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KST Presents: Stein | Holum Projects' *The Wholehearted* Multimedia theatre experience brings audience ringside for turbulent story of abuse and redemption

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FIVE CHANCES TO SEE STEIN | HOLUM PROJECTS' EXPLOSIVE NEW WORK

Kelly Strayhorn Theater (KST) is proud to present **Stein | Holum Projects' *The Wholehearted***, running March 20–21 and March 26–28 at Kelly Strayhorn Theater. The performances include unique theme nights including a special student night on Thursday, March 26.

Inspired by the lives of iconic women in sports and boxing history, *The Wholehearted* is a high-octane, one-woman play that tells the story of Dee Crosby, a fictitious world champion boxer hellbent on redemption after being taken down in her prime by her abusive husband. Sitting ringside, spectators are transported into Dee's memory as she tackles the complexities of love, glorification of violence, and intricacies of her own mind. Intensely dark and touching on issues of violence and abuse, *The Wholehearted* features live-action camera work combined with fight choreography to elevate this new work beyond traditional theater into a fast-paced and unconventional comeback story that prompts spectators to question what it means to be a hero inside and outside the ring.

A theatre piece unlike any other, *The Wholehearted* features live-action video presented on jumbotron-style screens and seating that evokes a boxing ring. Although all roles are played by Stein | Holum Project's performer/director Suli Holum, the play is "more a duet between Suli and the cameraperson," says writer/director Deborah Stein.

"We think a lot about the relationship between Dee and the camera, the real camera on stage, the camera in her mind, the movies, and the life that she thinks she's starring in. The set design is so the audience is sitting as they would in a live boxing match. Through the use of cameras they become viewers of wherever Dee needs them to be — the audience in her mind."

Dee, in the process of overcoming a ruptured relationship, carries the memories of other characters with her throughout the work. In order to tell her complex story, Holum and Stein researched ways in which the brain interprets trauma. "The idea that I'm playing a bunch of different characters came partially out of our research of trauma," says Holum. "Having one person play all these characters is a poem about how we carry people with us [in our memories], the people who have affected us — we carry them with us in our bodies."



Photo courtesy of Stein | Holum Projects
More press photos online at:
<http://kelly-strayhorn.org/contact/media/>



In addition to their research, Holum underwent a physical transformation by training with a former Olympic boxer and dancer for her role as Dee. "I'm always looking for a training element to the work, taking something that I've never done before," Holum continues. "I'm a trained dancer but I'm not a fighter. Now I've been training as a boxer for almost three years. That immersion into a physical discipline is also a huge part of the show."

The Wholehearted was conceptualized by Stein | Holum Projects, a collaboration between Deborah Stein and Suli Holum. Stein has worked extensively with the multi-disciplinary Pig Iron Theatre Company in addition to being an internationally-produced playwright and director and a resident of New Dramatists. Holum is a founder and former Co-Artistic Director at Pig Iron as well as a lauded actress and playwright Off-Broadway and regionally.

Stein and Holum began developing *The Wholehearted* during a KST Creative Community Residency Program in July 2013 at KST's Alloy Studios. Stein and Holum remarked, "We had so much fun during our residency at The Alloy Studios. We had a talkback afterwards about the themes and the character and that conversation really set the work. [The talkback] was really exciting for us because that's why we make theater. It's to engage people in conversations about the themes of the plays. It's the questions that we don't have answers to ourselves, we really need the audience to get in on that conversation and help us process what we're working on."

"We're excited to present *The Wholehearted* this March and welcome back Stein and Holum following their residency" says KST executive director Janera Solomon. "This unique theatre work reflects KST's ongoing mission of supporting the creation of unique and groundbreaking work that engages our audiences."

Showtimes

Friday, March 20

Saturday, March 21

Thursday, March 26

Friday, March 27

Saturday, March 28

8 PM Curtain | 7 PM Pre-show Mixer each night

Post-show discussion Friday, March 20

Gen. Admission - \$25

Senior - \$20

Artist/Student - \$15

15206 Resident - \$15

Groups of 10+ call for group rate

Tickets available via kelly-strayhorn.org and by calling **412-363-3000 x 318**

Box Office hours are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. M-F at KST's Administrative Office, 5530 Penn Ave

Lobby opens for ticket sales 7 p.m. day of performances

Special Events

Student Night

Thursday, March 26 :: \$5 tickets for groups of 10 or more students. Call for advance purchase.

More events pending. Check website for updates.

Funding

The Wholehearted was originally commissioned by ArtsEmerson. Additional support and residencies were provided by: HERE, Art/NY, the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council (Swing Space), the Brooklyn Arts Council, JACK, New Dramatists Creativity Fund, Philadelphia FringeArts, the Swarthmore Project in Theatre, the Orchard Project, and Kelly Strayhorn Theater.

About the Kelly Strayhorn Theater

As the last of nine theaters from the 1950s heyday of East Liberty, the Kelly Strayhorn Theater uses the arts as a catalyst for continuing community revitalization. The theater, in its 12th season, continues to play a key role in the transformation of Pittsburgh's East Liberty neighborhood. An intimate, professionally equipped, 349-seat multiple-use performance venue, the theater demonstrates its commitment to Pittsburgh artists and audiences. The KST is a favorite venue of emerging local artists, regional artists and arts organizations who take risks and present new work. Noted Pittsburghers Gene Kelly and Billy Strayhorn, the namesakes, are among the 80 area artists honored on the theater's Gallery of Stars. The building, opening in 1914, is the former Regent Theatre, which served the East End as a movie house for eight decades.

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