

DANCE REVIEW

BalletBoyz bring the thrills

By Merylyn Jackson
FOR THE INQUIRER

The first time I reviewed London's BalletBoyz, for their 2003 American debut, I said they were too cute for words, though I did think of a few: *gymnastic, marvelous, elegant*. Now, I add *exciting*.

Their new show, *theTalent*, touring worldwide, kicked off its American leg at Dance Celebration's 2014 series Thursday night at the Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, and it's more than exciting. It's thrilling.

Former principal Royal Ballet dancers Michael Nunn and William Trevitt left the Royal in 1999 to form their own company, George Piper (their middle names) Dances. But a BBC-imposed nickname, BalletBoyz, was harder to flick away than toilet paper on a wet jazz shoe. It stuck.

This company iteration has

10 breathlessly matchless men with the most exquisite foot, torso, and arm articulations and noiseless landings.

In Liam Scarlett's ethereal "Serpent," the men wear tights with built-in kneepads for the arduous floor work. To a riveting Max Richter score, they lie on their sides, backs to the audience, waving their perpendicular arms like sea snakes. Once on their feet, their athletic lifts and drops are measured, and as couples they face off adversarially in hand-to-hand-contact improv and head butts.

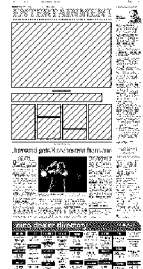
Facing upstage, the tallest, Adam Kirkham, begins a chain of men in descending height, locking arms around the next one's neck and leaning back until Matthew Rees arrives, looks them over, and decides not to join.

For his macho "Fallen," Russell

Maliphant uses the beautifully driven rhythms of film-score composer Armand Amar. In what could be military or prison garb, five dancers form a tight wheel turning clockwise while the other five circle them in the opposite direction. Elevated fish dives required a third dancer to hold the chest of the upended, perfectly rigid dancer. And Andrea Carruciu's sinewy solo, his impeccably pointed feet, mesmerized. The dark work ends as it began. No one has escaped the circle, whatever it represents.

Michael Hull lit both works, creating many sculptural effects on the men's musculature.

Additional performances: 2 and 8 p.m. Saturday at the Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, 3680 Walnut St. Tickets: \$20-\$60. Information: 215-898-3900 or www.annenbergcenter.org.





London's BalletBoyz are performing in the Dance Celebration series at the Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts. PANAYIOTIS SINNOS