



Presented by Dance Affiliates and the Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts

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## Dance Celebration presents the surrealistic Philadelphia premiere of *Oyster* from Israel's Inbal Pinto & Avshalom Pollak Dance Company

(Philadelphia, January 11, 2012)—A theatrical foray into a circus-world where the bizarre meets the fantastic with “wit, cleverness and odd beauty” (*The Village Voice*) is the stunning premise of Inbal Pinto & Avshalom Pollak Dance Company’s full-length Philadelphia premiere, *Oyster*, February 9-11 at the Annenberg Center as a part of the Dance Celebration 11/12 season.

Drawing its name from filmmaker Tim Burton’s (*Edward Scissorhands*, *Alice in Wonderland*) book of short poems and sketches, *Oyster* is a witty blend of ballet, mime, modern dance, physical comedy and acrobatics laden with the dreamlike qualities of Fellini, the keen intellect of Pina Bausch and the physical prowess of Cirque du Soleil.

Dance Celebration is presented by Dance Affiliates and the Annenberg Center. **Performances take place Thursday, February 9, 2012 at 7:30 PM; Friday, February 10, 2012 at 8 PM and Saturday, February 11, 2012 at 2 PM and 8 PM, 3680 Walnut St, Philadelphia, PA.** Tickets start at \$20. For tickets or for more information, please visit [AnnenbergCenter.org](http://AnnenbergCenter.org) or call 215.898.3900. Tickets can also be purchased in person at the Annenberg Center Box Office.

*Oyster*’s choreography, costumes and set, from the depths of directors Inbal Pinto and Avshalom Pollak’s imaginations, create a world that is “part surreal vaudeville, part circus, and part toy store after midnight... a delight for the eye” (*The Village Voice*) with wandering street acrobats, oddly striking creatures and enchanting dance. The cast of 12 performers in doll-like make-up, spiky blonde wigs and tutus alternately become puppets or puppeteers. In one delightful scene, a girl in a bouffant dress becomes a ringing bell. Recipient of Israel’s Theater Academy Award, *Oyster* boasts a score as eclectic as its performers, spanning opera (Pagliacci), tango (Piazzolla), Harry James, Yma Sumac and Tuvan throat singers.

Inbal Pinto (Artistic Director/Choreographer/Director) was born in Israel in 1969 and began her formal dance training at age 13. She studied graphic arts at The Bezalel Academy in Jerusalem and worked as a graphic designer for her army service. As a dancer, she first joined The Bat Sheva Ensemble and was promoted to the senior Bat Sheva Company. In 1990, Pinto began her career as a choreographer. She was invited to The American Dance Festival to take part in its International Choreographers Program in both 1997 and 1998. In 2000, she won a Bessie, the New York Dance and Performance Award for her creation *Wrapped*. Pinto also created the choreography for theatrical works, such as *The Chairs* and *Romeo and Juliet*. In 2000, she was given Israel’s Ministry of Culture Award for Dance and the Tel Aviv Municipal Award for Artistic Achievements.

Avshalom Pollak (Artistic Director/Choreographer/Director) was born in Israel in 1970. Trained as a classical actor, he graduated from The Nissan Nativ Drama School in Tel Aviv. He developed an understanding early of the commitment and drive needed to create a high-quality theatrical experience for an audience, after observing his father, a well-known Israel actor, from backstage. He has acted in films and television programs as well as many theatrical plays at The Habimah National Theatre, The Cameri Theatre, Geshen Theatre and The Haifa Municipal Theatre. His roles have included Romeo in *Romeo and Juliet*; Cassio in *Othello*; Valere in *The Miser*; Tuzenbach in *Three Sisters* and Phillip in *Orphans*.

Inbal Pinto and Avshalom Pollak founded their Tel Aviv-based company of 12 in 1992, and together they have created an impressive body of award-winning dance, theatre and opera. Their work has been acclaimed in Israel and world-wide for its innovative use of dancers and actors as well as their uniquely visual approach to production values. Part of a new

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generation of Israeli choreographers, Pinto and Pollak create all of their own sets, props, costumes, wigs and make-up as well as creating their eclectic soundscapes. All of the elements become integral parts of the hypnotic fantasy world created on stage.

**Significant funding for the 11/12 Dance Celebration season** is provided by the William Penn Foundation and also in part by Dolfinger-McMahon Foundation, Friends of Dance (Affiliates), the National Dance Project of the New England Foundation for the Arts, The Philadelphia Cultural Fund and the Virginia C. Mulconroy Fund of The Philadelphia Foundation.

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### **Dance Celebration**

Founded by Artistic Director Randy Swartz, Dance Celebration is the Greater Philadelphia region's major contemporary dance series and nationally-recognized in its field. For the past 29 seasons, Dance Celebration has been a collaboration between Dance Affiliates and Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts.

The annual Dance Celebration series engages a broad range of world-class and emerging dance companies each season. As a major cultural asset to the city and region, the program helps enhance the quality of life of both residents and visitors. Supporting Dance Celebration's primary mission of presenting and commissioning is a commitment to the presentation of diverse styles and choreography, cultures and nationalities; the cultivation of broadly-based adult and children's audiences; the enrichment of the school curriculum through quality children's matinees, arts education, and outreach; collaborations with performing arts partners in the field; and service to the local dance community through workshops, master classes, seminars and symposia.

Throughout its illustrious history, Dance Celebration has had ancillary series including the edgy NextMove Festival (1987-2003), the groundbreaking Monday Night Series (1986-1998), and numerous special events (1987-2011). Nikolais Dance Theatre, Dance Theatre of Harlem, Pilobolus Dance Theater and Murray Louis Dance Company launched the inaugural season at Annenberg Center in 1983, followed in subsequent years by modern dance legends Dance Celebration followed in subsequent years by modern dance legends Martha Graham, Merce Cunningham, Paul Taylor, Alvin Ailey, Bella Lewitsky and José Limon.

### **Dance Affiliates**

Founded in 1979 by artistic director Randy Swartz as American Ballet Competition, the organization later changed its name to Dance Affiliates, reflecting its mission since 1983 as one of the nation's few remaining dance-only presenters. Its annual Dance Celebration program is Philadelphia's acclaimed and longest-running series of world-class contemporary dance. Having presented 200 companies in 1,500 performances, Dance Affiliates provides a wealth of opportunities for the Philadelphia-area community to interact with visiting dance artists through master classes, residencies, artistic collaborations, symposiums, film screenings, workshops, special student programs and pre- and post- performance curtain talks. Through more than 600 outreach programs, 30,000 students and aspiring dancers have been served. Visit [www.danceaffiliates.org](http://www.danceaffiliates.org).

### **The Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts**

The University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts has been the region's leading multi-disciplinary performance venue for theatre, dance, jazz, world music, new music and children's programming since its inception in 1971. The Annenberg Center's curatorial vision emphasizes four primary values: artistic integrity, cultural diversity, curatorial balance and a willingness to take risks. By presenting world-renowned and cutting edge artists and companies that express adventuresome perspectives on contemporary issues, timeless ideas and diverse cultures, the Annenberg Center promotes critical thinking and dialogue among its audiences, creating a uniquely rewarding arts experience.

### **Annenberg Center 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season**

For the past 40 years, the Annenberg Center has dedicated itself to the advancement of a diverse and thriving cultural community through the pursuit of excellence, innovation and intellectual engagement in the realms of music, theatre and dance. To celebrate the momentous occasion, the Annenberg Center has put together one of the most expansive seasons ever—a nod towards the colorful history of presenting the best of the best from all corners of the globe. With highly acclaimed artists from six continents, audiences can take a journey around the world without leaving their seat. From Zakir Hussain of India and Chunky Move of Australia to the Gate Theatre of Ireland to the Spirit of Uganda from Africa, audience members will see the world in a whole new way.

**For additional press information or to set up interviews, please contact:**

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