

ENTERTAINMENT

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Madge not happy with M.I.A. **C2**

Pinto/Pollak does "Oyster." **C3**

Inquirer fashion writer Elizabeth Wellington reports from New York Fashion Week on her blog, "Mirror Image," at www.philly.com/mirrorimage and on Twitter at @ewellington



Saturday, Feb. 11, 2012 ★ Section C

Review *Music*

Violinist James Ehnes offered a marvelous Mendelssohn concerto.



A gifted night

Wrong again

Since the misleading pilot, "Are You There, Chelsea?" has been unfunny. It's faltering so badly that a newbie has been rushed to the rescue.

I like to think I'm big enough to admit it when I've been wrong. (Given the frequency of my errors, that makes me pretty immense.)

My review last month of the NBC comedy *Are You There, Chelsea?* was totally off base. I wrote that the show was funny and would succeed if only the real Chelsea (Handler) butted out. (In a weird transposition, Laura Prepon plays the sitcom Chelsea and Handler, in a bad wig, has a recurring role as her older sister, Sloane.)

So, how was I wrong? Let me count

David Hiltbrand

Dave on Demand



the ways. First, I was fooled by a slick pilot. (Happens all the time.) *AYT,C?* hasn't been funny since that first episode.

In fact, the only times it exhibits any signs of life are when Handler

does show up for a Sloane scene (so much for butting out). I suspect that's because the writers rack their brains to come up with rimshot lines for the show's executive producer and queen bee.

One of the surest signs that a new series is floundering is when it wedges a character into the main ensemble in the first few months of its existence.

That's a tacit admission by the writers that the show isn't working, that they can't create any chemistry with

See **DAVE ON DEMAND** on C3

Review *Dance*

Philadelphia is troupe's 'Oyster'

By Nancy G. Heller
FOR THE INQUIRER

It's 60 minutes of sheer delight — jam-packed with slapstick humor, astonishing acrobatic feats, witty visual effects, romance, heartbreak, and music ranging from jazz to Tuvan throat singing. *Oyster*, inspired by a book of poems by filmmaker Tim Burton, is a signature work of Israel's award-winning Inbal Pinto & Avshalom Pollak Dance Company. The troupe's three-day run at the Annenberg Center, which began Thursday, marks the end of its latest U.S. tour.

While each of the vignettes that make up *Oyster* evokes its own mood, the overall sense of eeriness and androgyny — and especially the dancers' stark white makeup, fright wigs, and outrageous costumes — are certainly Burtonesque. (Think: Johnny Depp in *Edward Scissorhands*, Michael Keaton in *Beetlejuice*, Helena Bonham Carter in practically anything.) But *Oyster* also owes a lot to the circus, Federico Fellini, and the cracked sensibili-

ty of Edward Gorey.

There's no linear, identifiable "plot" here, but there are distinctive recurring characters, notably a woman in a bright orange wig, dark tutu, pointe shoes, and a black turtleneck that obscures the lower half of her face. We don't know who she is or why she has a tiny step stool attached to her rear end. But, because of the performers' skill and the endless inventiveness of co-artistic directors Pinto, a dancer, and Pollak, a classically trained actor, who create the choreography and design soundscapes, sets, and costumes for all their works, we do wonder about this. We also care about *Oyster's* other creatures as they crawl, stagger, shimmy, scuttle, strut, and fly about the stage.

But *Oyster* isn't simply a parade of "acts." There's regular dancing, too, including a quirky and demanding sequence, performed by six people in tattered black frock coats, that would fit right into the repertoire of any contemporary company. The 12-member cast (which seems much



ELAZAR HAREL

Inbal Pinto & Avshalom Pollak Dance Company performs "Oyster" at the Annenberg Center. The shows, which will conclude Saturday night, end the Israeli troupe's latest U.S. tour.

larger) has the astounding physical control, and the comedic chops, to pull it all off.

Much of this piece's power comes from its wild, complex, and fast-paced sequences. But one of the most affecting moments occurs at the very end, when two women slowly walk upstage, accompanied by sweet, slightly melancholy violin-and-piano music, and

appear to dissolve into the back wall of the theater. It is a moment of genuine pathos and unexpected beauty.

Additional performances: 2 and 8 p.m. Saturday at the Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, 3680 Walnut St. Tickets: \$20-50. Information: 215-898-3900 or AnnenbergCenter.org.

Dave on Demand

Continued from C1
the ingredients they have, so, for the love of Mike, can we please try throwing something else in the pot?

In the case of *Are You There, Chelsea?*, it's Natasha Leggero as Nikki, a nasty, nasal golddigger with an astounding collection of push-up bras. She's become the focus of most recent episodes.

Can I get a do-over on that review?

The NBC sitcom isn't the only freshman show bringing in emergency replacements. CBS's *Unforgettable* added first a computer expert (Britt Lower) with eyes for Detective Saunders and, as of this week, a flinty new medical examiner (Jane Curtin). Did I dream up *Kate & Allie* or did that show actually exist?

How do you think these additions make the original cast feel? Like dinner guests who during drinks see their hostess in the next room on the phone, then hastily rearranging the table to add two more settings.

Minutes later, there's a knock on the door. The hostess admits a couple. "These are our neighbors, the Watsons. They're going to be joining us. Scooch over on the couch there. They just got back from Phoenix. How was the desert?"

And you realize that not only has your company been found lacking, not only are these newcomers going to be eating part of your meal, but they're also going to be mo-

that you've got game. But don't turn your back on Pops Grayson. The man has a plan for taking revenge on his boss's cereal.

Where'd you learn to...?
There was a nice coin tribute to Don Cornish this week's *Glee*. In a side shot months ago, Matt Martin played Spanish teacher (and former toothache) David Martinez.

He explained to Schuester (Matthew Morrison) that his Chilean teacher only spoke Spanish and learned to speak English watching reruns of *Train*.

Don Cornelius — the sorcerer.

Down, boy! Best line of the week came on *2 Broke Girls* when Oleg (Jonathan Demme) the diner's creepy shopkeeper chef, was coming on strong to the girls' neighbor Sofie (Jennifer Coolidge). She listened to him calmly and then told him hard with a rattle of a newspaper she was holding. An admiring Max (Kerry Washington) said, "You can handle yourself. That's rock, paper, pervert."

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Orchestra

and trombonist Nitzan Haroz (soon to be of the Los Angeles Philharmonic) — were spectacularly assured and refined. The gift they gave Dutoit, it seems, was a night in which the student surpassed

was the ensemble, for which Dutoit could claim primary authorship. Interpretively, it wasn't about revelation but rather homogeneity. Dutoit has a way of rounding out the ensemble