

Edinburgh International Festival: Grupo Corpo, Edinburgh Festival Theatre

Published on 23 Aug 2010

Mary Brennan

It's in the way they move.

As if the foxy, thrumming rhythms of the Brazilian music slip under the skin of these dancers, rippling every muscle, every sinew, from the soles of their feet up, paying special attention to the hips, then the shoulders, so that even a simple walking step insinuates itself off the Richter scale of effortless sensuality.

They do more than just stroll languorously. Thrillingly articulate limbs flick into a whole range of kicking, spinning, jumping moves that meld the uncluttered lines of classical technique with the dynamic footwork, hip sways and shimmies that choreographer Rodrigo Pedemereis has sourced from the popular dance forms – many of them born out of African influences – that flourish across Brazil.

Parabelo, the first piece on this double bill, celebrates the vitality of regional cultures – this one is in the north-east – in a slow burn of gathering complexities.

At first the dancers, bodies slicked over with red unitards, are flexing on the floor to an insistent beat. By the end, they're in hot yellow, orange or red flares, and the bare bones of that opening have fleshed out into a vibrant display of nuanced syncopations.

Ôngoto is a more coolly amused, yet more profound, use of Pedemereis' distinctive, hybrid vocabulary. And yes, football does enter into the question of existence, in a witty upbeat section but a series of finely-crafted duets where dark tensions joust with tender rapport show just how brilliantly Pedemereis and his dancers can switch not just rhythms but moods. And the music throughout is a treat in itself.

Star rating: ****