

Brazilian dance company provides vivid performance

John Daly-Peoples | Sunday February 26, 2012



Parabelo / Onquoto Grupo Corpo St
James Theatre
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New Zealand International Arts Festival

Grupo Corpo vividly bring to life the colours and sound of Brazil in a powerful display of dancing by dancers who are superbly athletic with an obvious passion.

They are able to convey the rhythms of nature, the beauty of the body and the emotions of the individual. Each country endeavors to find new forms of contemporary dance but it is not sufficient to merely try for novelty and spectacle. It needs to be dance which reflects the country and the people who make it.

In order to do that the choreographers and dancers need to dig deep into their cultural past and the contemporary cultural landscape.

Grupo Corpo has done that with dances which look at aspects of their contemporary culture such as football, the natural environment with its strange animals and plants which comes out of the forests, as well as popular dance which comes out of the dance halls and off the streets.

In Parabelo the dancers initially perform on an almost dark stage so that the rapid movements of arms and legs are like flashes of colour and light strobing across the stage. Their movements appear to be a complex combination of random movements and mathematically precise trajectories.

All the dancers display an incredible versatility with subtly nuanced gestures. In the second section of Parabelo there is an incredible duo in which a male enters carrying a limp female form. Slowly the two dancers embark on a series of dance sequences in which they stay intertwined but dancing to their own rhythms and movements.

The work is a metaphor for the conflicts, tensions and dependence between couples. In other sequences the dancers explore the way their bodies respond to the varying rhythms with rapid movements in which they employ high kicks, gymnastic rolls and falls. Muscles, arms, legs, stomachs and necks flex, tense and relax as the dancers move from high energy dance to an almost hypnotic state.

Onqotô which took its original inspiration from the social dynamic of Rio and the rivalry between the two main football clubs has evolved into a series of dances with themes around attraction and repulsion, chaos and order.

The opening sequence with its high kicks and leaps and lunges shows the way that dance connects to the physical aspects of sport and then morphs into a vast display which owes much to flamenco, the stage shuddering with mass foot stamping. After a series of formal dances between all the dancers two couples pair off to perform mating dances in which they alternate between romantic couplings and sexually physical coupling.

This is a superb sequence contrasting emotional tenderness and sexual intensity, the dancers bodies become expressive dynamos.

The continually evolving and changing dances range from an enigmatic solo of one male slowly unfurling himself to stand nude on the stage to lively works where the dancers ricochet around the stage in dances of unparalleled enthusiasm and dynamism and visual richness.

John Daly-Peoples stayed in Wellington courtesy Comfort Hotel

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