



Photo: Elyse Mertz

40-Years-Old And Still Kicking

June 29 2026

For its 40th year, The Performance Mix Festival was back at Abrons with a tantalizing lineup of new and alum artists whose performances celebrated the fringe of form. Over the course of the festival's first night, I had the opportunity to witness six distinct performances. Though the connective tissue of each program's curation seemed opaque, one thing held certain: all performances made room for experimentation, some with wider margins than others.

First up in the opening program was work by IV Castellanos, chameckilerner, and Ursula Eagly:

IV Castellanos employed stunning audio art that used magnets to generate sound, creating scaffolding for the most healing audience interactions of the night. They asked “Who here is from the Latinx community? Or who here loves someone from the Latinx community?” Inviting those audience members onstage, the Latinx community (and its lovers) were whispered unheard instructions to write on a thin board before smashing through it with their fists as audience members cheered them on. The most powerful moment was breaking through “La Migra,” as affirmations from a homogeneously ICE-hating audience filled the room. It was grief and gigglefilled rage that started the night on a socially-forward note.

Following, chameckilerner’s video dance piece provided audiences a lesson in how to make a simple movement score memorable, funny, and charming. At a park, they taught one seemingly random passerby a small movementphrase. Another person learned it from that participant. The movement distorted and skewed as different bodies learned to the best of their ability, and a beautiful game of dance telephone was edited together. Augmented by comically micky-moused sound-design, I couldn’t help but laugh throughout, thinking about the childlike mechanics of learning and movement.

Ending the program was Ursula Eagly’s seemingly improvisatory group work: five performers, eyes-closed, posed in a sculptural tableau, improvising lines to a story about the color red, ketchup, hot dogs, and more. Lighting design set the emotional vocabulary for each vignette, and as performers moved through different tableaux, pausing to narrate these improvised stories, at times it felt like they were reading the audience itself—ideas blooming from the look on someone’s face or what they were wearing.

After an abrupt end to the program and a short break where the audience was hastily removed from the theater, the second program for the evening began, with work by Julia Antinozzi, CoCoMotion, and Antonio Ramos & The Gangbangers in collaboration with Saúl Ulerio / Turista.

Julia Antinozzi's duet, performed by Paulina Meneses and Sienna Russo, featured rigorous composition tightly wound to high-level replication and juxtaposition between the two dancers' bodies. During the duet, a comparison between post-modern dance and ballet, Russo and Meneses alternated between synchronicity—breathing together through a generously held extension—followed by competitive articulations of the same phrase—such as across-the-floor combinations where Russo flew through the air taking twice as much space as Meneses, while using the same vocabulary. The dancers alone—in their focus, technical prowess, and connection—were entrancing, especially so as their bodies considered some of the more gendered bits of balletic movement, while visibly reading as a queer dance partnership.

Next up was CoCoMotion's work: a video collage followed by an equal-parts glamorous and hard-hitting performance—both parts a documentation and celebration of motherhood in all its emotional pathways. Whether speaking about the importance of passion, the collaboration between art-making and child-bearing, or their own femininity, the interview portion of the work provided a compelling snapshot into the lives of artists who were also mothers. Coupled with a stunning trio of mothers celebrating their joy-filled sensuality, krump-adjacent intensity, and sensitively-tuned rhythms, the work asserted that parenthood is not a death sentence for a dance career. At a time when parent-artist funding applications have all but disappeared, the piece served as a reminder that motherhood and dance coexist, naturally.

Ending the night was the pinnacle of risk-taking and ideological nuance for the evening, with Antonio Ramos and The Gangbangers' work in collaboration with Saúl Ulerio / Turista. Ramos' work began with him and Ulerio prancing through the audience naked. A brief interlude to this whimsy provided a prophetic voiceover about trauma, remarking how sometimes people replay trauma, in the hopes of reconciling their hurt, to no avail. Then, Ramos began singing about "rape in the colonies" while wearing genitalia as regalia, slathered in baby oil, or lube, while

sitting in a kiddie pool. In Ramos's words, this work was "set in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, confronting the contradiction between the [Puerto Rico] sold to tourists and the daily struggles of the people who called the island home."

Exiting the theater, reading these program notes after the performance, uncertain of whether to laugh or cry in Epstein's Amerikkka, I couldn't help but be grateful for Ramos and crew's brilliant ability to distill criticisms of coloniality, environmental ruin, neoliberalism, and the US's outsized role in all these foibles in raw, sardonically glee-filled images. A perfect end to a night of raw requests for community-building in experimental practice and experimental practice in community building.

The Performance Mix Festival: (<https://newdancealliance.org/performance-mix-festival/>) Day 1, Various Artists, Abrons Art Center, June 4-7.
