

# Dancing With the Universe

REASON d'être Dance Productions | Canada



April 23-24, 2022

**WORLD PREMIERE**

Part of CoMotion International Deaf and Disability Arts Festival

Cover Photo: Sarah Jones

**Harbourfront centre**

## About Dancing With the Universe

*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 emotion 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:

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:

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## 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.

## Dancing With the Universe

### 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 Kostyniuk,  
Suzanne Liska, Rudi  
Áneas Natterer, Zita  
Nyarady

### Original Music

Cheryl Ockrant,  
Rudi Áneas 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 Hyde

Timothy Keslick

Gaitrie Persaud

### 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

### Chief Executive Officer

Marah Braye

### Chief Programming

Officer  
Iris Nemani

### Cultural Engagement

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Diana Webley

### Associate Producer

Pam Briz

### Assistant Producers

Andrea Castaneda  
Melanie Dubois

### Company Manager

Rosie Driscoll

### Accessibility

Coordinator  
Katherine Hale

### Production

Director  
Jamie Rodriguez

### Production Manager,

**Theatres**

LJ Savage

### Front of House

Manager, Visitor Services  
Christopher Hackett

### Assistant Manager

Ian McNulty

### Manager, Hospitality

Norm Maschke

### 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.