

KST PRESENTS

MUSIC | PERFORMANCE

SUNSTAR FESTIVAL: WOMEN & MUSIC

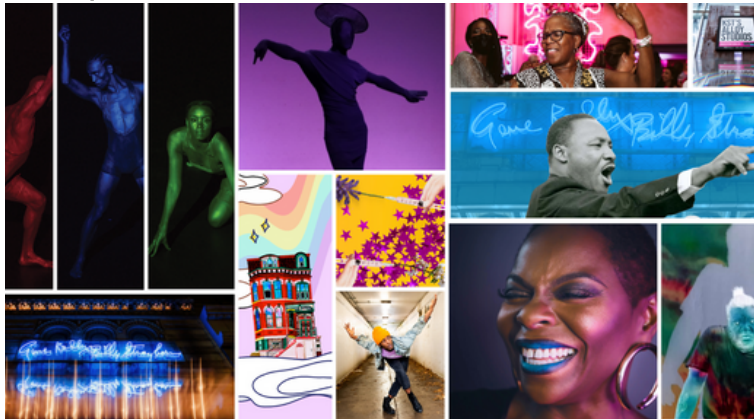
WITH DJ FEMI, DIARRA IMANI, TOSHI REAGON,
LOLA COLE, & CASAUNDRA

Curated in Partnership with the SCALE Fellowship Program

SATURDAY, MARCH 18
8:00PM

KST PRESENTS
WINTER | SPRING 23

THE SOUL OF EAST LIBERTY



*What you want.
Baby, I got
What you need.
Do you know I got it?
All I'm askin'
Is for a little respect when you come home.*

– Aretha Franklin

The Winter/Spring 2023 KST Presents season continues to be a home for celebrating the **Soul of East Liberty**. Guided by our recently released strategic direction, “**Owning Our Future. Thriving Where We Live.**” KST is welcoming the new year with bold programming and renewed vision. We are determined to own our future and remain a home where artists and Pittsburgh residents of all backgrounds can thrive.

This Winter/Spring season, KST mutual Aid resident **PearlArts** is looking forward to bringing **CIRCLES: going in**, a work debuted with KST at the August Wilson African American Cultural Center, Pittsburgh, on tour to The Dance Center at Columbia College Chicago on February 23. At home at KST's Alloy Studios, PearlArts brings a full class season, with **Open Company Dance Classes** on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings. For experienced dancers, 20-weeks of **Adult Dance Clubs** will begin on January 18 and run through the end of May. PearlArts hosts two **Synchronized with Soy Sos** events, February 25 and April 28. **PearlWatch/charrette** is back on March 24, showcasing new and unseen dance-for-camera and live choreography in different stages of development. Finally, on May 12, PearlArts shares an evening of multi-disciplinary and collaborative explorations with **INTERIM: Props Prompts Play**.

KST begins the Winter/Spring Season with two staples of **Youth & Family Programming**: On January 16, **The Audacity to Believe**, an **MLK day Celebration** reflects joyfully on the legacy of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Then, **The Alloy School** Open House kicks off February 4 with a free survey of KST's weekly dance classes, followed by an eight week class session and celebratory Let's Move! Family Dance Party!

Our **Community Partnerships** include a workshop from writers **Dorothy R. Santos & Adrian Jones** with The **Frank-Ratchye STUDIO for Creative Inquiry**. Boundary-pushing new **Freshworks** performances will come to KST's Alloy Studios in April and May. Choreographer **Nick M. Daniels** presents the globally-inspired *Nonsensical search for truth and understanding*, while **B Kleymeyer** uplifts Pittsburgh's trans community and celebrates every part of transition with *i'm not done with this body (and i never will be)*.

Our **Local & Global Performance** offerings include contemporary works of music, dance, and theater—something for everyone! **Dwayne Fulton** returns to KST on February 11 with **R.E.S.P.E.C.T. An Aretha Franklin Tribute Concert**, featuring **Anita Levels**. Carrying on this musical momentum, on March 18 KST presents the annual **Sunstar Festival: Women & Music**, this year co-curated by the **SCALE Fellowship Program**.

From April 12-15, KST welcomes choreographer and 2020 Guggenheim fellow **Shamel Pitts** back to Pittsburgh with a Welcome Dinner and Artist Talk, Gaga Dance Workshop, and the Pittsburgh premiere of **BLACK HOLE: Trilogy And Triathlon**, an evening-length multi-media performance work that is a journey in movement through an evocative soundscape. Our Local & Global Performance program closes with **Or Forever Hold Your Peace**, a performance from Pittsburgh's **Big Storm** with big dance numbers and even bigger laughs.

Finally, throughout this season, visit the KST lobby for a new visual art exhibition for the **BOOM Gallery: Neighbor to Neighbor**, featuring **Takara Canty, Sophia Fang, atiya jones, Maggie Negrete, Jameelah Platt, and Danielle Robinson**, which will run from February 11 through May 27.

JOSEPH HALL
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



TO SEE MORE OF THE FALL SEASON, VISIT
[KELLY-STRAYHORN.ORG/THE-SOUL-OF-EAST-LIBERTY-WINTERSPRING-2023/](https://kelly-strayhorn.org/the-soul-of-east-liberty-winterspring-2023/)

ABOUT KELLY STRAYHORN THEATER

Kelly Strayhorn Theater is a non-profit community performing arts center in East Liberty, with two venues running along historic 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 its founding, KST is a home for creative experimentation, community dialogue, and collective action rooted in the liberation of Black and queer people.

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SUNSTAR FESTIVAL: WOMEN & MUSIC

**WITH DJ FEMI, DIARRA IMANI, TOSHI REAGON,
LOLA COLE, & CASAUNDR**

Curated in Partnership with the SCALE Fellowship Program

ABOUT THE SHOW

Kelly Strayhorn Theater and **The SCALE Fellowship Program** (a project of the **Equity | Impact Center**) are thrilled to present the 2023 **Sunstar Festival: Women & Music**. On March 18, 2023 at 8:00pm, KST will host performances from **Toshi Reagon, Lola Cole, DJ FEMI**, and **Casaundra** with host **Diarra Imani**. The women represent a broad spectrum of musical genres and influences, illustrating the multivalent talent of Black Women in the local scene and beyond.

Since its 2009 inception, KST's annual **Sunstar Festival: Women & Music** has celebrated the power and creativity of Black women by creating a platform for local performers to share the stage with national acts in a neighborhood theater setting. Past programs have featured Grammy Award-winning group the **Carolina Chocolate Drops**, author **Rebecca Walker**, New York composer **Samita Sinha**, visual/spoken word artist **Vanessa German**, Pittsburgh artists and leaders: **Tania Grubbs, Staycee Pearl, Anqwenique Wingfield, Girls Running Sh**, INEZ, Clara Kent, Brittney Chantele, Chandra Rhyme, Geña y Peña, Dejah Monea, Najj Andrea, ICY PISCES, Nairobi, Chantal Braziel, Candace Burgess, Jenifer Rose Weber**, and many more.

CREDITS

Toshi Reagon, Lola Cole, Casaundra, DJ FEMI, Diarra Imani,
Featured Artists

Leigh Solomon Pugliano, David Pugliano, Curators

Michael Bernabe, Keyboard, Lola Cole

Charles Anderson, Bass, Lola Cole

James Johnson III, Drums, Lola Cole

Josh Wulff, Guitar, Lola Cole

Monte Reid, Keys, Casaundra

Maurice Robinson, Drums, Casaundra

Mani Stokes, Guitar, Casaundra

Daniel Rouse, Bass, Casaundra

Mia Marshall, Hair

Dominique Sheffey, Makeup

Ayesha Scott, Scenic

Joseph Amodei, Projection Design

Sasha Schwartz, Camera

Matt Washil, Lighting Design

INEZ Walker, A1

Michele Betts, Stage Manager

Kari Womack, Deck

Tina Delmonte, Other

Jon Hartwell, Camera 1

Parker Stephens, Camera 2

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Toshi Reagon has been described as “a talented, versatile singer, songwriter and musician with a profound ear for sonic Americana—from folk to funk, from blues to rock” by critic/blogger Eva Yaa Asantewaa (InfiniteBody). “She masters each of these genres with vocal strategies that easily spiral and swoop from the expressively sinuous to the hard-charging, a combination of warmth and mischief.”



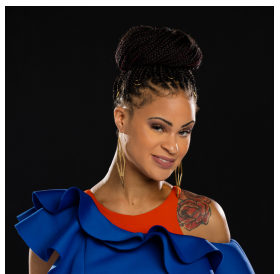
While her expansive career has landed her comfortably in residence at **Carnegie Hall**, the **Paris Opera House** and **Madison Square Garden**, you can just as easily find Toshi turning out a music festival, intimate venue or local club. Toshi finds home on any musical stage. Toshi has had the pleasure of working with Lenny Kravitz, Lizz Wright, Ani DiFranco, Carl Hancock Rux, Nona Hendryx, Pete Seeger, Chocolate Genius and many other amazing artists, including her favorite collaborator, her mom, Bernice Johnson Reagon. Yaa Asantewaa writes, “Toshi knows the power of song to focus, unite and mobilize people. If you’ve been lucky enough to be in Toshi’s presence, you know you can’t walk away from her without feeling better about yourself as a human being. She aims for nothing less.” Toshi has been the recipient of a NYFA award for Music Composition, The Black Lily Music and Film Festival Award for Outstanding Performance. She is a **National Women’s History Month Honoree**, and is the **2010 recipient of OutMusic’s Heritage Award**.

Lola Cole is based in Studio City, CA, and combines her Mississippi Blues roots with her Native Atlanta Soul to give voice to God and Freedom. She has been considered a hybrid artist; singing and writing with a conscious/activist mindset from a spiritual viewpoint. Lola recently captivated audiences at **Atlanta Dogwood Festival**, **Atlanta Pride Festival**, **SXSW 2016 for the ChooseATL Takeover** and



returned to the stage at **SXSW 2018**. From sharing stages with artists like Prisca, LeCrae, Khari Simmons, The Shadowboxers, Cleveland P. Jones, All Cows Eat Grass, and more, Lola's fierce, hymnal, yet sultry sound is sure to mesmerize. With a deep appreciation for jazz and the history of music culture, Lola calls her sound cultural art. It is a blend of her indigenous, black, southern, music roots. Lola explains to SCALE, "My goal is to expand the joy, education, appreciation, and pride for our ancestors and the freedom we gained because of their sacrifices. Of course, I'm human, so there will be projects simply about life. I wish to have film, television, and sports placements, cultural impact while building my brand to be one of the most influential in the cross culture of Afro-Indigenous people."

Casaundra is a singer, songwriter and composer from Pittsburgh, PA. She attended high school at the Pittsburgh Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA) magnet school, where she currently works. She continued her musical studies at **HBCU Norfolk State University**, focusing on Music Media with an emphasis on Vocal Performance. Casaundra likes to call her music **"Motivational Music"** as it is very



describes her sound as in the realm of R&B/Soul. She believes this style is relatable and speaks to issues of self-care, awareness and healing. Casaundra has performed at the Oaks Theater with the likes of Etta Cox for "Ladies of Jazz" in 2018. She has also shared the stage with phenomenal Pittsburgh singers, Anita Levels (2023 SCALE Fellow) and Tereasa Hawthorne, for the "Pittsburgh's Divine Divas" event. Casaundra currently has two albums out, **"What Kind of Love"** (2010) and **"Love Lessons"** (2015). Her short-term goals include putting out singles and curating music-related events for Pittsburgh's immediate neighborhoods and surrounding communities.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

DJ FEMI was born and raised on the East Side of Pittsburgh, but has lived in just about every neighborhood in the city. Femi's DJ career started 9 years ago when she attended CAPA, a local performing arts school. One of FEMI's goals as a DJ has always been to represent for all of the women in the music/entertainment industry as well as women worldwide. She always strives to be a beacon of light in the night life and a prime example that women can be great DJs, business women, and entrepreneurs too. In recent years, FEMI has been set up with some amazing opportunities, like performing with the legendary **Sheila E.** at Stage AE and opening up for **Pierre Bourne** at The Roxian Theatre. Some of her favorite moments also include, but aren't limited to, djing for Chandra Rhyme (2021 SCALE Fellow) at Stage AE for the big scale showcase, in Las Vegas for the Mayweather vs. McGregor fight and some private events in Washington, D.C. where she opened up for Shoreline Mafia, UNIIQU3, Rico Nasty and Dai Burger, as well as many more artists.



Diarra Imani is a Pittsburgh-based artist that is dedicated to truth-telling in her work. Whether it be a song, poetry, or painting, Diarra's work is centered around her story of becoming and the truths of the journey. Diarra finds that a lot of music and entertainment centers on a false life. She believes her role as an artist is to tell the truth to her listeners, to her comrades, and to the folks who are



witnessing her without her knowing. Diarra's artistry is multidimensional. She uses paint to illuminate a vision, poetry to evoke feeling, and song to reflect and create moments in time. Diarra realized how much she loved bringing music to people in masses around 15 years old, when she played Solomon Steel Pans during the Christmas parade of 2012 for the **Urban Pathways Steelpan band**. Diarra has since been granted travel to Ghana with the Teaching Artist Institute and performed during the **Ghana Music Awards**.

Leigh Solomon Pugliano is an entrepreneur, educator, and experienced strategist who has helped to scale established businesses, creative small businesses, entrepreneurs, and nonprofit organizations. Leigh provides organizational development support through consulting, strategic planning, and the development and implementation of initiatives specifically

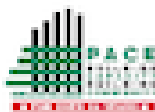


designed for organizations to increase their impact and move toward sustainability. For over a decade, Leigh served as **Principal Consultant at Straightforward Consulting, a firm she founded in 2011**. Leigh is also the **Founder and Director of Barrels to Beethoven**, and **Co-Founder of Limelight Creative**. Leigh has received several awards and recognition for her work, including Pittsburgh Courier Fab 40, Women in Business, The World Affairs Council Illuminate Award, and the YWCA Equity Award for Bridge Builder. In her newest role as **CEO of the Equity | Impact Center**, Leigh intends to advance the work of social justice organizations and drive equitable systems change throughout the U.S. with a specific focus on the Pittsburgh region. Leigh is originally from Guyana, South America, and currently lives in Pittsburgh, PA with her husband and three daughters.

THANK YOU!

We thank the generous individual donors, corporate sponsors, foundations and agencies that provide vital support for our programs and allow us to thrive in our community. This list reflects donations and commitments made between September 1, 2020 and August 31, 2021.

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