



## ***ABBEY: In the Red* honors the legacy of jazz great Abbey Lincoln**

Production by SPdp and Soy Sos combines dance and live music

MAY 24, 2017 | STEVE SUCATO

A lot can be learned from STAYCEE PEARL dance project (SPdp) works about the eclectic tastes of Staycee and Herman “Soy Sos” Pearl. *OCTAVIA* (2011) revealed that Octavia Butler is a favorite author of Staycee Pearl’s, while 2016’s *FLOWERZ* grew out of the pair’s love of house music and its role in how the married couple met. SPdp and Soy Sos’ latest project, *ABBEY: In the Red*, May 25-27 at the August Wilson Center, celebrates the couple’s respect for the music of jazz vocalist, composer and civil-rights activist Anna Marie Wooldridge (1930–2010), a.k.a. Abbey Lincoln.

The Pearls are one of Pittsburgh’s top artist couples, and for *ABBEY: In the Red*, they fused her choreography and directing and his sound design and musical direction. The hour-long, intermissionless production is structured around seven songs that Lincoln wrote and/or sang, including “Freedom Day,” “Garvey’s Ghost” and “Straight Ahead.” Starting with original recordings and archival scores from Rutgers University, the songs have been given modern arrangements by noted local saxophonist and composer Ben Opie. The music will be performed live by a six-member ensemble including Opie, Herman Pearl and singer Anqwenique Wingfield.

Staycee Pearl says that the non-narrative work for a dozen dancers, including guest artists from Legacy Arts Project, conjures the mood of Lincoln’s songs and her activism and draws parallels to today’s Afro-punk scene and the Black Lives Matter movement. “Here we are dealing with a whole other set of [social] issues that are very much the same as my parents dealt with back then [in the 1960s],” says Staycee Pearl.

The Pearls see *ABBEY: In the Red* not as an exploration of the social and political arguments surrounding both eras’ civil-rights movements, but a nod to the art and music that evolved out of those movements.

Adding to the work's somewhat abstract choreography, which blends contemporary, modern and African movement styles, will be a sculptural metal set by Atticus Adams, and avant-garde costumes by Adams and Tereneh Mosley.

"It's unfortunate that more people don't know about Abbey Lincoln's work," says Herman Pearl. "We feel she should be mentioned in the same sentence as Nina Simone and Billie Holiday. She was really on that level."

<https://www.pghcitypaper.com/pittsburgh/abbey-in-the-red-honors-the-legacy-jazz-great-abbey-lincoln/Content?oid=2946429>