

# thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: Lori Foxworth

## Atypical Beauty

by Whitney Weinstein

Agno Grill, furnished with casual wooden tables and benches and only as large as the first floor in a South Philly row home, housed *Musician, Model & Medical Experiment*, an amalgamation of a coffeehouse, cabaret, and creative therapy session. The open windows of the restaurant felt exposing in a performance which proved intimate, featuring Anomie Fatale, a former biochemistry student fulfilling each of the title roles, alongside her band Great Neck.

Sitting in a walker adorned with artificial greenery, Fatale recounted her tragedies, infusing humor through her narrative, which she read from a binder. Through her self-written text and songs, she held her body tensely and avoided looking at the audience. Instantly her words unveiled vulnerability. At age twenty, [Ehlers-Danlos syndrome](#) interrupted her life, almost immediately tossing her onto the surgical table for an operation that left her “stabilized.” In other words, it fused her head onto her neck bound in a downward position and locked her mouth shut. Dumped by her boyfriend, surrounded by misunderstanding family and friends, and frustrated by her inability to exhibit her phenomenal voice, she underwent another life-threatening operation, followed by a period of being a quadriplegic.

After living in a disfigured body with severely limited movement, as she regained physical abilities, she began to revalue the allure of the body. Fatale began modeling in a way that changed onlookers’ perspectives: once an inspirational cripple, she became an able-bodied, sexy woman.

Fatale is a casualty of “the system.” Because both disabled and impoverished communities are offered similar accommodations by the government, she was thrown into funded housing, where she learned that “this is a world war of people being mistreated.”

How we navigate this world physically can determine others’ estimations of our worth and affect our own. When Fatale began performing as a disabled dominatrix, during her first burlesque dance in her walker at Carnivolution, and as a [Snuggle Buddy](#), she began to rediscover physical approval. But fighting an incurable condition takes a mental toll beyond consideration of the body.

Unable to earn modest wages or marry for fear of losing social security income, she strives to find her role in society. She continues to explore ways to engage in work and express the trauma that permeated the bones of her skull into her mind.

Motion—big or small—has propelled Fatale through her young life. By the conclusion of the evening, her initial stiffness was alleviated as she replayed, in microcosm, her journey from an immobile body uncomfortably stuck in a biased system, into a spicy, expressive rock star advocating for those less recognized by society as whole.

*Musician, Model & Medical Experiment* integrated Fatale's life experiences, including burlesque vignettes. Fatale's concluding piece, a rendition of [Edith Piaf](#)'s "No Regrets" was particularly striking. She introduced the song with these words: "Pain is relevant and so is beauty."

*Musician, Model & Medical Experiment*, Anomie Fatale, Agno Grill, September 6, 10, 16.

By Whitney Weinstein

September 11, 2015