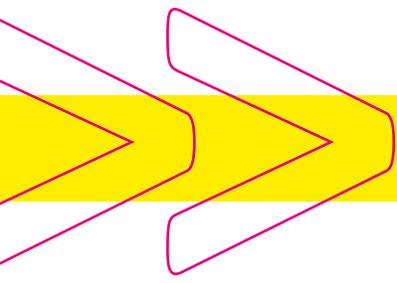




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# NEWS RELEASE

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## KST Presents “SUNSTAR: Tribute to Ladies of Jazz”

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Photo credit: J. Altdorfer

With only music and 15 minutes how would you tell your story and what story would you choose to tell? What songs capture your life?

On Saturday, March 29, 8 p.m. at Kelly Strayhorn Theater **SUNSTAR: Tribute to Ladies of Jazz** features dynamic vocalists who own the stage, capture the audience, and deliver the song like no one else. Vocalists include **Spanky Wilson, Tania Grubbs, Kenia,** and **BeLove.**

Jazz drummer Tom Wendt, saxophonist Yoko Suzuki, and a live jazz band will accompany the vocalists.

From Spanky’s bluesy voice and Kenia’s bossa nova beats, to BeLove’s soulful harmonies, the concert branches out of its jazz roots in an eclectic mix of various styles. Capturing stories that range from joy to sorrow, each vocalist delivers a personal retrospective or moment in life through a well-crafted playlist. These intimate performances lead the audience through a musical narrative, drawing from their own life experiences.

A two-minute profile filmed by KST video fellow Richard lamurri will introduce each vocalist and discuss how the playlist they have chosen relates to their own life.

Established in 2009, SUNSTAR was named in honor of the Sun, Earth’s most precious and energizing resource. The concert coincides with Women’s History Month and is inspired by SUNSTAR Music Festival, KST’s biennial celebration of women in music.

SUNSTAR: Tribute to Ladies of Jazz honors the diversity among Pittsburgh’s emerging and nationally acclaimed female vocalists. By celebrating the achievements of female artists who are sometimes lost in the shuffle of the bigger jazz world, Kelly Strayhorn Theater strives to support their contributions to the art form.

### About the Vocalists

#### Spanky Wilson

Internationally-acclaimed and renowned soul, funk and jazz singer raised in Pittsburgh, Spanky Wilson began performing in the late ‘60s. She has collaborated with several influential artists including Marvin Gaye, the Duke Ellington Orchestra and Sammy Davis Jr.



### **Tania Grubbs**

A professional singer, proud mother of three, and one of the organizers of the Jazz at Andys program at the Fairmont Pittsburgh, Tania has been a featured vocalist for the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra and performed with the Civic Light Orchestra. She is a four-time recipient of the Heinz Foundation's Ready for Life Grants for her work with young children through music and movement.

### **Kenia**

Brazilian jazz vocalist and producer Kenia Ashby blends the sounds of smooth jazz with samba and bossa nova, often in her native Portuguese, to produce a captivating and powerful performance. A native of Rio de Janeiro, Kenia is incredibly passionate about Brazilian culture and currently lives in Pittsburgh. She performed at the SUNSTAR music festival in 2012.

### **BeLove**

Originally from Denver, Colorado, BeLove now lives in Pittsburgh singing a mix of soul, rock, and scat. She has been a vocalist since the age of four, and playing guitar and writing songs for the last ten years. Currently, BeLove is recording a new album and plans to tour the east coast this summer.

## **BAND**

### **Tom Wendt**

Well-known jazz drummer and Pittsburgh native Thomas Wendt has been playing drums professionally since the age of 14. Thomas has collaborated with numerous jazz artists including Gene Ludwig, Joe Negri, Sean Jones, and Dwayne Dolphin. He is a member of the Pittsburgh Jazz Orchestra, member of faculty at the Afro-American Music Institute, and his work has appeared in the Emmy Award-winning soundtrack for the PBS documentary "Fly Boys."

### **Yoko Suzuki**

Alto-jazz saxophonist and scholar Yoko Suzuki became professionally trained in music at an early age. A native of Osaka, Japan, Suzuki moved to Pittsburgh in 2006. She received her Ph.D. in ethnomusicology and women's studies from the University of Pittsburgh, where she now teaches jazz history, arranging, and ensemble in addition to her music career.

## **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, professional 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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