



THE NEW ZEALAND PERFORMING ARTS REVIEW & DIRECTORY
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REFRESHING, INDIOSYNCRATIC, VIRTUOSIC BRAZILIAN DANCE



Credit: José Luiz Pederneiras

New Zealand International Arts Festival 2012

Parabelo/Onqoto

Choreographer: Rodrigo Pederneiras

Artistic Director: Paulo Pederneiras

Music: Tom Zé, José Miguel Wisnik and Caetano Veloso.

at St James Theatre, Wellington

From 24 Feb 2012 to 27 Feb 2012

[1 hr 45 mins]

Reviewed by Greer Robertson, 25 Feb 2012

A fresh breath of physical Brazilian difference breezes into Wellington.

With moves having started out as street dancing, this dynamic Brazilian Dance Company takes a cultural blend, adds contemporary dance and then totally refines it in a unique way. The result, an interesting and exciting distinctive mix.

Having been in existence for the past 37 years, Grupo Corpo, literally meaning Body Group has developed this idiosyncratically infused expression with extensive global performances. How refreshing to witness a large company of 20 exceptionally trained dancers in non-angst modern dance. Their performance is a celebration of culture, life, and the body culminating in a never ceasing demonstration of their honed dance skills.

The programme comprises of two major works interspersed with all too brief pockets of visual diversity as the occasional welcome surprise.

Dressed in figure-hugging lycra with every sinew exposed to scrutiny, the dancers give their all. Again and again and again they repeatedly undulate, thrust, kick and sway in a truly unique way. On a bare stage with static visuals, floor patterns appear within the energetic choreography accompanied by percussion beats. Communication is via the move and the body, the body and the move.

After one extols the supreme physical prowess of a body being able to execute such moves with longevity, the choreographic repetition tends to become slightly monotonous without a building crescendo. This however only happens in the first piece Parabelo. But with liquid fluidity and consummate flexibility, the dancers execute these difficult full ranged movements with dexterity and contemporary panache.

And onto the next piece, Onqoto. Set within a circular stadium feel, the dancers portray more character-like personas. There is a colourful happier carnival feel. A fun soccer representation is depicted and a level of humanity is exhibited by way of two duets where relationships are tested to the full.

The duet episode to my mind was the highlight of the programme, all too brief and definitely worthy of longer and further exploration. Superbly brilliant in every way, I wanted more. It was stunning. I, along with the audience about me lifted themselves higher in their seats, breathtakingly in awe of its magnificence.

The staging and certainly the lighting are also worthy of separate mention. Clever black lighting, shadows and strobe effects without even having a strobe are seen. Innovative floor to ceiling movable rubber curtains are there in all their glory if not underused at times. Of these, I also wanted more involvement.

Overall, a rare treat however.

For the price of a theatre seat, thanks to the International Arts Festival we are able to see such a high calibre cultural performance, without having to pay for a flight to Brazil.