

KST PRESENTS

BENEFIT | MUSIC | PARTY

SUITE LIFE

**A CELEBRATION OF BILLY STRAYHORN
& GENE KELLY**

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 25

7:30PM



KST PRESENTS
FALL 2023

BRAVE ACTIONS BOLD VOICES

The function of art is to do more than tell it like it is – it's to imagine what is possible.

– bell hooks

The KST Presents Fall 2023 season is about celebrating the brave actions and bold voices of the artists, audiences, and communities who call KST home. The season features new offerings from Mutual Aid Residents **Dreams of Hope** and **PearlArts**, a visual art exhibition in the **BOOM Gallery**, two **Freshworks** Performances in Progress, and premieres of **Local and Global Performances** from longtime Pittsburgh favorites and returning faces.

Our **Mutual Aid Residencies** continue to support Dreams of Hope and PearlArts with administrative facilities and space for ongoing classes and events. This fall, Dreams of Hope hosts the **theatriQ** educational workshop series, offering queer creatives ages 13 – 26 a space to learn, discuss, and connect through a plethora of topics pertaining to theater and the performing arts. PearlArts brings together **Soy Sos** and **Ali Berger**, and later Soy Sos, **James Johnson III**, and **Erik Lawrence** for two editions of the music and dance staple, **Synchronized with Soy Sos**. Later in the season, a dance-focused **PearlPRESENTS** will feature SPdp&SS founder **Staycee Pearl** alongside choreographers **Raphael Xavier** and **Chitra Subramanian**.

Curated by **DS Kinsel**, the BOOM Gallery, located in KST's historic 1914 lobby, presents **Eternal Maternal**. Featuring artworks from interdisciplinary artists **Fran Flaherty** and **Meg Foley**, the exhibition centers motherhood both as an active pursuit and a fundamental state of existence, irrespective of and subject to gender. Visit the gallery before performances from the opening on Monday, September 18 and Sunday, December 17 to experience the artists' unique interpretations of the sacred practice.

Our Fall 2023 **Freshworks** Residencies support exciting new performance works in process. On October 6 and 7, **Pria Dahiya** shares a "play-adjacent performance work" **You and Me and The End of the World** that touches on loneliness and coming of age through a pandemic. On December 1 and 2, **Andraya Rand-Mathis** presents dance, music, and drag in **Diving Within**, part of a healing process from grief, heartbreak, and childhood trauma.

KST's **Youth and Family** programs feature a revamped Halloween celebration. Bring the whole crew to join us for **Pumpkin Palooza**, An East Liberty Halloween Adventure! There will be tricks, treats, performances, and crafts from community partners. Tune in August 10 for our complete Fall 2023 offerings from **The Alloy School**.

The KST Presents **Local and Global Performance** series welcomes **Blood Baby** from Detroit/Philadelphia-based artist **Meg Foley**, featuring four works from the series (Primordial, Queer Parent Convening, Communion, and Touch Library). Foley shares the performance Communion on Friday and Saturday, September 22 – 23. Don't miss the Welcome Dinner & Artist Talk on September 18, where Foley will be in conversation with **Fran Flarety**; **The Embodied Imaginary**, a workshop with Foley on September 20; and a **Queer Parent Convening** later that evening. On December 8 and 9, Pittsburgh's own superduo **slowdanger** takes to the KST mainstage with **SUPERCELL**, a new work addressing climate change and media sensitization. Join artists **anna thompson** and **taylor knight** for a Welcome Dinner & Artist Talk on December 4, and their workshop **Demystifying the Box** on December 6.

Finally, the Fall season wouldn't be complete without **Suite Life**, our annual celebration of KST namesakes **Billy Strayhorn** and **Gene Kelly**! Join us on Saturday, November 25 for a VIP reception and eclectic performance celebrating these Pittsburgh legends and artistic champions.

There is so much to be explored in the voices and actions of artists across the KST Presents programs. We hope you will add **your bravery and boldness** to the mix by coming out to share in the work!

Joseph D. Hall

JOSEPH HALL
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



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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SUITE LIFE

A CELEBRATION OF BILLY STRAYHORN & GENE KELLY

ABOUT THE SHOW

Billy Strayhorn (1915-1967), a Homewood native, pianist, and composer, began studying classical music at Pittsburgh Music Institute. By age 19, he was writing music professionally, but faced opposition because of his race. He continued to work, and eventually met Duke Ellington in 1938. The two worked together for the next 25 years. Strayhorn's most well-known tunes include "**Take The A Train**" and "**Lush Life.**"

Gene Kelly (1912-1996), an East Liberty native, rose to fame after working in his family's dance studios in Squirrel Hill and Johnstown. After choreographing "**Hold Your Hats**" at the Pittsburgh Playhouse in 1938, Kelly landed his first Broadway assignment, and his career skyrocketed. His most notable work to date is "**Singin' In The Rain,**" (1952).

Beginning as the **Regent Theatre** in 1914, the building **KST** occupies was a movie house for most of its existence. However, in 2001, the theater underwent a name change and took on a powerful new identity. The neon sign that lights up Penn Avenue is designed after Kelly and Strayhorn's actual signatures!

"As young artists, Kelly and Strayhorn likely visited the Regent Theatre, taking in films that would later impact the trajectory of their careers. Celebrating these two Pittsburgh legends inside of the oldest nickelodeon in our city is an absolute treat. We are delighted to honor the legacies of Kelly and Strayhorn, together, with Suite Life."

— Joseph Hall, Executive Director

CREDITS

Dr. Alton Merrell, Musical Direction & Piano

Joshua Banbury, Featuring Vocalist

kelsey jumper, Dancers / Vocalists

Treasure Treasure, Dancers / Vocalists

Dwayne Dolphin, Bass

Colter Harper, Guitar

James Johnson III, Drums

Scott Andrew, Media Design

Madeleine Steineck, Lighting Design

Stephen Graham, Audio Lead & PA Mix

Broughton Ganaway, Audio Assist & Monitor Mix

Michele Betts, Stage Manager

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Dr. Alton Merrell (musical director, piano) is a world-class pianist, Hammond B-3 organist, composer, author and educator. He has performed and taught throughout the United States, Europe, Asia and parts of the Caribbean. Merrell's musical artistry is a unique blend of lyrical melodies, rich harmonies, and fluid technique that spans multiple music genres including jazz, gospel, classical, pop, and rhythm and blues.

Merrell's musical interpretations take listeners on spirit-filled excursions that deeply touch the soul. Currently the Professor of Jazz Piano at West Virginia University, Merrell has taught students all over the world and continues to train musicians worldwide through his online school Minstrel School of Music.

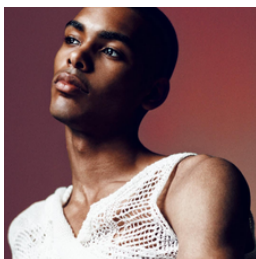


Scott Andrew (media artist) is a queer multimedia video, installation, performance artist, media designer, educator, and curator. His works have been exhibited at Ballroom Marfa (Marfa, TX), The Hammer Museum (LA), The J. Paul Getty Museum (LA), Whitechapel (London, UK), among others. Media Design and VFX projects include 'Show Queen', a collaboration with Jesse Factor, 'Suite Life' and 'House Party' (KST), and the documentary 'Workhorse Queen' by Angela Washko. Scott is a Visiting Lecturer in Studio Arts at the University of Pittsburgh, an Adjunct Professor in the School of Art at Carnegie Mellon University, and co-curates TQ Live! (CMoA).



Joshua Banbury (vocalist) is a classically trained jazz singer and opera librettist with Texas roots. At twenty-eight, his collaborations include solo performances with many of the most respected musical organizations in the country, including The Apollo Theatre, The Phillips Collection, The New York Philharmonic, Jazz at Lincoln Center, Jazz at The Ballroom, National Sawdust, and The National Black Theatre.

In 2022, Joshua also served as Librettist in Residence with the American Lyric Theatre, considered to be one of the country's premier mentorship initiatives for promising operatic writers. His work has been commissioned and presented by The Kennedy Center, Los Angeles Opera, Washington National Opera, and Fort Worth Opera. Joshua is a graduate of The New School and The Austin School for Performing and Visual Arts.



Dwayne Dolphin (bass) is a Pittsburgh-born bassist, bandleader, and educator who has been an essential member of the jazz scene and a major artistic force for many years. He is a world-class acoustic and electric bassist, and in the late 1990s Dwayne began playing the electric piccolo bass. His piccolo band played strictly in an R&B funk setting for years, and now Off Minor features Dwayne playing his electric piccolo bass in a straight ahead, acoustic jazz setting. Something he's never done before! Repertoire includes music from the jazz and American songbook catalog, and a few surprises.



ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Colter Harper (guitar) is a guitarist and ethnomusicologist whose creative and scholarly work explores jazz, American nightlife, and the music of West Africa. Harper served as a Fulbright Scholar in the University of Ghana from 2018 to 2020 and has performed as a guitarist, including with the rock band Rusted Root. His forthcoming book *Jazz in the Hill: Nightlife and Narratives of a Pittsburgh Neighborhood* (University Press of Mississippi, 2024) delves into the intersections of jazz, entrepreneurialism, placemaking, labor organizing, and critical listening in Pittsburgh's Hill District from 1920 to 1970.



James Johnson III (drums) adapts comfortably to various genres, excelling in Jazz. He began his musical journey playing drums at five years old. His father, Dr. James Johnson Jr., a nationally known pianist and educator sparked his passion for music. Prior to his worldwide career, he attended Pittsburgh's High School for the Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA), where he was mentored by jazz great Roger Humphries. This laid the foundation for a stellar career that has included performing as a regular member with legendary jazz pianist Ahmad Jamal. His musical adventures have led him to play in prestigious venues and with respected artists worldwide.



kelsey jumper (vocalist, dancer) is a Brooklyn-born, rustbelt-reared performance artist. She's joined celebrated PGH theater companies including The Public, Quantum, Pittsburgh CLO and Carnegie Mellon Drama in musical storytelling, as well as local bands Afro Yaqui Music Collective, Bindley Hardware Co. and Ames Harding & the Mirage. She's been honored to perform at favorite local venues as well as internationally acclaimed stages including Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, The Kennedy Center, The Studio Museum of Harlem, MoMA and The Shed. Her duo with Treasure Treasure, The Cookie Table, is currently in residency at The Children's Museum of Pittsburgh and is honored to return for another year of Suite Life.



Treasure Treasure (vocalist, dancer) (she/her) is a performing artist, comic, composer, and multi-instrumentalist. She recently starred as the title role in *Hamlet* with Quantum Theatre. Other appearances: Broadway, Lincoln Center, The Kennedy Center, Carnegie Museum of Art, Atlantic Theater Company, PCLO, PICT, Hangar Theater, Children's Museum of Pittsburgh, Squonk Opera. Treasure's original score for *The Tempest* made its premiere with Southwest Shakespeare Company and her debut EP, *Hypnerotomachia*, is available on all platforms.



Madeleine Steineck (lighting designer) has been working as a lighting designer and master electrician in western Pennsylvania since 2011. Companies she has designed for include: Mercyhurst University's MIAC and Theatre Programs, MCG Jazz, Pittsburgh Festival Opera, off the WALL Productions, the New Hazlett's CSA Program, Texture Contemporary Ballet, fireWALL dance theatre, Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre Company, and various local schools. She also works as a stagehand for IATSE Local 3. Her design for PPTCO's production of *Miss Julie*, *Clarissa*, and *John* was seen at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2017. She has also toured with Philadelphia artist and choreographer, Raphael Xavier.



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