



Photo: Nadirah Zakariya

## **About Pilobolus: A Brief History**

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In 1970, several young men enrolled at Dartmouth College, took a dance class...to fulfill a physical education requirement. With interests as diverse as history, philosophy, and psychology, the idea of standing alone, in front of a class, and moving, was frightening. So they "clung to one another for both moral and physical support" building dances as a collective while at the same time creating something they thought was "cool".

Following graduation the "company without a name" headed to a member's dairy farm in Vermont where they continued their movement discoveries; creating choreography that relied on their collective creativity, humor, and interest in telling stories with their bodies. It was here, that PILOBOLUS was born; and audiences loved this new kind of Modern Dance.

This collective creativity continues to this day. Dancers along with members of the Artistic Team and often artists from different genres create dance collaboratively. Their physical inventions often appear to defy gravity or create new life forms right before your eyes.

In the more than four decades since, Pilobolus has performed on Broadway, at the Oscars, and the Olympic games, and has appeared on television, in movies, in advertisements, and in schools and businesses. They have created over 120 dance works and toured to 65 countries.

As you watch the performance, keep in mind how this company came to be. Watch for those moments of connectiveness; when one or more bodies join together to support another while moving through space; when dancers appear to transform into something completely new. In those moments, you too will become connected...to PILOBOLUS.



Photo: John Kane

## About the Performance: *PILOBOLUS IS A FUNGUS*

Each of us is part of our environment. We are connected to nature whether we know it or not. From its beginnings, Pilobolus has been inspired by the humor and beauty in nature. We even get our name from nature. Pilobolus is a fungus that grows in cow manure. We created the show *Pilobolus is a Fungus* to showcase the growth and the decay, the joy and the darkness, the movement and the little invisible community of animals and plants that surround us that we don't see.

### ***BRANCHES (2017)***

#### **Performance Section Titles**

**Down by the Water:** People are animals. Animals have a community too. They all meet at the watering hole. This is the center of their community, interaction, and social life.

**Up in a Tree:** Have you ever noticed the movement of trees and plants outside your window? The world outside is full of movement and motion, wind and light. The animals in the landscape are in constant interaction with these elements.

**Mr. Right:** Humans have dances they do to attract love. Animals do too! We dance the tango, and the bird of paradise performs an equally intricate mating dance.

**What's Left:** The sun goes down, flowers wilt, light falls and the cycle of life continues.

**There will be a 10 minute Q&A with the dancers following the performance.**



**What's in a Name?** *Pilobolus crystallinus* is a phototropic (light loving) fungus. Commonly known as "Hat Thrower," its spores accelerate 0–45 mph in the first millimeter of their flight and adhere to wherever they land. "It's a feisty little thing—only ¼ inch tall, the length of your fingernail—and can throw its spores nearly 3 feet!"

This fungus also has a light sensitive area causing it to face the sun as it grows. As the fungus matures, water pressure builds inside its stalk until the tip literally explodes, shooting the spores into the daylight and landing up to 8 feet away. One spore can even shoot over a cow!

Like its namesake – a fungus that propels its spores into the world with extraordinary velocity – Pilobolus spreads seeds of expression through movement around the globe. The image of a spore shooting itself through the air was the perfect metaphor for the style dance they were creating, and hence, the perfect name for their new company – Pilobolus!

**THE PILOBOLUS DICTIONARY** – Here are some words you might hear at the performance and those that are part of the company's toolbox when they make a dance:

**Collaboration** (noun): one of the foundations of the way in which Pilobolus works, by working together...in tightly knit groups/teamwork.

**Improvisation** (noun): often the manner in which Pilobolus creates a dance: by trying things out and/or inventing new movement; the art of creating something without advance preparation.

**Partnering or Weight Sharing** (verbs): in Pilobolus, the physical process of connecting one or more dancers together by taking and receiving weight. In doing this, new shapes are created which may or may not move as a single unit.

**Pilobolize/Pilobolizing**: (verb): to make something the way Pilobolus would.

**Pilobolean** (adj.): to act or be like a Pilobolus dancer/company member.

**Piloboli** (noun): more than one Pilobolus dancer/company member.

## The Role of the Choreographer and Pilobolus

A choreographer designs the steps or patterns of steps and teaches the dancers those steps and ways to use their bodies to communicate an idea. Choreographers are sometimes inspired by a certain piece of music or an image, idea, mood or feeling they wish to express through movement. Some choreographers are storytellers meaning that they create a narrative through the physical action of the dancers. Other choreographers work in abstract forms in which they let the audience determine the meaning of the dance based on their individual experiences of it.

Pilobolus uses a collaborative, creative and education process when designing each new work; inviting a diverse group of artists, choreographers and dancers to their new works development sessions to create as a team. This collaborative process inspires imaginative and fresh performance pieces.

Moses Pendleton, one of Pilobolus' collaborators shares "You have got to use your imagination, and in our shows, we try to create what I call 'optical confusion,' designed to excite the brain cells and stimulate creativity."

## Pilobolus and Music

In Katherine Teck's "Ear Training for the Body," she addresses the connection between music and dance; it can help establish where you are, how to move, what the story or theme is, even bring unity to the piece.

The work of Pilobolus is no different. More often than not, the company seldom completes a dance without the added element of music, or sound. Though there are occasions where the absence of sound or music helps tell a "different story."

The process of adding that aural element can happen in several ways: a work can be choreographed in the studio without music or sound; or, existing music (or pieces from a variety of compositions), that has the "feel" the choreographers need to express their idea, is used. Another way is when a composer observes and participates in the creation of the work as it develops. When this occurs, an original score evolves from the "back and forth" or "give and take" relationship between choreographers, musician(s), and dancers. This collaboration is yet one more example of how important the collaborative process is to PILBOLUS.

As you watch, and listen to *Pilobolus is a Fungus*, consider how the music or sound, or perhaps its absence, connects to each piece. How important is the music or sound to the dancers' movement? Is it another part of the story or helping illuminate where the story takes place? It's up to you to decide, because as the audience member, what you see and how it makes you feel, is an important part of experiencing dance, and the amazing PILOBOLUS.