

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

### Kelly Strayhorn Theater Presents: Dwayne Fulton with Anita Levels

*R.E.S.P.E.C.T. An Aretha Franklin Tribute Concert*

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**EAST LIBERTY, PA — Kelly Strayhorn Theater** brings together multi-faceted performer **Dwayne Fulton** and iconic vocalist **Anita Levels** for ***R.E.S.P.E.C.T., An Aretha Franklin Tribute Concert*** on Saturday, February 11th at 8:00pm. One year ago, Fulton and his team of Pittsburgh musicians rocked the foundations of KST and heated up the Valentine's Day weekend with their Prince tribute, *When Doves Cry*. This year, the performance will honor the Queen of Soul, Presidential Medal of Freedom honoree, and the first woman to be entered into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame: Aretha Franklin.

Franklin's name is synonymous with virtuosity, vocal power, and musical genius. The artist, who was born in Memphis, Tennessee in 1942 and died in Detroit in 2018, began her prodigious musical career as a child singing in her Father's Baptist Ministry. By the time of her passing, Franklin had amassed 112 charted singles on the US *Billboard* charts and 18 Grammy awards out of a staggering 44 nominations. Audience members of *R.E.S.P.E.C.T., An Aretha Franklin Tribute Concert* can expect to hear many of **Franklin's most well-known hits**, including *Think*, *Chain of Fools*, *Son of a Preacher Man*, *I Say A Little Prayer For You*, *Natural Woman*, *Rock Steady*, and of course, *R.E.S.P.E.C.T.*

**Dwayne Fulton** is a native of Pittsburgh with a Bachelor's degree in Sociology from the University of Pittsburgh and three decades of musical and theatrical performances under his belt. He has composed multiple operas, accompanied greats such as Sean Jones, and has won numerous awards for his work. Like Franklin, Fulton's musical career is informed by the Gospel tradition and underpinned by acts of service to his community — from counseling troubled youth and families to working with academic

institutions such as The University of Pittsburgh and St. Vincent College. Fulton mentors young musicians, songwriters, and actors in the Pittsburgh area. Notably, since 2002 Fulton has served as the Minister of Music/Director of Fine Arts at **Mount Ararat Baptist Church**, the largest church in the Pittsburgh area and western Pennsylvania serving over 8,000 members. To quote Fulton, "The world is longing for music and creative arts that speaks to the total man; body, soul, and spirit."

*R.E.S.P.E.C.T. An Aretha Franklin Tribute Concert* brings together some of Pittsburgh's finest musicians. The ten-piece ensemble includes featured vocalist **Anita Levels**, whose vocal renown is well-known in Pittsburgh and beyond. The group also features keyboardist **Chuck Anderson**, guitarist **Gary Howard**, bassist **John Hall**, saxophonist **Lou Harris**, and drummer **Alex Hines**, along with supporting vocalists **Krystyn Kirkland**, **Keesha Sheffey**, and **Timothy Woodruff**.

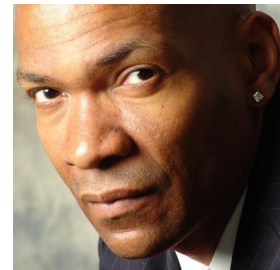
Prior to the concert, be sure to come by the KST lobby beginning at 6:00pm for the opening of the newest exhibition in the BOOM Gallery, ***Neighbor to Neighbor***. Curated by **DS Kinsel**, the show features the work of **Takara Canty**, **Sophia Fang**, **Atiya Jones**, **Maggie Negrete**, **Jameelah Platt**, and **Danielle Robinson**, have created a beautiful community landscape by bringing together works that visualize ideas around active neighboring. The works are inspired by the KST space, the institution, the building, the neighborhood, the city of Pittsburgh, and the neighbors all around us. Bringing together a diverse range of visual strategies, *Neighbor to Neighbor* includes text, collage, portrait, dynamic pattern, and abstract mapping styles.

Join KST and the artists on a rock-and-roll journey down the road of Aretha Franklin's greatest hits on Saturday, February 11 at 8:00PM at Kelly Strayhorn Theater, 5941 Penn Ave. Tickets are Pay What Moves You, \$25 - \$40. For full season details, KST COVID policy updates, and tickets, go to [kelly-strayhorn.org](http://kelly-strayhorn.org).

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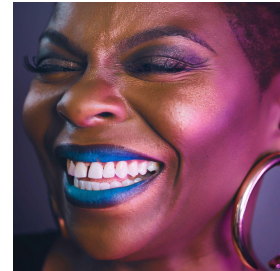
## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

With over 30 years of Theatre and Musical Performance, **Dwayne Fulton** fully understands the power and influence of music and the arts. He is the founder and Chief Executive of **Kingdom People Productions**, inc. ('99) and **The SouLyfe Cafe** ('03). Dwayne Fulton is a native of Pittsburgh with a Bachelors degree in Sociology from the University of Pittsburgh. Notably, since 2002 Fulton has served as the Minister of Music/Director of Fine Arts at **Mount Ararat Baptist Church**. Dwayne is an accomplished pianist whose musical career spans decades. Fulton has had the honor of accompanying such great musicians as **Grover Washington, Jr.**, **Roger Humphries**, **Sean Jones**, and **Nathan Davis**. He has shared the stage greats such as: **Keith Sweat**, **Guy**, **Fred Hammond**, **Bobby Jones**, **Kirk Franklin**, **The Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra** and **Michael Buble**. In 2011, he was hired as the Musical Director for the **Opera Gospel at Colonus** with the **Opera Theatre of Pittsburgh**; and in 2012 he composed his first opera short for the **Opera Theatre of Pittsburgh's** Summer Festival, *Bridal Suite*. In 2013, he composed his second opera short *The Mayoral Suite* also for the Opera Theatre of Pittsburgh. In 2017, Fulton composed his first full length Opera with the **Pittsburgh Festival Opera Theatre**, *A Gathering of Sons*. This production was met with such success that it was filmed and shown nationally on PBS four times in 2018. This production also won a Bronze medal in the 2019 New York Festivals and International TV & Film Awards presented at the NAB show in Las Vegas, NV. In December of 2018, Dwayne composed his second full length Opera with the **Trilogy Opera Company of Newark, NJ**. Titled *Scott, Garner, Gray, says Jimmy Baldwin*, the opera was performed to a full house at the



beautiful NJPAC Theatre in New Jersey. Fulton recently completed composing scene and background music for a production in Pittsburgh called Savior Samuel with the Pittsburgh Playwright Company.

**Anita Levels (vocalist)** is a vocal artist, voice influencer, songwriter and producer who began singing at the age of 3 years old in Frankfurt, West Germany. Texas-born, being a preacher's kid, and a member of a musical family from New Orleans, Louisiana, U.S.A, singing and performance are in her blood. Anita's powerhouse, soulful, but lark-like vocals have graced national and international audiences. She has performed in London, England, has toured the country of Holland with world renowned ethnomusicologist, **Dr.**



**Portia Maultsby**, was featured in the NFL's Super Bowl 50 commemorative commercial, has appeared in the **Pittsburgh International Jazz Festival**, and has performed in many, many other private, public and virtual events. Ms. Levels has a plethora of original music on all streaming music platforms and enjoys sharing the history and influence of Black American music on world and American culture. Anita Levels, MS, has a Masters Degree in Training and Development from Carlow University (Pittsburgh, PA, USA) and believes that instrumentation and the voice have the innate ability to vibrate truth, healing and thought. Anita's more recent venture is, ***Corn and Potatoes Are Good For You***, a podcast exploring the soul's journey through all things spiritual and sensual. She will always be the Mother of two magical daughters, put clorox in her water, powder her sheets, season her vittles, sing, laugh and cultivate spaces for communication and thought.

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## 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.**

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