

## The sparkling fun snowballs

By Nancy G. Heller  
FOR THE INQUIRER

**Y**ou expect a lot from a Brian Sanders production: exquisite beauty, slapstick humor, and gasp-inducing feats of derring-do. And *Snowball*, Sanders' latest, delivers on all counts. In fact, for this viewer, *Snowball* delivers a little too much.

### Dance Review

The plot is ostensibly about an evil urban landlady (Christine Morano) who is ultimately defeated through the transformative power of love, imagination, and really good dancing. There are a lot of marvelous elements in *Snowball* — the intense hip-hop

number in Act I, the gorgeous love duets between Ann-Marie Gover and Tommy Schimmel, and the running gag about Morano's footwear, ever higher, sparkling platforms with killer stiletto heels that she eventually trades in for a pair of spangled stilts, atop which she still manages to dance.

It's hard to believe your eyes, as the "Ruffians" (residents of the gritty street designed by Pedro da Silva and beautifully lit by Jay Madara) scamper up and down the scaffolding that covers

much of the Annenberg Center stage, to say nothing of John Howell IV's openwork metal sculptures, inside which dancers are suspended, making intricate designs with their bodies as the pieces twirl.

Especially astonishing were the teeter-totterlike segment featuring John Luna and Billy Robinson, and Gover's thrilling swoops across the stage on a gigantic bungee cord.

I would have preferred to sit back and bask in the sheer wonderfulness of Sanders' always-inventive choreography, plus the dancers' uniformly superb performances, without worrying about who was who, or why the entire work was set to 1980s pop-music classics. (Postmodern irony is one thing. ...)

Still, it was impossible not to laugh when, at evening's end, cast members pelted the audience with (cotton) snowballs, which the audience threw right back. And who wouldn't love a Grand Finale in which a troupe of pseudo-rabbits (Sanders' so-called Gang of Fur, in costumes designed by Jill Keys, with floppy ears and fuzzy tails attached to their droopy white drawers) started to shimmy and shake? Lee Ann Etzold directed and wrote this "Winter Wonderland Furry-tail."

Through Dec. 15 at the Annenberg Center, 3680 Walnut St. Tickets: \$20-\$40. Information: 215-898-3900 or [www.AnnenbergCenter.org](http://www.AnnenbergCenter.org).



The "Gang of Fur" pseudo-rabbits shimmy and shake in the finale of Brian Sanders' "Snowball."

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