

DANCE REVIEW

Bad Boys of Dance, all in good fun

By Ellen Dunkel

INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

Dance is art. But sometimes, it's also just pure fun.

Rasta Thomas' Bad Boys of Dance brought out all the fireworks Thursday night, when they opened a three-day run at the Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts. It was entertaining, accessible, and yes, artistically sound — if occasionally over the top.

The Boys' program is an 80-minute spectacle of tricks, beautiful bodies, and pulsating colored light. The dance seamlessly blends the sharp arm movements of hip-hop and ballet's entrechats and arabesques, with contemporary, jazz, and other forms mixed in, all set to a score of 19 mostly highly recognizable pop songs. It feels like an evening-length music video.

Choreographed by Adrienne Canterna — Thomas' wife, codirector, and the one "Girl" in the seven-dancer cast — the show is divided into two parts. The first, "Don't Stop Believin'," features a light story line. Canter-

na enters to "My Sharona" as the love interest in an on-and-off affair with Kevin Mylrea. She lights up the stage with a series of very fast pique and chaine turns, whipping her white-blonde hair behind her. The movement itself is not particularly difficult, but she adds speed and sass.

The second part, "We Are the Champions," is a showstopper, with acrobatics, long leaps, and series of seven or more pirouettes dazzling the audience to pop numbers such as "Moves Like Jagger" and "Stayin' Alive." Here, more tricks are added, including split jumps, back flips, and arm stands.

It isn't long before the Boys are bringing "SexyBack," ripping off their shirts, flaunting their abs, and strutting into Chippendales territory.

The dancers are clearly beautiful, confident, athletic. The hyper-sexiness gets the audience going, but it seems cheap. They don't need it. Let the dancing speak for itself, and they would be golden.

Additional performances: 2 and 8

p.m. Saturday at the Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, 3680 Walnut St., Philadelphia. Tickets: \$20-\$55. Information: 215-898-3900 or www.annenbergcenter.org

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Rasta Thomas' Bad Boys of Dance mixed athleticism with pop hits in an over-the-top performance. OLIVER FANTITISCH

