

# thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: James Izlar

## Fresh Juice 2025: Joy, Heart-Ache, Apocalypse

by Zoe Farnsworth

Mascher Space Cooperative's annual "Fresh Juice" dance show is a menagerie of 10 works that boldly blended styles and artistic disciplines with various results. Some combine elements of projection and text, creating several competing focuses, while others meld together for a seamless viewing experience.

Themes range from invasive species and climate change to apocalypse/disaster, queer and non- queer romantic and platonic relationships, self-inquiry, and more specific exploration of aesthetics and movement quality. An eclectic mix of musicians, actors, and dancers take on each other's roles blurring distinction among them. I appreciate the breadth of dancing queer bodies as well as the various ages of performers.

[Nerissa Tunnessen](#) and [Sam Xiao Cody](#) appear to be developing an art form of violin playing while doing contact improvisation. On opposite sides of the stage, Cody performs a joyful and folksy violin to back up Tunnessen's technically rigorous modern dance and ballet solo. The performers begin to draw closer, circling or walking past each other with spins and turns in a call and response.

The speed and minor melody of the music turns the mood darker and more violent. Cody plays while lying face up, as they walk in sharp right angles, and they meet to meld together. Tunnessen handles Cody roughly while picking them up as Tunnessen descends in a slow plié. Tunnessen launches Cody across the floor, darting quickly to pick them up again up on their shoulder, repeatedly falling in and out of contact. They end on their separate sides of the stage, backs turned away from the audience, evoking a loneliness after a failed struggle to connect together.

It is distinctly satisfying to watch [Vyette Tiya](#) mix African diaspora dances into joyous expression, feats of strength and endurance, and sensual moments with attention to musical rhythm and body articulation. Her hips consistently carve out space—to the beat and in

opposition or layering on top of it, circling her through space.

Dancing as much for herself as for the audience, Tiya enthralls us. I see popping arms and legs cutting in space mix with deft salsa hips and legs. A stag leap and bow drawback is evocative of the Candomblé orixá's [Oxhossi's](#) movement, and house dance farmer steps grooving footwork— all to the audience's thunderous applause. Accompanying is a surprising array of 80s synth pop, house, clapping, singing and jazz that speeds up and slows down while Tiya plays rhythms with her body on top of the music or right on time.

[Mik](#) and [tor](#)\* perform a duet referencing the zombie apocalypse show, the last of us, in their title. They come alive, slowly but surely, from a mashed together shape. A contact improv gone wrestling language emerges between the two. They press their faces into all parts of each other in a struggle to hold on. They clunkily collide with the floor, moving with bounded energy into each other while locomoting through space. A flow, play, swing, and rhythm emerges amidst the soundtrack of static and emergency sirens.

In a sudden change, Madonna's voice flies into the space as tor and mik strip out of their dark clothing to bright sparkly orange bras and lingerie, a joyful outpouring in contrast to the previous sorrowful and deathly struggling and its sound score's evocation for me of natural disasters, current ICE raids, and other conflicts around the world. A relieved audience cheers, as the dancers perform virtuosic leaps and lunges, their faces reflecting a campy joyfulness. That joy decays with falling and stumbling in an ending thematically satisfying, but extending longer than my attention can hold.

Although the viewing experience of watching 10 works in a row is a bit tiring, "Fresh Juice 2025" is an exciting showcase of the talent and growth of the Philly experimental dance scene in all its strange glory.

[Fresh Juice 2025](#), Mascher Space Cooperative, Philly PACK, June 7.

Homepage Image Description: *Vyette Tiya (she/her) smiles with her eyes closed and head tilted upwards, arms lofting upwards as she descends downwards. She wears baggy pants and a textured crop top, and is washed in a dark blue light. Two white chains hang in the background above her head. To her left is Daniel Sohn with a mixing board and laptop, focused on mixing for his music. He is wearing a baseball cap, t-shirt, and pants.*

Article Page Image Description: *Full cast clapping onstage with the house lights up in a blue and purple light, taking from a low angle shot to their right.*

\*The writer has collaborated with and is a co-worker of tor.

*The evening's performers also included Daniel Sohn, Kiki Carruth, Andrea Agostini, Corinne Jones, Shoshana Isaacs, Nella Biacs, Claire Natiez, Mads Klemm, Brandon Graf, Free Fleet, des amaiya and skylar quehl.*

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