

Pearl Arts

movement & sound
ELECTRONIC PRESS KIT



ABOUT

STAYCEE PEARL dance project & Soy Sos (SPdp&SS) exists to celebrate and explore the full range of Blackness and culture through dynamic dance-centered performances and experiences. Incorporating immersive soundscapes, SPdp&SS explores innovative conceptual possibilities while participating in meaningful collaboration. Under the leadership of Choreographer Staycee Pearl and Sound Designer Herman 'Soy Sos; Pearl, SPdp&SS produces programming around compelling concepts and themes driven by socio-political world issues. SPdp&SS also creates engaging works inspired by celebrated legendary and contemporary artists of the African Diaspora.

HISTORY:

STAYCEE PEARL dance project & Soy Sos started as an informal incubator in 2009 with its first concert PUPA. From 2009 - 2013, SPdp&SS was resident dance company of Kelly Strayhorn Theater. SPdp&SS ended this formative residency with the premiere of *...on being...*, an investigation of race, gender, and personal identity in relation to conversations around Post-Blackness. Since these early works, SPdp&SS has created several evening-length works, including *ABBEY: In The Red*, a work inspired by the unique Jazz vocals of Abbey Lincoln and the civil rights movement she helped give voice to, *sym*, inspired by Octavia Butler's final novel, *Fledgling*, and *sol.*, a celebration of the soul music of the late 50s to mid 70s.

SPdp&SS is the resident dance company of PearlArts, a Pittsburgh-based arts organization founded by Herman and Staycee Pearl in 2012. Named as one of Pittsburgh's Cultural Treasures in 2022, PearlArts serves the community with movement classes, public events, sound experiences, and artist residencies. PearlArts is the home of PearlDiving Movement Residency: a month-long residency for artists making dance centered multimedia works. This unique experience provides a generous stipend, work and live space, and a variety of resources to support the work of both local and national artists.



BIOGRAPHIES

Staycee R. Pearl began her directorial and choreographic career as the Artistic Director of Xpressions Contemporary Dance Theater in 2001, premiering numerous works and performing choreography by celebrated national artists such as Rennie Harris and Robert Battle and Kyle Abraham. Pearl choreographed Nathan Davis' jazz-opera, *Just Above My Head*, *Carmen Jones*, and *Lost in the Stars* for the Opera Theater of Pittsburgh. She graduated from the University of Pittsburgh with a BFA and honors in Studio Arts/Africana Studies. STAYCEE PEARL dance project & Soy Sos (SPdp&SS) debuted as Kelly Strayhorn Theater's resident dance company for the 2010-2013 seasons. As a guest teaching artist lecturer in the University of Pittsburgh's theater arts department, Staycee choreographed the acclaimed musical production, *In The Heights*. Her choreographic work has been consistently supported by the Heinz Endowments and The Pittsburgh Foundation since 2001. Most recently, Staycee and her collaborators successfully premiered *CIRCLES: going in* and *CIRCLES: reclamation* at the August Wilson African American Cultural Center in October of 2021. Both the stage performance and the gallery exhibition respectfully were commissioned and presented by Kelly Strayhorn Theater and the August Wilson Center. This represents the company's first National Dance Project and National Performance Network-supported project. Ms Pearl is honored to have won the Carol R. Brown Creative Achievement Award / Established Artist for 2021.



Herman Pearl (Soy Sos) is head engineer and owner of Tuff Sound Recording, as well as sound designer and co-founder of PearlArts Studios | STAYCEE PEARL dance project & Soy Sos, a sound and creative movement company he formed with his wife, Staycee Pearl. Through PearlArts, Herman creates soundscapes to serve as a component to contemporary dance. As a sound designer, Herman's repertoire includes a wide variety of projects and collaborators. His work has been featured in various independent films and documentaries, video games, and advertising. He has designed soundscapes for numerous choreographers including Donald Byrd and Kyle Abraham. He has collaborated with many visual artists to create installations and touring exhibits. He has recorded and produced work for a plethora of recording artists across genres and techniques. Herman has performed, created, and recorded his own music for over 25 years. With DJ MKL, Herman created 3 Generations Walking and MKL vs. Soy Sos, a deep house music-centered collective that produced approximately 30 releases with worldwide distribution and acclaim between 1998 and 2006. In 1997, Pearl and longtime collaborator Christiane D founded the band Soma Mestizo, which produced 8 albums and performed over 500 shows. With reggae group Chill Factor International/CFI Massive, Pearl acted as co-founder, member, manager, and producer between 1986 and 1999, during which the band performed at nearly 1,000 engagements and released six records. His full-scale sound installation, "Named/Unnamed," was featured at 937 Gallery for the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust and Three Rivers Arts Festival. He continues to develop live performance ensembles, remix projects, and multimedia art installations.

sum of y'all



photo by: Beth Barbis

[Click Here for Trailer](#)

PREMIERING FALL 2025

What do we add up to as a community? Staycee Pearl's newest creation invites audiences to reflect on the delicate impermanence of community. Tracing back to memories of historically Black spaces that have been erased over time, *sum of y'all* highlights the constant and inevitable state of expansion, change and transformation.

A compelling movement work, layered within a multimedia stage installation, *sum of y'all* draws parallels between gentrification and patterns found in the cellular structures of the human body. Set to an original score by jazz musicians James Johnson III, Erik Lawrence, Eli Namay, Mark Micchelli and co-composer Herman Pearl, the score unfolds as dancers flock, disperse and reassemble in blurred unison.

Creative Team:

Choreography: Staycee Pearl in collaboration with company dancers

Concept Collaborator: Marvin Touré

Music Director and Co-Composer: Herman Pearl

Collaborating Musicians: James Johnson III, Erik Lawrence, Eli Namay, Mark Micchelli

Touring Party: 3 dances, 1 stage manager, 1 sound engineer, 1 artistic director

Running Time: 60 minutes (no intermission)

CIRCLES: going in



photo by: Kitoko Chargois

[Click Here for Trailer](#)

Black Joy. Femme. Cycles of Life and Love.

CIRCLES: going in, is a full-length dance work celebrating #BlackGirlMagic. Layering dance, visual arts, and original club music, the work presents snapshots of popular culture through choreographer Staycee Pearl's lens as a Black woman. With an ensemble of five dancers, **CIRCLES: going in** is a colorful, unapologetic, and daring path to self-reclamation.

Central to the work is a sound score of hip-hop, techno and ballroom music mixed live throughout the performance by Herman "Soy Sos" Pearl. Pulsing beats, bass lines and sample vocals bring the joy, spontaneity and uncensored freedom of self-expression from the club to the stage. Rebellious and confident, the music is a celebration and affirmation of the deep influence from queer, BIPOC and femme artists in music and pop culture.

CIRCLES: going in



photo by: Heather Mull

NDP Funding Available

Creative Team:

Staycee R. Pearl / Lead Artist, Choreographer

Herman B. Pearl / Sound Designer/Engineer

Touring Cast: 5 Dancers, 1 DJ/Sound Engineer

Administrative/Tech: 1 Artistic Director, 1 Stage Manager

Running Time: 60 Minutes (no intermission)

***CIRCLES: going in** premiered October 28-30, 2021 at the August Wilson African American Cultural Center in Pittsburgh, PA. The work is a National Performance Network (NPN) Creation & Development Fund Project co-commissioned by Kelly Strayhorn Theater, The Joyce Theater, and NPN. More information: www.npnweb.org. **CIRCLES** was made possible by the New England Foundation for the Arts' National Dance Project, with lead funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Co-commissioning Partners are Kelly Strayhorn Theater, August Wilson African American Cultural Center, and The Joyce Theater. The development of **CIRCLES: going in** is made possible in part by the National Center for Choreography at The University of Akron (NCCAkron). **CIRCLES: going in** is supported in part by The Pittsburgh Foundation's Advancing Black Arts in Pittsburgh Fund, Heinz Endowments, and The Opportunity Fund.*

ABOUT THE MUSIC



Music collaborators from left to right: **DJ Haram, DOTGOV, Geña, Ixa, Kha'DJ, Kilamanzego, Madame Dolores, Meejah, Queen Jo, Yah Lioness**

The sound score for ***CIRCLES: going in*** was created in collaboration with Herman “Soy Sos” Pearl and revered music artists from the experimental and underground club scene including: Queen Jo (Philadelphia), DJ Haram (Philadelphia), Ixa (Berlin/Philadelphia), Yah Lioness (Pittsburgh), Madam Dolores (Pittsburgh), DOTGOV (Pittsburgh), Kilamanzego (Philadelphia), Kha'DJ (Pittsburgh/NYC), Geña (Puerto Rico/Pittsburgh) and Meejah (Copenhagen/South Korea).

Over the course of many months, the collaborators engaged in an exchange of vocal and musical elements, including freestyle and vocal sessions. Contributions were based on the collaborators' response to the dancers' movement on stage. The result was the accumulation of an audio library of beats, rhymes, chants, bass lines, percussion, sample chops and synthesizer textures that are mixed live in the performance space by Soy Sos, presenting a unique, propulsive club-like sound scape for every show.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES



STAYCEE PEARL dance project & Soy Sos offer aesthetic training workshops and engagement activities specifically developed for: Youth Grades 1 - 12, University Dance Departments, Non-Dancers & Local Communities and Adults. Offerings include:

- Lecture/Demonstrations
- Contemporary Technique Classes for: Beginning / Intermediate/ Advanced Dancers
- Sound Design for Dance
- *CIRCLES* Workshop
- School time Performances. *Study Guide Available*
- Pre- & Post Performance Discussion

[Click HERE for descriptions of in-person and virtual offerings.](#)

PRESS QUOTES

[Black-centered dance performance highlights social, racial issues - The Columbia Chronicle](#)

[Emerging Dance #4: STAYCEE PEARL dance project + Soy Sos - Dance Currents](#)

[Pittsburg Dance Troupes Get Virtual National Stage Courtesy of Kennedy Center- 90.5 WESA](#)

[Wife-Husband team continue big year by producing weeklong dance festival - Pittsburgh City Paper](#)

[Dance Review: On Being by Staycee Pearl dance project - Coal Hill Review](#)



"Pearl's choices usually bring a mix of past and present. Within a phrase of her movement, one may see a big, technical leap reminiscent of her time at the Alvin Ailey school. And in the next second, her dancers may sink to the floor with the release styles more prevalent today."

-Adrienne Totino, *Coal Hill Review*

CONTACT

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