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Pilobolus Dance Theatre: Azimuth

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Pilobolus Dance Theater (Source: John Kane)

Pilobolus Dance Theatre": Azimuth packs them in at Dance Celebration, as one of the first acrobatic, conceptual dance companies to carve a strong, influential following here. After two decades they are more popular than ever and returned to the Annenberg Center last week. DC Artistic Director Randy Swartz noted that this was their best-sold show.

For the uninitiated, the name refers to a fungus and those amorphous shapes are occasional bipeds, but in some pieces, that is almost a rarity.

This sampler concert was a mix of mostly new works starting with "Azimuth" choreographed by Renee Jaworski, Michael Tracy and Michael Moschen. The title means vanishing point at horizon.

The tableau creates a galaxy of suspended orbs, rings and dance arcs. The main prop was a steel ring that

the dancers partnered to hypnotic effect. There were dance hi-jinx with stacks of dancers' heads and 'follow that ball on the liquid' body tricks. The performance played out a bit long, but delighting the kids in the audience (and those of us who think like one).

Next was a creepy silhouette dance, "Transformation." This is a new work in silhouette that has a young lass transformed rather brutally into a cute hound. This is as scary as a Rorschach test as she is morphed by a giant hand into a Huckleberry Hound and sent on her way. Huge laughs from those kids in the audience, even if some of us ancients cringed.