

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Pittsburgh Duo slowdanger Responds to Climate Crisis and Sensationalism with Performance *SUPERCELL*

MEDIA CONTACT

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EAST LIBERTY, PA — Kelly Strayhorn Theater is thrilled to present Pittsburgh-based performance duo **slowdanger** and their new work ***SUPERCELL***, with an exciting week-long program during the first week of December.

At KST's Alloy Studios, on **Monday, December 4 at 6:00pm**, artists **anna thompson** and **taylor knight** of slowdanger share their artistic ideas and creation process with audiences at our informal **Welcome Dinner & Artists Talk**, kicking off the week. Following the talk, on **Wednesday, December 6 from 9:00am to 10:15am**, slowdanger offers a **75-minute workshop *De-Mystifying the Box*** co-presented with PearlArts, engaging participants to sense deeper into the micro-ecosystems of our bodies.

The week reaches its crescendo **at Kelly Strayhorn Theater on Friday and Saturday, December 8 and 9** with the **Pittsburgh premiere** of the evening-length quintet performance ***SUPERCELL*** at **7:30pm**. Kelly Strayhorn Theater co-commissioned this performance as a National Performance Network (NPN) Creation & Development Fund Project in collaboration with The Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center (College Park, MD) and NPN (New Orleans, LA). ***SUPERCELL*** was developed with support from the prestigious National Dance Project, a program of the New England Foundation for the Arts, and additionally supported by residencies at

the National Choreographic Center (Akron, OH), The Space Upstairs (Pittsburgh, PA) and New York University's Tisch School of the Arts Department of Dance (New York, NY) .

The work draws inspiration from the awe-inspiring yet ominous supercells—large storms with deep, persistent updrafts often leading to tornadoes.

The terrifying supercells are harbingers of substantial damage. This natural effect is also similar to sensationalist media, instantly amplifying catastrophic events for insatiable public consumption. *SUPERCELL* therefore **is informed by the natural effect, finding parallels and addressing environmental collapse and sensationalism in media.**

Through seamless integration of corporeal mime techniques, contemporary and improvisational dance frameworks, live vocalization, electronic and sample-based music, and interactive set design, *SUPERCELL* is a multidisciplinary adventure by nature. The synchronized and amplified breaths and vocalizations of the dancers serve as a motif, articulating the effects of toxic natural and media environments on our bodies.

“Throughout the creation process, we formed and consulted with advisory cohorts in Maryland and Pittsburgh, composed of scientists, climate activists, anthropologists, sustainable design experts, and a dramaturgical advisor,” said slowdanger.

The collaborative nature of the project allows for multiple truths to emerge in the reception and interpretation of *SUPERCELL*. Through a dinner conversation and a workshop with the general public, slowdanger opens the floor for diverse discussions and decentralizes the creative process.

SUPERCELL is the final event of KST's Fall 2023 Season. Information about the Winter/Spring Season will be released on Thursday, December 14 at kelly-strayhorn.org.

This presentation of *SUPERCELL* is supported by the National Performance Network Artist Engagement Fund, The New England Foundation for the Arts's National Dance Project and Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation's ArtsConnect programs. *SUPERCELL* is made possible by the New England Foundation for the Arts' National Dance Project, with lead funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the Mellon Foundation. *SUPERCELL* is a National Performance Network (NPN) Creation Fund Project co-commissioned by Kelly Strayhorn Theater, The Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center and NPN. *SUPERCELL* is also supported by the Opportunity Fund, The Pittsburgh Foundation and The Heinz Endowments, with additional residency support from NCCAkron, The Space Upstairs and New York University's Tisch School of the Arts Department of Dance.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

slowdanger, taylor knight (they/them) & **anna thompson** (they/them) are co-founding artistic directors of slowdanger, a multidisciplinary performance organism based in Pittsburgh, PA. slowdanger uses a systematic approach to movement, technology, found material, vocalization, and physiological centering to produce their performance work. Through the process of making each piece, slowdanger works with an ever deepening understanding of energy, synergy, action, gender, time, and storytelling. As a queer, non-binary led organization, slowdanger is committed to deconstructing the binaries of how performance and performers are viewed onstage.



Harbour Edney | Lighting Designer (they/he) is a freelance lighting designer and installation artist who is currently nested in the Philadelphia area. Recent designs include *Always the Hour* (Annie Wilson), *The Wild Party* (Eagle Theatre), *a hit dog will holler* (Azuka Theatre Company), *Chaat* (Usiloquy Dance Designs), *Papa* (The New Hazlett Theatre) and *Bruise & Thorn* (Pipeline Theatre Company). They have designed for other companies such as Obvious Agency, The Bearded Ladies Cabaret, The Pillow Projects, The Kelly-Strayhorn Theatre, Alumni Theater Company and INTAR NYC. Harbour has a special love for dance and is thrilled and grateful to be working on *SUPERCELL* with this team.

Nile Harris | Performer (he/him) is a performer and director of live works of art. He has done a few things and hopes to do a few more, God willing.

Jasmine Hearn | Dramaturgical Support, Collaborating Media Design, and Collaborating Sound Design (they/them) is an internationally-touring interdisciplinary artist, director, performer, choreographer, organizer, doula, and teacher. They are committed to performance as an expansive practice that includes a spectrum of dance and somatic traditions and techniques, sound design, garment design, cooking, and the archiving of matrilineal memories. They give gratitude to Spirit, their mothers and aunties, and all the mothering Black people who have supported their moving, remembering body.

AJ Libert | Performer (he/him), from Pittsburgh, PA, started his dance training at the age of three. He graduated from PBT's full time program, and then attended Point Park University where he received a BFA in Modern dance. AJ enjoys the complexities that movement exploration has to offer. Combining his love for the natural world with his love for movement drives AJ to continue to find deeper connections between the two, in hopes to merge both worlds seamlessly. AJ would like to thank his two beautiful mothers, without them he would not be where he is today.

ProjectileObjects | Scenic Designer and Technical Director (he/him) Cornelius Henke III is a multi-talented creative with a passion for video production and performance art. His work spans across various mediums, including music videos, motion graphics, live events, and interactive installations. Cornelius is an activist and partner at Merging Media, a boutique digital media production company based in Pittsburgh, PA. In 2021, ProjectileObjects formed an LLC that offers a range of services, including conceptual design, development, engineering, fabrication, and installations. With a wealth of experience and expertise, Cornelius continues to captivate audiences with his unique vision and exceptional talent.

Mad Recital is an avant-garde fashion label established in 2010. The designers involved in the label are Richard Ramirez (who started his own fashion label in 1997 prior) and Sean E. Ramirez-Matzus. Mad Recital focuses on deconstruction, repurposed garments, handmade techniques, alternative visions of beauty and unconventional designs. Drawing inspiration from nature, folk-lore, myths and legends, film and the arts as well as the history of avant-garde

fashion, Mad Recital aims to create wearable art. The end goal, pieces that delight, unsettle, inspire and provoke. Their work has been sold at boutiques in Japan and France.

kira shiina | Performer (they/she) is a dance and sound artist based on the unceded Lenape land known as Philadelphia, PA. kira shiina attended Pittsburgh Creative and Performing Arts, going on to receive their BFA in Dance from the University of the Arts. In 2019, they presented their first solo work, DID YOU / FALL APART in collaboration with painter Jameelah Platt. They were a founding company member of Mark Caserta's Big Kid Dance and are currently a creative associate of choreographer Tommie-Waheed Evans, and has been a company member of waheedworks since 2019. kira shiina is an Adjunct Assistant Professor of Dance at the UArts.

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 namesakes had for the arts. Today, KST carries their legacy 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.

KST 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 Friendship, and the historic **Kelly Strayhorn Theater** is located in the thriving business district of East Liberty. 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.

PC: Mariah Miranda, Anna Labick