



Kelly Strayhorn Theater  
5941 Penn Ave  
Pittsburgh, PA 15206

Offices + The Alloy Studios  
5530 Penn Ave  
Pittsburgh, PA 15206

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## Freshworks Fall 2026 & Winter/Spring 2027 Program Guidelines

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### Application Timeline

- **Monday, February 2, 2026:** Application Opens
- **Tuesday, February 17, 2026, 6:00pm - 7:00pm:** Information Session on Zoom & Facebook Live
- **Sunday, March 1, 2026, 11:59pm:** Early Submission Deadline for Feedback
  - Applicants who submit by the above deadline will get feedback on their application from KST Staff and will be able to edit/modify their application prior to the final submission deadline.
- **Friday, March 20, 2026, 11:59pm:** Feedback on Early Submissions Returned to Applicants
- **Sunday, April 5, 2026, 11:59pm:** Application Closes
- **Week of April 20, 2026:** Applicants Notified

Freshworks is KST's creative residency for emerging 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 emerging artists with planning support and guidance, studio space, production staff, lighting and sound design, a stipend and resource budget, and encouragement for creative risk taking. Artists are invited to apply either as an individual or as a collaborative group. Artists without extensive experience in new work development are highly encouraged to apply. This residency is dedicated to nurturing those who are just beginning to explore original work, providing a unique opportunity for experimentation and artistic growth.

**Each residency will take place over a two-month period.** During these two months, artists will develop a 30-minute showing that is a first draft of an original piece.

**The first month is intended for planning; this includes what form the piece will take, securing collaborators, and brainstorming design.** During this time, artists will meet weekly with KST Programming, Marketing, 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 their ideas. This is also when collaborators are secured and contracted, confirming how they will work together to realize the vision of the Freshworks artist.



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**The second month is focused on in-studio rehearsal and creation of a 30-minute draft of the work.** Weekly meetings with KST Staff continue and shift focus as needed towards actualizing production needs. The residency will culminate in a two-night in-person showing of the draft of the piece at KST's Alloy Studios. This includes post-show discussions with the audience after the showings for feedback.

**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.** By the end of the process, they'll gain valuable insights for advancing their work and managing the artistic direction of a production.

**An info session for Freshworks Fall 2026 & Winter/Spring 2027 with KST Programming Manager Sarah Gilmer will take place Tuesday, February 17, 2026 at 6:00pm on Zoom.** The session will also be broadcast to KST's Facebook and available for viewing after the initial broadcast. The info session will review the residency program details, talk attendees through the application process, and hold time for answering questions from prospective applicants.

**All applications will be reviewed by a panel of Pittsburgh-based artists** selected by KST's Programming team. After a thorough review and discussion, the highest scoring applications will be considered by KST Staff for residency selection.

### **Fall 2026 Residency Periods**

Residency Period 1: August & September 2026; Showing on October 2 & 3, 2026

Residency Period 2: September & October 2026; Showing on November 6 & 7, 2026

### **Winter/Spring 2027 Residency Periods**

Residency Period 3: January & February 2027; Showing on March 5 & 6, 2027

Residency Period 4: February & March 2027; Showing on April 2 & 3, 2027

### **Eligibility**

- Must be based in the Pittsburgh region
- Can not have had a Freshworks Residency within the Fall 2023 - Winter/Spring 2026 seasons



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Read on for...

- [Program Goals](#)
- [KST Responsibilities](#)
- [Artist Responsibilities](#)
- [Sample Application](#)
- [Available Residency Dates](#)
- [Panel Evaluation Criteria](#)
- [Sample Production Week Schedule](#)
- [Studio Details](#)



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## Program Goals

- To provide artists across diverse disciplines and experience levels access to financial and administrative resources to help develop their craft.
- To encourage artists to explore their ideas and work within the context of a community-minded performing arts center.
- To share a short draft of a new work followed by post-showing discussions with feedback from an audience.
- To engage and educate our audience about the creation process of new artistic work and to facilitate their feedback for the artist's development of the work.
- To create pathways for the presentation and touring of contemporary performance.
- To bring artists into a dynamic community of creative practitioners.

## KST Responsibilities

- KST will grant each chosen artist a two-month residency at KST's Alloy Studios.
- KST staff will meet with the lead artist on a weekly basis to plan their residency including their creation process, technical rehearsals, and showing.
- KST will make up to 80 hours of studio time available for the artist at KST's Alloy Studios in either the upstairs or downstairs studio during their two-month residency. *KST's Programming & Production Managers will work with artists to schedule this time.*
- KST will administratively support the artists in developing and promoting their 30-minute draft showing.
- KST's Programming Manager will moderate the post-showing discussions with the audience after each work-in-progress showing.

## Awarded Artists Receive

- A \$1,000 honorarium.
- A \$1,500 resource budget for project expenses.
  - Kelly Strayhorn Theater recognizes that the honorarium and resource budget will most likely not cover all of the artists' costs.
- Up to 80 hours of time in KST's Alloy Studios (in either the upstairs or downstairs studios).
- 15 hours of technical rehearsal with two crew members (Lighting & Sound/A.V.) during their presentation week outside of show calls.
- Photo and video documentation of one night of their two-night showing.
- 1 ticket to each of KST's season events within the year they are programmed as they are available (i.e. "Fall 2026 / Winter/Spring 2027")



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- A two-night showing of their work-in-progress production followed by a post-show discussion with the audience at KST's Alloy Studios as a part of the KST Presents season their project is awarded
- A feature in the seasonal KST Presents brochure with their approved project image and description
- A feature in a Kelly Strayhorn Theater press release for their Freshworks showing

### **Artist Responsibilities**

- Artists will be granted a two-month residency based on dates selected through their application and must complete their residency during their granted timeframe.
- Artists must participate in an in-person program orientation with the KST Programming team and other Freshworks artists in September 2026.
- Artists must sign a residency agreement committing to make full use of their allocated time and resources and participation in proposed residency activities.
- Artists are required to use at least 25 hours of the given studio time.
  - We encourage artists to spend at least 5-10 hours per week in the studio to access a deeper exploration of not only the work-in-progress, but the artist's practice.
- Artists must take initiative throughout the process to brainstorm, plan, and execute how they will use their time and resources during the residency.
  - The artist will be responsible for communicating these ideas to the KST Staff in a timely manner.
- At the end of their two month residency, each artist will present two showings of a 30-minute draft of the piece and participate in a post-showing discussion with the audience following each showing.

### **Freshworks Fall 2026 & Winter/Spring 2027: Sample Application**

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The application questions are in black text; examples and sample answers are included in the Narrative Questions in pink.

#### **Demographics**

Name (First & Last)

Zip Code

Email

Phone Number

Race



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Gender Identity

Pronouns

Sexual Orientation

Age

Do you identify as disabled? (It is not necessary to tell us how)

How long have you lived in Pittsburgh?

### **Artist Details**

1. What is your artistic discipline(s)? For example: theater, dance, visual art, music, etc.
2. Are you applying as an individual or part of a collaborative group?
3. If you are applying as a group, please list all members.
4. Please share your website and/or social media if it is relevant to your work (optional)
5. Upload Resume or CV (optional)

### **Availability**

*Please let us know when you are available for a residency in Fall 2026 or Winter/Spring 2027. The residency dates are fixed and cannot be changed. Please do not apply if you are not available for at least one of the below periods.*

*Each residency is two months (one planning month and one in-studio month) with the showing the first Friday and Saturday of the following month.*

### **Residency Periods**

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### **Narrative Questions**

Please answer the following questions in the fields provided below. **All questions in this section are required.** Each response has a word limit. Applicants are strongly encouraged to use the full word limit for each question to provide as much detail as possible about their project. Words that exceed the limit will be excluded from the application reviewers.

Your responses should provide detailed insight into your art you create, the goals you'd like to focus on during the residency, and the project you're proposing. Your answers will help our panelists get a better sense of who you are and the artistic ideas you are passionate about exploring.



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**If you prefer, you can submit your answers to narrative questions 1 - 4 and 6 in video or audio form (9 minutes max).**

If you prefer to submit your answers to these questions via audio or video, please record yourself answering questions 1 - 4 and 6 below and submit the answers. Video answers should be in a single video uploaded to YouTube or Vimeo and shared via link/URL; audio answers should be a single file uploaded in MP3 or WAV format.

If you choose to respond by video or audio, please write "Submitting Video/Audio" in each answer field below and then add your video or audio to the "Narrative Answers Audio/Video Upload" field at the end of the section.

- 1. Please provide an artist's bio. This should describe your artistic work and what you make work about, highlight some of your achievements, and share a little about yourself and background (200 words max).**

Consider this...

- What questions, issues, ideas are you passionate about exploring in your proposed project and overall artistic practice?
- What are some of your inspirations or influences?
- What are the key details about who you are and what makes you who you are that informs your focus with this project?

Jane Doe is a multi-disciplinary theater artist who creates immersive performance pieces. Her art examines the nuances of Black womanhood through movement and puppetry. Jane devises and choreographs work that combines her own experience as a global majority artist with the repurposing of items associated with the Black culture she grew up with in order to create physical representations of Black women's interior life.

Over the past several years, Jane has created short-form performances in Community Arts Space and has collaborated with local artists. Her latest piece, *Parallel Trains*, is about the tension Black women experience to fit into mainstream white society while holding onto their heritage. The piece takes place in a room split down the middle, each side with objects representing one aspect of this tension. Through puppetry of these objects, Jane voices her thoughts and questions surrounding what it means to be a Black woman in America.

Jane is a Pittsburgh Artists to Watch 2019 grant recipient and has presented her work at Tucson Fringe Festival and Philadelphia Fringe Festival. She is currently an assistant puppetry teacher at New Road School, where she works with high school students to help them tell their stories in creative ways.



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2. **Please tell us about the specific project you intend to work on during the residency. Keep in mind that Freshworks projects are intended to be drafts instead of fully realized versions of larger pieces. If you plan to work on a section of a larger/more realized project, please tell us the specific aspects you are choosing to work on during the residency and why (400 words max).**

Consider this...

- Where does the concept you're exploring come from?
- What would you say to someone to help them visualize your project? Even if this doesn't manifest completely as you describe, the more detail provided the better within spatial and production considerations of the downstairs studio at KST's Alloy Studios.
- How would your idea manifest within a 30-minute showing?
- Is the description of your project feasible within the scope of the \$1,500 budget?

During Freshworks I will begin work on a performance piece called "At the Stop," about experiences I've had and people I've met at bus stops around Pittsburgh. As someone who takes the bus at all hours from various parts of town, it has given me a look into the lives and routines of many Pittsburgh citizens. There are rich stories and encounters from the wildly hilarious to the tragic. During the pandemic, this became a way to glimpse how others were dealing with the unexpected shift in our lives, offering both connection and isolation.

"At the Stop" will be a performance of character vignettes with puppetry setting the backdrop for these experiences. As a woman of color, I've had different conversations and encounters depending on the location of the bus stop; some were welcome verbal exchanges, and others were non-verbal interactions meant to send negative messages. The piece will explore the ways I've moved through the city, experienced connection or distance with others, and how taking the bus is both fundamentally human and intensely spiritual.

I plan to experiment with how gesture, rhythm, and repetition reflect the ritual of waiting—checking the time, shifting weight, avoiding eye contact. I also want to explore how the bus stop can act as a stage for emotional landscapes surrounding the kinds of waiting we experience, such as dread or anticipation. I will test approaches to integrating puppetry to set the scene and tell the stories of three characters before arriving "at the stop."



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The stories of a caretaker, hospital worker, and bank teller will anchor the piece and reflect on how public spaces in our city can both connect and divide us. By focusing on ordinary encounters, “At the Stop” aims to highlight the humanity woven into daily life and spark conversation about how we show up for one another while we wait, even briefly, while navigating the social and economic pressures shaping our community. I hope people leave empowered to affect change wherever they wait.

This project represents my belief that the everyday spaces we overlook can hold profound meaning when we pause to notice them. The bus stop becomes a meeting point of stories, burdens, and hopes, reminding us that community is formed not only in planned gatherings but in fleeting, ordinary moments that reveal who we are becoming together in our shared city everyday.

**3. How is your project relevant to the world today and the current moment (200 words max)?**

Consider this...

- How does your project connect to your experiences?
- Why is this important to you?
- In what ways is your project relevant for our community and the world?
- How does what’s being explored in your project connect with [KST’s mission](#) to be a home rooted in the liberation of Black and queer people?

This project is relevant to the current moment because it examines the ways in which community members intersect and diverge in a time where it is harder to have perspective on the experiences of others. Due to the pandemic, the political climate, and other ongoing social and economic issues, people are broken into silos and tribes. It gets increasingly harder to find common experiences and to meditate honestly on the nature of our differences. Many people are navigating increased isolation, uncertainty, and pressure, yet we rarely acknowledge how those feelings travel with us into the places where we wait alongside others. “At the Stop” hopes to ground the audience in the humanity of the mundane everyday as a path to focusing on what can be done to build small connections and epiphanies amidst the overwhelming tide of global issues, and invites audiences to reflect on the emotional and social dynamics shaping Pittsburgh today.

**4. What are your short and long term artistic goals? How will the Freshworks residency help you reach these goals (250 words max)?**

Consider this...



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- What are you hoping to learn through the residency?
- How will you make use of the studio space during the residency?
- How does what you will learn connect with the project and your long term artistic goals?

My short term artistic goal is to have a defined weekly schedule for my art practice. Currently, I am working on my projects whenever I can grab time, which has made it difficult for me to consistently bring my ideas to life, as I lose track of creative threads. This lack of regularity also makes time management hard when it comes to grant deadlines. The weekly meetings with KST staff will be a great start to having a specific time each week to work on my craft, and the in-studio times that I can schedule as part of the residency will help me build blocks of time for art into my weekly schedule and help me learn what times of day work best for me.

My long term goal is to design and lead workshops before each of my performance projects. The workshops would be a way for the audience to engage with the themes, methods, and materials within the project; therefore, they would have deeper insight to the work and the process of making it. The in-studio time within the residency will help me hone in on the parts of my creative process that are essential so that I can begin to craft workshop activities. Additionally, the audience Q&A after each showing will provide better insight into what audience members are curious about and interested in knowing about my work.

5. **Please outline how you anticipate spending the \$1,500 resource budget. The budget can be used on collaborator fees, design materials, or other items that help with your project and your art (200 words max).**

Consider this...

- What type of collaborators do you plan to work with on your project and how much will you pay them for their work? *Collaborators should also be based in greater Pittsburgh.*
- What props or costumes do you need and how much do they cost?
- Specificity will show that you're aware of what your project will take to bring to life.

The majority of my budget will be spent on actors, puppetry materials, costuming, and a set designer. I would also like to possibly consult with a documentarian to learn more about writing stories based on true and observed behavior.

ACTOR 1: \$150



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ACTOR 2: \$150

ACTOR 3: \$150

Puppetry Materials (these are based on prices found on Amazon and JoAnn's Fabric Store)

Felt: \$50

Glue Gun: \$25

Glue Gun Sticks: \$15

Wooden dowels: \$20

Paint: \$80

Fabric: \$150

TOTAL BUDGETED FOR PUPPETRY: \$340

Costumes: The costumes to embody the bus stop characters will be items such as hats, jackets, and scarves. Ideally, I would thrift these items.

TOTAL BUDGETED FOR COSTUMES: \$120

Set Designer: This person would work collaboratively with me to help me bring a bus stop environment to life within the studio.

TOTAL BUDGETED FOR DESIGNER: \$100

TOTAL BUDGETED FOR SET PIECES: \$250

TOTAL BUDGETED FOR DOCUMENTARIAN: \$100

AMOUNT OF ANTICIPATED SPENDING: \$1,360

I would like to put the rest of the budget towards unexpected and miscellaneous costs.

6. **Please submit a 100 - 200 word marketing description of your project. If your project is selected, this description will be used in KST's promotional materials for the general public. Imagine the audience has no prior knowledge of your project. Be as specific and concrete as you can about how the work will come to life. What form will it take? How will the audience interact with your project? (200 words max)**

"At the Stop" is a performance exploring the shared and solitary experiences of waiting at Pittsburgh bus stops. Drawing on multidisciplinary artist and 71A rider Jane Doe's personal encounters across neighborhoods, times of day, and diverse communities, this piece captures the humanity in small moments — from lighthearted exchanges to tense interactions, each uniquely shaped by the city's social landscape. Inspired by her own experiences as a woman of color, the artist reflects on how place and context influence



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connection, isolation, and vulnerability within public spaces. Developed through KST's Freshworks residency, "At the Stop" uses puppetry to portray the silent stories and chance meetings that unfold in everyday life. This performance will spotlight the power of interpersonal interactions as a means to glimpse shared humanity, even in the face of broader social and economic divisions. By focusing on universal yet intimate interactions, "At the Stop" reminds us of the potential for empathy and understanding in fleeting moments.

7. **Please submit a 40 - 60 word marketing description of your project. If your project is selected, this description will be used in KST's promotional materials for the general public. Imagine the audience has no prior knowledge of your project. Be as specific and concrete as you can about how the work will come to life. What form will it take? How will the audience interact with your project?** (60 words max)

Experience the raw essence of Pittsburgh's urban pulse in "At the Stop," a mesmerizing fusion of storytelling and puppetry. Delve into the artist's personal encounters and reflections at bus stops, where every interaction becomes a brushstroke on the canvas of city life. From the poignant to the whimsical, journey through three key narratives that anchor this evocative performance. Join us for an immersive exploration of human connection, identity, and the spiritual resonance found amidst the rhythms of public transit.

8. **Please submit two to three images that can represent you and your project in KST marketing materials if you are selected.**

Consider this...

- Is there a photo or image from a previous project that could represent this one?
- What image gives the viewer a sense of your artistic practice or the proposed performance before they read the text?
- The image will always be accompanied by text and should not have any text overlaid
- The image will be used in prints and ads. Photos with bright, saturated and contrasted colors tend to produce the best results as ink printing can make colors look less vibrant.
- Horizontal images are preferred and should be adaptable to a square crop.

*Below are examples of past Freshworks project images.*



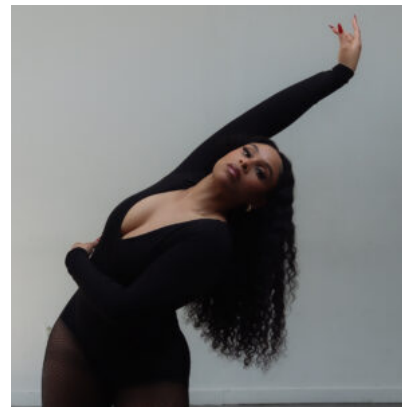
*Pictured Above: Moire del Carmen, Freshworks Fall 2025 | Pictured Above: Arnita Simone, Freshworks Winter/Spring 2024*

- 9. 9. Please attach two to three headshots with photo credits to represent each lead artist (1 MB file size). If your project is selected, one of these images will be used in KST's promotional materials for the public.**

*Below are examples of past Freshworks headshots.*



*Pictured Above: Moire del Carmen*



*Pictured Above: Arnita Simone*

- 10. Narrative Answers Video Upload** (9 minutes max) *Please answer questions 1 - 4 and 6. Questions 5 and 8 must be submitted using the narrative field. If you submitted written answers above, please skip this field.*
- 11. Narrative Answers Audio Upload** (9 minutes max) *Please answer questions 1 - 4 and 6. Questions 5 and 8 must be submitted using the narrative field. If you submitted written answers above, please skip this field.*



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### **Work Samples**

Please submit samples of your artistic work. Work samples should demonstrate the core principles and ideas mentioned in your narrative answers and reflect the artistic medium of your proposed project.

**Including a sample of the proposed project is encouraged** (i.e. a video of choreography you're working with, a script, performance footage, etc.).

**All artists should include a brief description of each work sample that includes how it demonstrates the core principles, ideas or medium(s) being explored in their proposed project (limit 75 words for each description).**

For visual artists (photographers, painters, sculptors, costume designers, etc.) please upload 3-5 images of your work.

For writers, please upload a writing sample no more than 10 pages in length.

For time based artists (performance, video, music, etc.), please include links to at least 2 work samples on Vimeo, YouTube, or other video or audio platforms with passwords as necessary. Please provide a three minute timeframe (ex. 00:00 - 03:00) for panelists to review. In addition we ask that you submit a link to the entire works regardless of length.

Work samples must be sent in addition to any video responses to the narrative questions above.

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## Panel Evaluation Criteria

All applications will be reviewed through a two stage panel process. In stage one, applications will be reviewed and scored by a panel of Pittsburgh-based artists selected by KST's Programming team. Panelists will score the applications based on how well the artist addresses the following questions throughout their application narratives, work sample, and budget submission. The panel will then recommend three projects for each residency period to be considered by KST Staff who will determine the final residency selection.

- 1. Would the applicant be considered an emerging artist?**
- 2. Does the artist's project align with KST's work of uplifting historically resilient communities?**
- 3. Does the applicant clearly articulate the artistic vision for their project?**
- 4. Does the proposed project seem achievable within the scope of the residency (time, budget, technical resources)?**
- 5. Is the applicant explicit about how they would use the studio space?**
- 6. Is this project relevant to the world today and the current moment?**
- 7. Are their short term goals connected to objectives of the Freshworks program?**
- 8. Will this residency significantly contribute to the artist's development?**
- 9. Does the applicant provide an itemized budget?**
- 10. Do the work samples reflect the applicant's ability to realize their artistic vision?**
- 11. Does the proposed project excite you and foster creative experimentation?**

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Read on for details about KST's Alloy Studios, where the Freshworks Residencies take place.



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## SAMPLE PRODUCTION WEEK SCHEDULE

**Project:** Freshworks: Name of Artist

**Date(s):** October 1st and 2nd

**Coordinated by:** KST Co-Production Manager

PRE-EVENT				
Day	Date	Time	Description	Persons Involved
Monday	9/27	TBD	Set Install	Residency Artist
Tuesday	9/28	TBD	<b>Cue-to-Cue</b> Meet with Crew and share overview of showing Review show cues Program Lighting, Sound, and Projection	Residency Artist, Collaborators, Crew
Wednesday	9/29	3:00PM	<b>Tech Rehearsal</b> Run of show with Crew and runthrough for KST Staff Run with tech elements	Crew, Residency Artist, Collaborators
Wednesday	9/29	8:00PM	END OF DAY	Residency Artist, Collaborators, Crew
Thursday	9/30	3:00PM	<b>Dress Rehearsal</b> Tech notes and work problems first At least 2 full runs of the show Work moments as needed	Residency Artist, Collaborators, Crew
Thursday	9/30	8:00PM	END OF DAY	Residency Artist, Collaborators, Crew
DAY OF / RUN OF EVENT				
Friday	10/1	5:00PM	<b>Crew / Artists Call</b> Work notes / run as needed	Crew, Residency Artist, Collaborators
Friday	10/1	6:00PM	FOH Call	FOH, KST Staff
Friday	10/1	7:00PM	Lobby Open KST Pre Show music playing KST Preshow slides begin	FOH
Friday	10/1	7:30PM	<b>Show Start</b> KST Curtain Speech Live taping of the show Still Photography of the show	Residency Artist, Collaborators, Crew, Camera



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Day	Date	Time	Description	Persons Involved
Friday	10/1	8:30PM	Post-showing Discussion KST Programming Manager to moderate	Residency Artist, Collaborators, Crew, KST Staff
Friday	10/1	9:00PM	End of Event	All
Friday	10/1	10:00PM	Audience Clear	All
Friday	10/1	11:00PM	END OF DAY	
Saturday	10/2	6:00PM	FOH / Crew / Artists Call Set restore	FOH, Crew, Residency Artist, Collaborators
Saturday	10/2	7:00PM	Lobby open KST Pre Show music playing KST Preshow slides begin	FOH
Saturday	10/2	8:00PM	<b>Show start</b> KST Curtain Speech	Crew, Residency Artist, KST Staff
Saturday	10/2	8:30PM	Post-showing Discussion KST Programming Manager to moderate	Residency Artist, Collaborators, KST Staff
Saturday	10/2	9:00PM	End of Show	All
Saturday	10/2	10:00 PM	Audience clear <b>Strike set</b> , costumes, and all belongings	All
Saturday	10/2	11:00PM	END OF DAY	



Kelly Strayhorn Theater  
5941 Penn Ave  
Pittsburgh, PA 15206

Offices + The Alloy Studios  
5530 Penn Ave  
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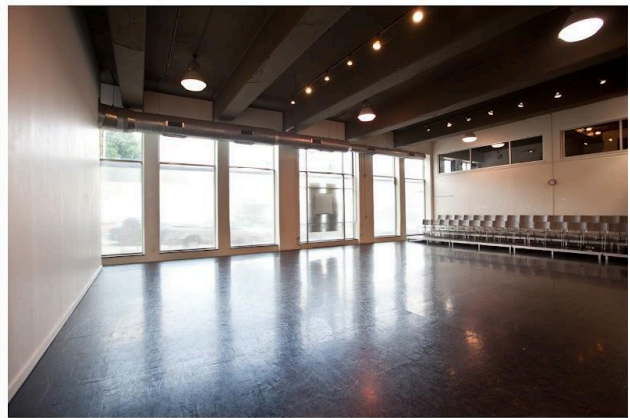
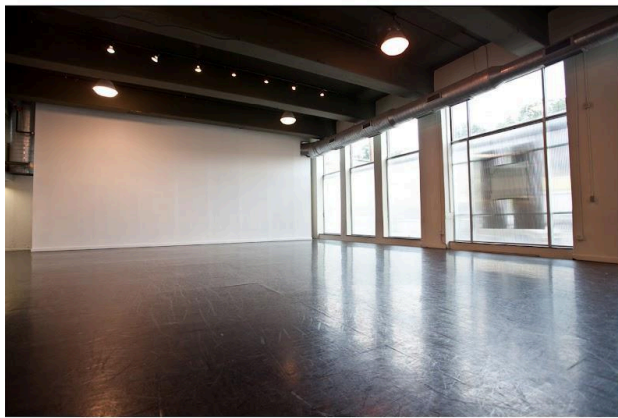
### **KST's Alloy Studios**

5530 Penn Ave, Pittsburgh, PA, 15206

Freshworks residencies will take place at KST's Alloy Studios! KST's Alloy Studios contains two studio spaces designed to accommodate performance events, classes, workshops, and more. The ground floor studio features an LED theatrical lighting plot, professional sound, and sprung dance floor. Performances will take place in the downstairs studio. The upstairs studio is a spacious, mirrored dance studio that overlooks Penn and Stratford Avenues. Rehearsals may take place in the downstairs or upstairs studio.

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#### Downstairs Studio



#### Upstairs Studio (Marley not provided)

