

thINKIngDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: Jonathan Van Arneman

Flow State: Less Recital, More Revival!

by Emily “Lady Em” Culbreath

“One part performance, many parts party.” That’s how *Urban Movement Arts* director Vince Johnson described *Flow State* — and he wasn’t kidding. Held in the basement of the First Unitarian Church of Philadelphia, this underground (in every sense) gathering blurred the lines between dance concert, nightclub, immersive theater, and sacred ritual. Think communion with a DJ, prayer through motion, and a house party with a heartbeat.

Guests descended from Chestnut Street into a dimly lit, speakeasy-like fellowship hall. Johnson, emceeding with charisma, made the night’s purpose clear: “This is dance culture — love, elevating, and escaping.” Amen!

The space had been transformed by interdisciplinary collective The Rev into a sensorial playground. Chairs lined the walls, forming an in-the-round setup, while one end featured Jason Killinger’s dreamy lounge installation — part Wonderland, part disco, part ‘70s living room — quickly claimed by a few audience members, erasing the line between set piece and stage.

A pulsing soundtrack of hip hop, dancehall, and house from DJ Kingsley Ibeneche kept bodies moving and energy high. The crowd buzzed with a sense of shared connection — like they already knew each other, even if they didn’t.

The evening unfolded in three choreographic acts, with DJ interludes keeping the momentum alive.

First came *FLOWSTATE:EARTH*, choreographed by Chloe Marie and Alex Brazinski, featuring six dancers whose grounded, wave-like movement felt both elemental and intentional. Cupped hands, eye contact, and solo offerings created a ritual of trust and shared purpose — a tapestry of individual voices moving as one.

Next, *Threaded*, by Jonathan Van Arneman, OreOluwa Badaki, and Anna Matone, began with them leading an embodied ritual with

audience members before erupting into a 20-dancer ensemble piece. Set to Yussef Dayes' *Black Classical Music*, it blended House, West African, and contemporary influences into a pulsing, angelic interplay of music and movement — a new kind of social choreography...cyclical, alive with collective agency.

The night closed with *Look To Each Other* by Kayliani Sood and Allison Smith, where dancers in street-sport wear built and shattered patterns through slicing gestures and floor-bound phrases. "Breathe!" someone shouted — fatigue became an elemental aspect of the work.

The evening created its own category of concert dance. *Flow State* wasn't just a performance — it was an invitation. Not to watch, but to witness. Not a show, but a shared space.

What happens when you assemble visionary artists in a church basement?

If you're lucky... *Flow State* happens.

[Flow State](#), Philadelphia Fringe, Urban Movement Arts, First Unitarian Church of Philadelphia, September 28.

Image Description: ??A large group of dancers stand closely together in a studio, their bodies tilted in unison with heads falling dramatically to one side, creating a strong visual wave across the room. They are arranged in staggered rows that draw the eye from front to back, emphasizing their collective rhythm and connection. The black floor grounds the image, while the wall behind them bursts with bold, curving black outlines and sweeping pink brushstrokes, giving the space an energetic, almost theatrical backdrop.

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