

Extreme movement with Pilobolus

By Ellen Dunkel
INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

Forget “they make it look easy” — when the dancers of Pilobolus Dance Theatre perform, they make it look all but impossible.

Pilobolus, perhaps most widely known for twining bodies into outrageous formations at the 2007 Academy Awards and the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics, opened Thursday at the Annenberg Center with a weird, wonderful evening of dance interspersed with amusingly out-there short films.

Sheer strength is the name of the game in *Gnomes*, a piece for four men set to music by Paul Sullivan and throat singing by Matt Kent. Slowly and with intense core control, the four become one as they roll on stage as a human wheel, hold a man upside down by his arms, lift a dancer with only their feet, balance someone on his head, and defy gravity in countless ways.

Want to see a music video performed live? *Skyscrapers* is based on Trish Sie’s choreography for the riveting OK Go video in which Sie and a partner tango past various colorful backdrops, dressed to match each one. Pilobolus performs it with three couples who are quick-change artists, often cleverly swapping outfit after outfit right before our eyes in the span of a single song.

All Is Not Lost — also the

See **PILOBOLUS** on C3

work of Sie, also set to OK Go — takes the movement to different levels. The dancers performed on a clear elevated platform with a camera below transmitting images to a screen. So while they slither across the platform on the right side of the stage, they seem to be swimming across the screen at left; when standing and performing simple arm movements, they make interconnected shapes on the screen. They smile and play with the audience all the while, and the piece is loads of fun.

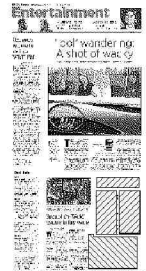
The program opens with *Azimuth*, a mini-circus — dancers on tight-rope, performing with hoops, juggling, balancing balls and metal bars — that sets up the evening for more gravity-defying, shape-shifting, strong-bodied, quick-changing enchantment.

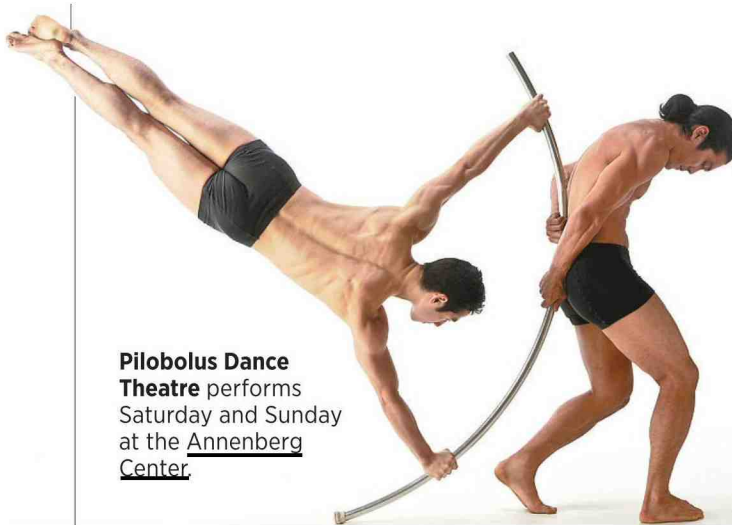
All that plus “Explosions,” a short film by Dumt & Farligt that shows what happens if you take a baseball bat to an egg, a chainsaw to a bottle of soda, or put a nice merlot in the microwave. And there’s even a Philly connection: Renee Jaworski, associate artistic director, received her bachelor of fine arts from University of the Arts and has created work here.

There are other companies that take art to extremes, but Pilobolus proves once more that it does it best.

Additional performances: 2 and 8 p.m. Saturday and 2 p.m. Sunday at the Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, 3680 Walnut St. Information: 215-898-3900 or www.annenbergcenter.org

Contact Ellen Dunkel at edunkel@philly.com.





Pilobolus Dance Theatre performs Saturday and Sunday at the Annenberg Center.