

Dancing With the Universe

REASON d'etre Dance Productions | Canada

April 23–24, 2022

Part of CoMotion International Deaf and Disability Arts Festival

Harbourfront Centre Theatre

Dancing with the Universe is a dance theatre production co-directed by Vivian Chong and choreographer Kathleen Rea with dramaturge Tristan Whiston. It tells Chong's life story of losing her sight due to a rare reaction to ibuprofen and her journey to rediscover herself as a multidisciplinary artist and athlete. Chong performs in the production alongside an ensemble cast of six dancers and cellist Cheryl Ockrant.

Dancing with the Universe is an interdisciplinary journey of human emotions that shines a light on loss, grief and resilience. Through her sense of humour and focusing on what she loves to do, Chong has found her authentic voice as a multidisciplinary artist.

60 minutes, no intermission.

There is a book launch for Vivian Chong's graphic memoir *Dancing after TEN* following the April 23 performance.

“Disability is political. Disability is community. Disability is identity. Disability is an experience of living in a world with a ‘one size fits one’ design. An international artistic and cultural movement is growing, and Deaf and disabled artists are shouting ‘We exist!’” — Alex Bulmer, CoMotion Curator

Special thanks to Anthony Bergamin, Chris Williams, Rachel Marks, Shay Erlich, Becky Gold, Sean Lee, Eliza Chandler, Syrus Marcus Ware, Véronique Leduc, Kyle Rawn and Colin McCarthy.

Thank you to our supporters: Site Partners - the Government of Canada, the City of Toronto. Programming Partners – the Government of Canada, the Government of Ontario, the Ontario Arts Council, Canada Council for the Arts, the City of Toronto, Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund. Corporate Site Partner – Labatt.

Biographies:

Vivian Chong – Original music, original songs, story, script, dancer, actor and musician

Vivian Chong's first love is drawing. Ever since she could hold a pencil, she drew night and day. After graduating from the University of Toronto and Humber College, Chong worked as a graphic designer, video editor and 3-D animator. After a medical accident left her without sight and damaged her eardrums, she experienced a creative rebirth. She became a medal-winning triathlete, an access-focused yoga instructor, motivational speaker, potter, musician, dancer and performer. Chong was named The Female Athlete of the Year by Achilles Canada and trains regularly as a triathlete with her guide promoting accessible ways of racing in the triathlete community. In 2016, she created and performed a one-woman show, The Sunglasses Monologue, which toured in Canada and was part of the Next Stage Theatre Festival in January 2022. Chong's graphic memoir Dancing After TEN was short-listed for The Toronto Book Awards in 2020. She is also featured in two documentaries, A Whole New Light and Ripples by Accessible Media Incorporated and appears in the children's book Claire Wants a Boxing Name with her guide dog, Catcher. Chong and Catcher often hike together and trek the entire 275 kilometers of the Oak Ridges Trail through rain and shine.

Kathleen Rea – Co-director, choreography, staging, video editing, costume design and pill puppet concept.

Kathleen Rea danced with Canada's Ballet Jörgen, National Ballet of Canada and Tiroler Landestheater (Austria). Rea fell in love with Contact Improvisation (CI) 21 years ago and has been involved in the CI community ever since. She has choreographed over 40 dance works and has five nominations for DORA awards. Rea has a learning disability that has meant that writing takes four to eight times longer for her than for the average person. It is one of life's great surprises and mysteries for her that despite this struggle, she developed a love of writing and is a published author of *The Healing Dance* and a blog and academic writing. With a Master in Expressive Arts, she has a passion for functional movement and is a teacher of the Axis Syllabus. Rea has been on the George Brown Dance program faculty for the past twenty years and is also the Director of REASON d'être dance productions. This not-for-profit contact improvisation-based dance company produces weekly dance jams in Toronto. Being on the autism spectrum, she also identifies as neuro-atypical and works to educate the world about neurodiversity.

Production Credits:

Lead Artist, Original Music: Vivian Chong

Co-Direction: Vivian Chong, Kathleen Rea

Choreography, Staging, Video Editing, Costume Design: Kathleen Rea

Ensemble Dancers, Co-Creators: Sofia Castillo Ardines, Brayden Cairns,

Sid Ryan Eilers, Nickeshia Garrick, Karen Kaeja, Ryan Kostynikl,

Suzanne Liska, Rudi Äneas Natterer, Zita Nyarady

Original Music: Cheryl Ockrant, Rudi Äneas Natterer

Dramaturg: Tristan R. Whiston

Ensemble, Choreography Assistant: Elise Tigges

Swing Consultant, Co-Choreographer: Jonathon Neville

Lighting Designer, Stage Manager: Adrien Whan

Pill Puppet Construction: Ann Powell, David Powell, Puppetmongers
Theatre

ASL Interpreter Coordinator: Gaitrie Persaud, Phoenix The Fire

ASL Interpreters: Amanda Hydes, Timothy Keslick

Audio Description Production: Superior Description Services

Audio Describer: Rebecca Singh

AD Dramaturg: Letizia Binda-Partensky

AD Quality Assurance: Ramya Amuthan

AD Audio Engineer: Dev Ramsawakh

Harbourfront Centre Staff:

Chief Executive Officer: Marah Braye

Chief Programming Officer: Iris Nemani

CPO Executive Assistant: Chris Scholey

Cultural Engagement

Manager, Interim: Diana Webley

Associate Producer: Pam Briz

Assistant Producers: Andrea Castaneda, Melanie Dubois

Company Manager: Rosie Driscoll

Accessibility Coordinator: Katherine Hale

Production

Director: Jamie Rodriguez

Senior Manager: Andrea Strachan

Production Manager: Sterling Bogie

Production Manager, Theatres: LJ Savage

Front of House

Manager: Christopher Hackett

Assistant Manager: Ian McNulty

Manager, Hospitality: Norm Maschke

Hospitality Supervisor: Michelle Grimaldi

Front of House Supervisor: Stephanie Dotto

Fleck Dance Theatre

Head Electrician: Allan Day

Stage Carpenter: Jackson Sayliss

Audio Engineer: Phil Clemo

Flyperson: Rob Martin

Stage Technicians at the Harbourfront Centre Theatre and Fleck Dance Theatre are represented by Local 58 of the International Alliance of

Theatrical Stage Technicians, Artists and Allied Crafts of the United States, its territories, and Canada.