

thINKIngDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: Steve Sarafian

A Circus Family Comes Home

by Lauren Berlin

[Growing Pains](#) isn't just a performance—it is a homecoming. Presented by Black Ice Circus and co-produced by Tyshaun Thomas and Shekinah Williams, *Growing Pains* reunites six performers who grew up together as part of the [Trenton Circus Squad](#). Now grown, each on their own artistic path, they answer the call not out of duty, but because the work still matters.

At the Icebox Project Space, *Growing Pains* shifts from diabolo to silks to mime, dazzling skill grounded in honesty that lingers long after the show.

It begins like a circus should: loud, fast, and full of motion. Juggling rings spin midair, bodies flip and twist as Kanye West and Daft Punk's *Black Skinhead* fills the space. The energy is sharp, almost manic—everything is happening at once, like youth itself. It's not messy; it's alive. One performer on the Chinese yo-yo describes the next act as turning "ADHD into art."

Later, the tone shifts. [Kordell Garland](#) steps out in a du-rag and sweatpants, and the music drops into a spare piano instrumental. His body moves like water in a contemporary flow.

Another act, introduced by Tyshaun Thomas, emerges from a psychedelic trip—a reckoning with his inner child. Performed on aerial silks, his movement is open. These aren't just displays of skill but personal stories, each act authored and lived-in.

[Shekinah Williams](#), suspended in an aerial hoop, delivers a spoken word poem with quiet, raw grace. Her soft, deliberate movements hold grief rather than escape it:

I used to flinch at gentleness because I only recognized love when it hurt...

Broke bread with the ghosts I once ran from...

I didn't just do the work, I went under it.



Photo: Steve Sarafian

Her aerial dance is beautiful and haunting, each rotation a measured breath between fragility and strength. Set to FaceSoul's *Grow (Freestyle)*

, the act unfolds as a meditation.

Growing Pains is structured by the rhythms of growing up, growing apart, and coming back together again.

What holds it all together is the trust of artists who didn't just train together, but grew up together. You see it in seamless partnering, shared weight, and the way silence lands.

When it is all over, I see performer Kordell Garland exit the building. He hops on his skateboard. And just like that, he vanishes into the Philly night—a reminder that, despite the growing pains, the child within us never truly clocks out.

[Growing Pains](#), Black Ice Circus, Icebox Project Space, September 19-21

Homepage Image Description: Performers in colorful pajamas juggle neon hoops under vibrant stage lighting, evoking themes of childhood, playfulness, and simpler times.

Top Article Image Description: From left to right, Tyshaun Thomas, Kordell Garland, and Joy Johnson—Trenton Circus alums—perform a contemporary piece on the floor, their intertwined arms and hands embodying artistry, trust, and connection under warm stage lighting.

Bottom Article Image Description: Shekinah Williams hangs suspended in a deep backbend on aerial straps, her body arched against a backdrop of blue light, embodying strength and fluidity in motion.

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