

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Kelly Strayhorn Theater Presents: Spring 2023 Freshworks performance in process presentation, Nick M. Daniels, *Nonsensical search for truth and understanding*

MEDIA CONTACT

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March 6, 2023



EAST LIBERTY, PA — Kelly Strayhorn Theater is pleased to announce the first Spring 2023 Freshworks performance in process presentation , **Nick M. Daniels. *Nonsensical search for truth and understanding***. Join us on Friday & Saturday, April 7 - 8, 8:00pm, at KST's Alloy Studios for a taste of this new work in development followed by a Q & A with the artist.

Nonsensical search for truth and understanding is a movement-based performance that explores how technology has grown, developed, and changed global communication. Choreographer Nick M. Daniels will draw the audience into an oddly beautiful and melancholic atmosphere by pairing digital/electronic noise and piano with stylized phrases inspired by global movement styles such as **Butoh, Ballroom, Hip Hop**, and **traditional African and Indian dance**. Photography and projections round out the piece, creating a multidisciplinary heartbeat for this work from D.A.N.A. Movement Ensemble.

Nick M. Daniels is a movement based performance artist and choreographer born, raised, and based in Pittsburgh who draws from a vast network of influences. Their drive to create art through movement can be traced back to their childhood, when their mother supported their creative spirit, even at her own risk:

“As a child I was always just a little different. I would watch figure-skating, (my mother was an avid figure-skating person, she loved it) and I would try to do those moves, and jumps — our ceiling could

have come down quite a few times because you had this little diva doing triple sow-cows above your head in their bedroom. I used to spray pledge on the floors! It made them really, really slick, and one morning, getting ready for church, my mother had her church shoes on, hit the pledge on the floor and fell. After that she said, 'OK, we need to get you into skating, into dance!'" — Nick M. Daniels

Daniels, a Freshworks alum ('17) has built a practice that balances the horrendous with the sublime. Informed creatively by their identity as a Black, gay, and non-binary person, **Daniels makes work that confronts the world as it is while leaving space to imagine different, more beautiful realities.**

"For this residency, there were a couple of images I really needed to see, to get back into my head. This past weekend I traveled to DC to the Museum of African American History, to sit with Emmett Till. A lot of my imagery comes from things that are absolutely horrible, but I try to make it a compassionate effort, because beautiful things come from horrible things. I try to avoid hitting really strong triggers with my audiences, but I do need to push buttons to some extent." — Nick M. Daniels

Because their practice synthesizes language from so many different sources, the result can be free-wheeling, abstract, and untethered to the narrative arcs that audiences are used to. Daniels is unconcerned with the legibility of their work. Rather, they hope audiences will connect with the authentic essence of *Nonsensical search for truth and understanding*.

"My work is what comes out of my mind, it's what comes out of my heart and what comes out of my soul. My friends and colleagues recognize that. You can call my work unrefined, you can call it non-traditional dance, you can call it performance art, but the one thing you're definitely going to say is that it is *of me* — **it's honest, it's raw, it's emotional, and it's a little gay, and very Black.** I tell my story the way I feel it should be told. It's a reflection of finding myself, finding my energy, and finding my Black Boy Joy after being in the pandemic. The uncertainty of that, and the ugly thoughts, things that were being said about queer, transgender Blacks, people of color, all that hatefulness — I want to package that and dance around it. I need to find myself again." — Nick M. Daniels

Join KST and Nick M. Daniels for *Nonsensical search for truth and understanding* Friday & Saturday, April 7 - 8 at 8:00pm at KST's Alloy Studios, 5530 Penn Ave. Tickets are Pay What Moves You: \$10 - \$25. For full season details, KST COVID policy updates, and tickets, go to [kelly-strayhorn.org](https://www.kelly-strayhorn.org).

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Nick M. Daniels is the founding Artistic Director of **D.A.N.A. (Dancers Against Normal Actions) Movement Ensemble** whose choreographic style is inspired by African dance and many modern and contemporary global movement styles. After attaining his BFA in Dance from Slippery Rock University in 1991, Nick created D.A.N.A Movement Ensemble and was a pioneering force in Pittsburgh for the exploration of race and sexual identity in performance art. Nick's creative work often uses self-realized soundscapes and video imagery based in pure, raw emotion. Throughout his career he has toured nationally and abroad, receiving grants and accolades including **The Young-Howse Theater Award for Movement Artist of the Year, The Pennsylvania Council on the Arts Preserving Diverse Cultures Grant**, and a **2017 Freshworks Residency with Kelly Strayhorn Theater**. Currently, Nick is developing work that will



premiere in Europe, Central America, and South America in 2023.

ABOUT KELLY STRAYHORN THEATER

Named after 20th century entertainment legends **Gene Kelly** and **Billy Strayhorn**, both natives of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, **Kelly Strayhorn Theater** (KST) is reflective of the passion that its founders had for the arts. Today, Kelly Strayhorn Theater carries on the legacy of its founders by fostering bold and innovative artistry with a global perspective. **KST celebrates diversity in voice, thought, and expression**, and upholds a firm commitment to inclusion. Furthermore, KST provides a safe and welcome space for dialogue and artistic expression for all who enter.

Kelly Strayhorn Theater has a dynamic footprint in Pittsburgh, with two venues running along Penn Avenue. **KST's Alloy Studios** is a cultural hub in the heart of East Liberty, and the historic **Kelly Strayhorn Theater** is located in the thriving business district. More than 20 years after the founding of the theater, **KST continues to use its broad reach to impact the contemporary arts and the community.**

ABOUT FRESHWORKS

Freshworks is KST's **creative residency for artists and collaborators** based in the greater Pittsburgh region. Freshworks made its debut in 2013 and supports playful exploration in performance through interdisciplinary work in contemporary dance, theater, music, and multimedia. The program provides artists with planning support and guidance, studio space, production staff, lighting and sound design and encouragement for creative risk taking. Artists are invited to apply either as an individual or as a collaborative group.

Freshworks artists are provided a \$1,000 honorarium and \$1,500 resource budget during the residency. This is to help offset the costs of creating new work. Each residency will take place over a two-month period. During these two months, **artists will develop a 30-minute live showing that is a first draft of an original artistic project.** The first month is intended for planning; this includes what form the project will take, securing collaborators, and brainstorming design. During this time, artists will meet weekly with KST Programming and Production Staff to chart out production and scheduling needs as well as utilize their outside perspectives. The intention is that KST Staff is present to pose questions that can help the artist think through various aspects of ideas.

The second month is focused on in-studio rehearsal and creation of a 30-minute draft of their project. Weekly meetings with KST Staff continue and shift focus towards actualizing production needs. The goal of the residency is for the artist to experiment and explore early iterations of ideas and share a draft of these concepts in front of an audience. At the end of the process, they will have valuable insight into further developing their project.
