

thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Club Lifestile and All That Glitters

by Christina Gesualdi

Tip Flannery is a member of the Philly dance troupe, [Club Lifestile](#), a group that “gets the party started.” Here’s what he had to say in a get together in South Philadelphia about the group’s origins, go-to moves and giant community.

Christina Gesualdi: It was just Club Lifestile’s 5th birthday. Happy Birthday! How did it all begin?

Tip Flannery: I think it was mostly visual art people from Tyler. There was an existing dance troupe in Philly called [Dancetron Infinity](#) that Club Lifestile formed to dance battle at a club night. They dance battled once, and it wasn’t really clear who won or lost, but after that, Dancetron just kind of fell apart and half of their members joined Club Lifestile. So whoever won the battle, Club Lifestile kind of won.

Help us envision Club Lifestile. What exactly is this “dance troupe” you speak of?

We are people who are into shiny things. That is our commonality. We are party starters.

What kind of parties do you start? What kind of gigs do you seek out?

We do back-up dancing or post-show acts for touring bands. We get gigs at art spaces, fundraisers, and dj nights. We had a monthly night at the Barbary, so for two years, that was our standing gig.

What do your performances look like?

Everything kind of looks like aerobics routines with comedy elements thrown in. We reference a lot of mid-90’s club or go-go dancing—it’s what we remember. We go for numbers and spectacle.

Yes, numbers. When I saw Club Lifestile perform at thefidget space/ anonymous bodies benefit, there were at least 10 of you or more. Can you talk about numbers?

There are maybe 45 people on the Google group and about 20 members who are currently active. We usually take a gig if we can get at least 7 or 8 people on board.

Describe this massive email group. Is it overwhelming?

Not really. It's also a group of friends. People also wind up posting any amazing Youtube videos they find...or pictures of sparkly things to file away for future inspiration. It really is a "lifestyle". It started out as a joke that we are a group of kids that brush our teeth with Sparks, but it has turned into a giant community.

How did you become a part of it?

I joined almost three years ago. I had done mummings with the Vaudevillians for a few years. There were several Club Lyfestile members involved with mummings at that time, so I said, "let me make your costumes" and they said, "as long as you like having fun, you can just join."

So since you make the costumes, is there one costume that you are most proud of?

For our normal gigs we usually go with a base unitard or neon mesh, and we don't plan. We make a trip to Jomar, see what's on sale, and grab the three brightest things we can find. We bang them out, fast and dirty. But for *Rite of Spring*, we actually sketched out and designed things. We had a girl costume that had 120 inches of skirt, hand-pinned and pleated into the bodice...We were like, "Oh, Let's do this for real."

Discuss *Rite of Spring*.

Rite of Spring was intense. For most gigs, if we rehearse for 3 weeks, that's usually enough, but for this, we had to start way earlier. There was tension in that.

Tension?

When you have a large, nebulous collective, people have different visions. Some thought it (ROS) was more arty than party. It was super different than our normal gigs; we had to find a space, raise money, and bring out a big audience. There were 17 performers and two long acts. After it was over we decided, okay...we're going back to 3 minute aerobic routines.

In discourse around contemporary choreography, the word "quoting" and "referencing" comes up often as a way to describe choreography. How does this relate to what you do?

We joke that one of our go-to moves when we need something more in the piece, is "humping"...wall humping, floor humping. For *Rite of Spring* though, we referenced a bunch of the 70's Joffrey Ballet version moves. That is part of the reason we picked this ballet. You know, dance from the pelvis, something non-dancers can do.

It worked so well.

We don't have training to unlearn.

How did you make the choreography?

It's a collaboration. We split into groups and say, "okay, now these four people come up with six-eight counts to kill your solo. Then we combine them. We also cannibalize all of our dances and re-use existing moves. We currently have three girls with formal dance training. They don't do all of the choreography, but they do know how to break it down.

So what's next for Club Lyfestile?

People are talking about maybe putting together a dance battle with other non-dancer dance teams: Jazz Hand Job from Providence, Hot Tub from Baltimore, and the Dazzle Dancers from New York. We joke that they ([The Dazzle Dancers](#)) are our nemesis. They don't do choreographed routines, but they dress way more naked and are conventionally attractive and in shape. Not our style...

I had no idea these groups existed.

There are bound to be non-dancer dance teams in any city with an art school where people stick around and are bored enough, they have to create their own fun. Club Lyfestile evolved out of people playing dress up and dancing around their apartments. I'm glad that

people enjoy watching us. We really do it more for us. We're fun and accessible. I'll give us that.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=keDgZMI9hAo> *Rite of Spring* 2011 Act 1

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NY7Z1XXCDzE&feature=relmfu> *Rite of Spring* 2011 Act 2

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7pV2cX0qxs> Pina Bausch's Version

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_7ndqgwxcm&feature=related *Nijinsky* by Joffrey in 1987

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IHOr8jjTA8&feature=relmfu> Vaudevillians Mummings 2011

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0WDjjsgy63c&feature=related> Vaudevillians Mummings 2012

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