).

MAURI TERRA CONNORS (PERFORMER) Mauri Terra Connors is a dance artist based in Durham, NC, originally from Rockbridge County, VA. She makes work with movement, paper, and words. She received her BA in Dance with honors from Connecticut College in 2015, where she studied with David Dorfman, Heidi Henderson, Shani Collins-Achille, Rosemarie Roberts, Lisa Race, and Shawn Hove. She has performed with Jenny Davies/ Progeny Dance. Her writing and visual work have been included in Contact Quarterly and About Place Journal. From 2018-2021 she was the Artistic Director of Halestone Dance Studio, a nonprofit dance education organization in Lexington, VA. She is a passionate advocate for dance education for all ages, and is currently listed on the Virginia Commission for the Arts Teaching Artist Roster. She is honored to contribute to this project as a guest artist with ShaLeigh Dance Works.

JANIE DESMOND (CREATIVE COLLABORATOR) Janie Desmond first began her dance training with ShaLeigh Comerford in 2005. Together they have created a movement relationship and bond that has spanned more than ten years. They have moved together through the forms of Ballet, Modern, Creative Movement, Improvisation, Composition, Choreography, and ShaGa. In 2018, they presented their duet, *J'aime ma soeur* at DPAC for Reality Ministries' annual talent show. Janie began working with ShaLeigh Dance Works as a Guest in 2019 with a performance of *enVISION* at The Cary Theatre. Janie is a 2015 graduate of UNC Greensboro with a certificate in Integrative Community Studies. Her goal is to share her love for dance through teaching all ages with a special interest in elementary education. She is currently working as a dance instructor with Inspire Inclusion Dance.

CHERYL EDSON (STAGE MANAGER) Cheryl Edson is a theatremaker, educator, and writer. In addition to being the resident stage manager for ShaLeigh Dance Works, she has stage managed for Bulldog Ensemble Theatre, Sweet Tea Shakespeare, and the Durham 150 closing ceremony at DPAC. Cheryl is a board member of the National Women's Theatre Festival and a teaching artist at the Durham Arts Council. She has a B.A. in philosophy from Wesleyan University in Connecticut.

HILLARY HONIG ENSMINGER (CREATIVE COLLABORATOR) "I am still dancing!" Hillary began dancing as a child in NYC despite degenerative blindness. She studied Modern dance at the schools of Graham, Ailey, Interlochen, Perry-Mansfield, and Zina Romette. In 1970 she was introduced to Haitian and African dance, the perfect rhythmic platform she needed to express herself given blindness. She has studied with the greatest masters and traveled the world in pursuit of the African root of other dance forms like Tango. Hillary graduated from Hamilton College with a BA in the Arts, trained as a Chef at the CIA, Hyde Park, NY and has certification in NonProfit Management from Duke and Wake Tech. For 25 years, she owned and operated two restaurants and "A Wandering Feast Catering." She is a proud mother of 2 and her guide dog Nettles. Currently, Hillary has been working as a consumer advocate to eradicate stigma and promote inclusion for those with disability in the Durham community.

LUCIA DEL VECCHIO GRAY (TEXT DESIGN CONSULTANT) Lucia Del Vecchio Gray is a playwright, director, writer, and business owner living in Asheville, North Carolina with her family. She holds an MFA from the University of Texas at Austin in Theatre/Playwriting, and her plays have been produced in Asheville numerous times over the last 15 years. After directing and serving as head writer for the yearly local hit *The Bernstein Family Christmas Spectacular* for its last four years, Gray has transitioned to working on a long work of fiction. Gray has also served as dramaturg and general fun consultant for Shaleigh Dance Works intermittently for the last decade.

KATE GUPTON (PERFORMER) Kate Gupton is a graduate of The University Of North Carolina At Greensboro. She holds a BFA in Choreography and a K-12 public school teaching license in dance. Kate is currently the dance teacher at North Graham Elementary school, a public title 1 school in Graham North Carolina. Additionally, Kate is a choreographer for the Rainbow Dance Company, a multi-generational modern dance company in Raleigh NC. Currently Kate can be seen performing in Durham with ShaLeigh Dance Works and Tony Johnson. Kate also enjoys teaching dance to all ages at private studios throughout the state. Kate has had the pleasure of training at American Dance Festival in Durham NC, Unitec in Auckland New Zealand, and Arts Together in Raleigh NC.

KEVIN HIGGINS (AUDIENCE ACTIVATOR) Kevin Higgins is a high school junior from Chapel Hill, North Carolina. He started dancing at age 5, and for more than a decade his passion for dance has been constantly growing. He studies modern, ballet, jazz, and tap at the Ballet School of Chapel Hill and has also developed a love for choreography. His choreography was selected by ADF to be featured alongside the Nasher Art Museum's RESIST COVID/TAKE 6! exhibit by Carrie Mae Weems, and he has also helped choreograph for dance companies that he is a part of. He has also performed in Voices: A Walking Tour, hosted by the Process Series at UNC. Last summer he performed with ShaLeigh Dance Works for The Stars Are Out at ADF, and he is excited to be performing with them again for this season!

ERIC HIRSH (COMPOSER & LIVE MUSICIAN) Eric Hirsh is a jazz pianist and composer living in Durham, North Carolina where he creates music as leader of his own jazz quartet, as co-director of Afro-Cuban ensemble Orquesta GarDel, and as a member of hip hop group The Beast. His debut album as bandleader, "Distillation," was released in 2018. Hirsh is a 2012 recipient of the North Carolina Arts Council Composer Fellowship, and a four-time winner of the Herb Alpert Young Jazz Composer Award. He has been in residence at the Kennedy Center's Betty Carter Jazz Ahead, Ravinia's Steans Music Institute, and the School for Improvisational Music.

NICHOLAS F. JACKSON (SCENIC DESIGNER & SOUND BOARD OPERATOR) Nicholas F. Jackson is a Designer, Technical Director, and occasional Choreographer. Most recently Nicholas was an assistant professor at the University of Houston and head of the MFA Technical Direction program. Nicholas received his MFA from the University of Memphis and BFA from the University of Wyoming; both in theatrical design and production. Nic is returning to the triangle area after being the Technical Director for ADF in 2018. Nic is very happy to be a part of the

work of ShaLeigh Dance Works and its importance as an accessible performance for a traditionally underserved part of the community.

JEREMY KUMIN (LIGHTING DESIGNER) Jeremy Kumin's career in lighting spans 35+ years between entertainment and architectural projects. He has designed the lighting for plays, musicals, opera, dance, video, fashion shows, special events, gardens, commercial building exteriors, and much more. He received a BA in Drama at Duke, and then an MFA from Brandeis in Lighting Design. In '87 he interned with the lighting designer at ADF. Later dance projects included 2 years touring the USA and Europe with the American Indian Dance Theater. He has designed for choreographers such as Carlota Santana, Laura Dean, Amanda Selwyn, and more recently Shaleigh Dance Works and OM Grown Dancers. He has guest-taught at universities such as Brandeis, NYU, SUNY Purchase, and is named as a co-inventor for US Patent 8950901 (LED fixtures). From 2019 to the present he has worked with Southern Lights of Raleigh designing outdoor lighting for high-end residential and commercial properties.

IRIS PONCE LLOYD (WARDROBE SUPERVISOR) Iris is a Raleigh native. She has been working with local arts organizations for many years that include North Carolina Theatre, Carolina Ballet, and the City of Raleigh. She is so grateful to Kayla and Christine for bringing her on to be part of this powerful project. Much love to her beautiful children, Caden, Charlotte, and Jackson.

HANNAH NICOLE MARR (PERFORMER) Hannah Nicole Marr was born in Raleigh and currently lives in Durham, NC. She graduated in 2017 from the University of North Carolina School of The Arts. Hannah has been a company member with ShaLeigh Dance Works since 2017, and has taken on the role of rehearsal director in 2022. She is also a company member with OM grown dancers, and is a dance teacher and choreographer to all ages for many studios and programs around the area, including TRAIN at Threehouse Studios, Stage Door Dance Productions, and Ninth Street Dance. Hannah also guest teaches and choreographs for many schools and studios both locally and out of state. Hannah has been honored to perform works by Doug Varone, Paul Taylor, Martha Graham, Wayne McGregor, Juel D. Lane, Ming- Lung Yang, Netta Yerushalmy, Kira Blazek, and many others.

CHEMAE MEBANE (CREATIVE COLLABORATOR) Chemae Mebane was born in Coupeville, Washington and raised in Oxford and Raleigh, North Carolina. She attended North Carolina A&T State University and is now located in the Raleigh area. She is currently attending the Career and Training Center under the Vision Services of the Blind to return back to school in the Fall at Wake Tech for Human Resources Management. She performed as a part of her high school theater and served as house production manager and back stage crew. She is a member of the International Thespian Society. She loves the beach, singing and listening to music and books. Dance is important to her and gives her a way to express herself. She loves to dance to all types of music. Her mission is to help advocate and improve equity and inclusion for the visually imparied community within business and in life.

CHRISTINE MCINNIS (COSTUME DESIGNER) Christine is a costume designer, maker and theatrical gypsy, having lived and worked professionally in New York, Chicago, Las Vegas, Washington D.C., Louisville, Cincinnati, and now the Raleigh-Durham area. She previously worked at Carolina Ballet and Nevada Ballet, and has toured nationally and internationally with touring productions of Jesus Christ Superstar starring Ted Neely and Carl Anderson, West Side Story, The Sound of Music starring Barry Williams, Swing!, and Say Goodnight Gracie starring Frank Gorshin, among others. She has also designed costumes locally for various plays at Theater in the Park in Raleigh. When not working on costumes, Christine can be found hunting for vintage sewing patterns and clothing, practicing Reiki as a Certified Reiki Master, and enjoying travel and cruises with her family.

PALANI MOHAN (VIRTUAL PREMIERE VIDEOGRAPHY) Palani Mohan is the owner of PTM Photo & Video. He has a love for the performing arts and a deep admiration for artists. He specializes in taking dance portraits as well as filming live performances with a cinematic look. enVISION: Sensory Beyond Sight is his second collaboration with ShaLeigh Dance Works. His first collaboration with the company was SDW's 2020 evening-length work The In-Between which premiered at The Fruit March 13-15th amid the Covid pandemic. All 3 live performances were filmed with high-quality multi camera shoots and carved the way for our first live-streamed premiere.

KAYLA LYNN OELHAFEN (COMPANY MANAGER) Kayla Lynn Oelhafen is community organizer, artist manager and events producer, writer, photographer, yogi, and co-owner of Raleigh-based e-tailer Westgate Wine. She joined SDW staff in 2018 and has helped manage and produce *Bamboo Wind*, *Revolutionaries in the Dark*, and *The In-Between*. Currently, she serves as Company Manager and Development Director. Totally enthralled by *enVISION: Sensory Beyond Sight*, she'd love to discuss future opportunities to book and tour the show or screen the forthcoming documentary. Kayla has volunteered with NCModernist, ART/RE/ART, Girls Rock NC, Full Frame Film Festival, and The Carrack and directed the marketing for their final Muse Masquerade. She's on the team at The Fruit, handling much of their social media and recently producing two month-long live music series: Joe Troop & Friends at The Fruit. She's also on Joe Troop's management team. Born and raised a Wisconsin bumpkin (self-proclaimed with affection), Kayla found her way down south by means of Hollins University.

MARCO ORELLANA-PORTILLO (AUDIENCE ACTIVATOR) Marco Orellana-Portillo is a Salvadorian American contemporary/modern dancer who jumped into the Durham dance community right out of high school. He started dancing from a young age by learning traditional Latin American dances from bachata, cumbia and merengue which eventually led to a smooth transition learning ballet, modern and jazz styles, along with some viral TikTok dances. Since making the jump to become an independent dancer, Marco has participated as a dancer in: Tobacco Road Dance Productions "In Concert," Richmond Dance Festival, American Dance Festival and the NC Dance Festival. Working with choreographers such as: Marsha Thomas, Megan Ross, Jess Shell, Lindsay Winthrop, Tony Johnson, ShaLeigh Comerford and Rosie Herrera. What started as a hobby quickly bloomed into a beloved passion while also being an expressive outlet.

LEXI OVENDEN (PERFORMER) Alexis “Lexi” Ovenden is a multidisciplinarian from Boulder, CO. Growing up, she trained at local Durham dance studios and the American Dance Festival (ADF) where she studied under Twyla Tharp, Alexander Brady, Rika Okamoto, and Min-Lung Yang. She’s worked with ADF as their Production Stage Manager alongside companies like Pilobolus, Paul Taylor Dance Company, Shen Wei Dance Arts, and more. She graduated in 2020 from Appalachian State University with a B.A. in Interdisciplinary Studies — Management for Dance, minors in dance and somatic sustainability. Currently, she loves training in ballroom dance with partners Vadim Terentiev and Serhiy Titarenko at Fred Astaire Dance Studio, Durham. Lexi now resides in Durham and works as Executive Assistant for ADF under Jodee Nimerichter, teaches private and group pilates at Duke University, and occasionally works for a local brewery. She is thrilled to be joining ShaLeigh Dance Works for their 2021-22 season!

CINDY PAN (AUDIENCE ACTIVATOR) Cindy Pan is a second-year graduate student at Duke University in the Doctor of Physical Therapy program. She is passionate about the power of movement in all forms and dancing for all abilities. Cindy has over ten years of training in classical ballet, jazz, tap, and lyrical. Her friendship with Janie Desmond brought her to enVISION and a beautiful first experience with modern dance and ShaGa.

ERIK RAMQUIST (SOUND DESIGN) Erik is a Raleigh native who has worked regionally and nationally in sound for nearly 20 years. He is currently touring as a member of the sound team for Hamilton and has previously worked as the Head of Audio for DPAC. His other recent projects include coordinating production for the Creedmoor Music Festival. Erik is excited to collaborate with so many talented artists in this multi-disciplinary project. He has enjoyed helping to highlight the sensory experience that challenges the conventional perceptions of modern dance. In his free time he enjoys playing the banjo and dabbling in other musical projects. He would like to thank everyone for supporting the arts.

OMAR RUIZ-LOPEZ (LIVE MUSICIAN) Omar Ruiz-Lopez (he/him) teaches viola and violin, and is a chamber ensemble coach and conductor with Kidznotes. He is also a bilingual songwriter, multi-instrumentalist, and co-founder of the original Americana group Violet Bell. Omar was born in Panama and raised in Puerto Rico with Spanish as his first language. His love of music began at an early age thanks to his father's frequent vocal renditions of traditional Caribbean folk songs. Omar is a composer at heart, and a true example of American diversity manifesting through music. He is experienced in music business, production and engineering, and as a virtual cultural diplomat, demonstrating his commitment to music education over decades of teaching. The diversity of his own experience as a multi-genre musician and Latine immigrant helps him connect with diverse international audiences. Omar is a gifted, experienced, and encouraging teacher who believes that a well-structured music and arts education is essential for the development of a growing mind. He has taught with the El Sistema-based program Kidznotes in Durham since 2011.

BRICE SMITH (CREATIVE COLLABORATOR) Brice Smith was born and raised in Raleigh, NC. He graduated from North Carolina State University where he studied Communication,

Public Relations, and Nonprofit studies in 2012. He is a test engineer at SAS Institute, where he tests SAS products against web accessibility standards and trains other SAS employees how to use screen readers. Before joining SAS in 2015, he worked for a corporate communications agency to provide services for a variety of nonprofit senior living and affordable housing communities. He also taught blind and visually impaired students throughout North Carolina as a part-time assistive technology instructor with Invision Services, Inc. In his free time, Brice enjoys lifting weights, tandem cycling, and traveling.

DESEREE TUTTLE (MARKETING DIRECTOR) Deseree Tuttle received her B.S. in marketing with a concentration in Social Media marketing and marketing strategy from Southern New Hampshire University. She has worked on extensive marketing campaigns with professional race car drivers, real estate brokerages, and even wedding industry leaders. She is a marketing manager, choreographer, and even a cake artist. Her unique outlook on marketing stems from her arts background. Deseree has danced for more than 20 years and been choreographing for 6 years. She has the ability to use her dance background to integrate marketing strategies into a piece of art.

ALEXA VELEZ (PERFORMER) Alexa Velez is a photographer, video artist, and dancer based in North Carolina. As a multidisciplinary artist, her work draws attention to our disconnect from the natural world and seeks to restore a connection through imagery, movement, and sound. In 2017, she completed her undergraduate studies at the University of North Florida where she received a BFA in photography and a BA in English with a minor in film studies. In 2021, she graduated from Washington University in St. Louis with an MFA in Visual Art. As a graduate student, she was a recipient of the Chancellor's Fellowship and won best in show for her thesis work examining our relationship with the element of air. Over the last few years, her short films have screened both nationally and internationally. Most recently, she was a recipient of the Frankenthaler Climate Art Award for her video work addressing climate change.

KRISHNA WASHBURN (CREATIVE CONSULTANT) Krishna is the director and teacher of Dark Room Ballet, a pre-professional dance curriculum designed for the educational needs of blind and visually impaired people, the only course of its kind in the English-speaking world. Krishna holds a Masters of Education from Hunter College, a BA from Barnard College, and multiple certifications from the American College of Sports Medicine with a focus in biomechanics. Dark Room Ballet has been featured in USA Today (Green Bay Gazette, North Jersey News), BLOOM magazine, Speak Out for the Blind podcast, Eyes on Success podcast, and on Bloomberg Quicktake news. Krishna Christine Washburn has performed with many leading dance companies including Jill Sigman's thinkdance, Infinity Dance Theater, Heidi Latsky Dance, Marked Dance Project, and LEIMAY.

MICHAEL I. WASHINGTON (DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKER) Michael I. Washington is the founder and CEO of Argyle Rebel Films. A writer, director, producer, Michael believes in telling organic, personal stories that reminds us that we are all connected. A graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Washington is passionate about the cinematic power of North Carolina. It is his goal to create a film studio in the Triangle that prioritizes the historically

disenfranchised. In late July, 2021, Michael released his newest film “Save the Dad Bod: A Men’s Health Odyssey.”

LEXI WATKINS (PROPS MASTER) Lexi Watkins was born in Jacksonville, Florida and currently lives in Durham, NC. Lexi has been around ShaLeigh Dance Works since 2018, helping with the design, setup, and decorations of the company’s fundraising galas. Lexi has taken on the role of Props Master for the company’s new work in 2022. She’s a huge animal lover at Care First Animal Hospital, and enjoys doing DIY projects in her spare time.

JESSICA WOOTEN (PERFORMER) Jessica Wooten is a dancer and teacher from Raleigh, NC. She graduated from East Carolina University with a BFA in Dance with a concentration in Performance and Choreography, as well as an Entrepreneurship Certificate. Jessica has attended the American Dance Festival summer intensives where she performed in Dark Meadow Suite by Martha Graham, and also had the opportunity to study at the Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance study abroad summer program in London, UK. She performed in part of Carrie Mae Weems’ outdoor exhibition RESIST COVID / Take 6! in 2020, as well as Taryn Griggs and Chris Yon’s piece *Pairs in the Park* in 2021. Jessica studied as an apprentice with ShaLeigh Dance Works in 2021 and was invited to officially join the company in January 2022.