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# Philly Fringe: 'Pandaemonium' builds from ennui to explosions of movement

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📷 **LARS JAN**

Video + dance: Nichole Canuso, Geoff Sobelle in "Pandaemonium."

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by **Merilyn Jackson**, For The Inquirer

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The world premiere of the Nichole Canuso Dance Company's *Pandaemonium* began its Wednesday-through-Sunday run at FringeArts. Canuso is an accomplished dancer/choreographer, a FringeArts favorite, and the daughter of Theater Exile director Joe Canuso. No surprise, then, that her works are dance theater and that acting has always been part of her toolbox. Here, she has worked with Lars Jan and Early Morning Opera.

In *Pandaemonium*, as she did with an earlier Fringe show, *TAKES*, she chose a well-known actor, Geoff Sobelle, as her partner. Like her, Sobelle is an extraordinary performer. He has terrific, even athletic, movement chops.

We did double-takes watching Canuso and Sobelle on screen, wandering desert rock formations, where they spent more time together than they did on stage - merging into each other or writhing over the other's body on a tabletop. The video and interactive software design by Pablo N. Molina is one of the most successful and witty blends of dance and technology I've seen in some time.

Canuso's languid movement style contrasted sharply with Sobelle's. He uses every muscle and fiber of his body to convey meaning. So, when the two are reclining on plastic chaises, he inclines his head wearily toward the cold can of beer he is applying to his temple. Later, his convulsive body reveals an agony within.

Their ennui, and perhaps animosity, toward each other builds to the pandemonium that inevitably erupts. A male and female mannequin, in various stages of dress, perhaps represent the couple as normal or average, barbecuing or camping in the desert. But Canuso attacks the female mannequin, first dancing with it, then tearing it limb from limb. Soon, Sobelle follows suit with the male mannequin. A teary and disheveled Canuso faces a camera with a cardboard circle that serves as a steering wheel, and Sobelle follows behind her with headlights, so the film looks like a real car chase.

Throughout these prismatic relationship explorations, Xander Duell, on guitar in the background, sings his deceptively soothing songs. "Fear is man's best friend" is one line. Eventually, after a bout of boozing, Sobelle and Canuso do wind up in a tender, twisty dance on one of their tabletops.

It ends with a palindromic feel, as they watch themselves on the screen as if rerunning the reel of their life over and over.

*Pandaemonium*. Thursday through Sunday, FringeArts, 140 N. Columbus Blvd. Tickets: \$15-\$29. Information: 215-413-1318, fringearts.com.



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