

## Grupo Corpo gives dance a Brazilian spin



Society For The Performing Arts

Legendary ensemble Grupo Corpo of Brazil performs in an unusual dance that integrates the language of lindy-hop with the more abstract theme of the law of magnetism. Another featured work, *Sem Mim (Without Me)*, evokes the rhythms of the sea.

By Theodore Bale

March 10, 2013

Ask the average person what he or she thinks about contemporary dance, and many will say it is brooding, serious, maybe even overwrought. Since its founding in 1975 in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, however, the legendary ensemble Grupo Corpo has taken a different approach.

"I don't like the idea that it has to be dark, drastic, heavy, down," choreographer Rodrigo Pederneiras said, "Therefore, my creative process flows in a different direction.

"I'm guided by a Brazilian way to see the life," he says, "which is colorful, rhythmic and always looking forward."

Society for the Performing Arts brings the company to the Wortham Theater Center for two lively performances Thursday and Friday.

The program both nights features "Ímã," Pederneiras' renowned 2009 dance set to an original score by & 2 (the Brazilian trio of Alexandre Kassin, Moreno Veloso and Domenico Lancelotti). This unusual dance integrates the language of Lindy Hop with the more abstract theme of the law of magnetism, attempting to embrace how particles repel or attract one another.

The other featured work, "Sem Mim (Without Me)," evokes the rhythms of the sea. It's set to music by Carlos Núñez and José Miguel Wisnik based on the "Sea of Vigo Song Cycle" by 13th-century Galician-Portuguese composer Martín Codax.

Another significant characteristic of Grupo Corpo: The entire company aspires to move as one. Pederneiras often refers to "our body" when talking about the dancers and artistic staff. While individual artists shine during performances, the ensemble has always preferred to imagine itself as a singular entity.

Early dances in the company's repertory, such as "Maria Maria" and "O ultimo trem" (choreographed by Oscar Araís and produced by his Argentinian team), showed a tendency toward narrative.

"I personally believe that dance isn't a type of art that should be seen as a story line," Pederneiras said. "In our works, we don't develop histories. Rather, we try to evoke feelings and emotions. Our main goal is to touch deeply, to enchant, to move and to captivate the audience."

That philosophy has held fast since Pederneiras became resident choreographer in the early 1980s, a move he says caused a drastic stylistic change. Further experimentation unfolded.

"Until the beginning of the '0s, we always created choreographies with erudite music. [They] were neoclassical creations," he said.

The company seems to be in its artistic prime, after many years of successful innovation and extensive touring.

"Our third phase, and the most important in my point of view, was marked by the search for our Brazilian identity. Corroborating this idea, all soundtracks since 1992 were especially composed for our creations by Brazilian musicians," he explained.

Does he have any advice for aspiring choreographers and fledgling dance companies?

"I believe that the most important thing is to believe in the people you're working with. The continuity of a work is developed on its creation, and it will determine its direction. It is very important to stay connected when working as a team and trust your colleagues 100 percent," he said.

*Grupo Corpo*

When: 8 p.m. Thursday-Friday

Where: Wortham Theater Center, 501 Texas

Tickets: \$35-\$70; 713-227-4772 or [www.spahouston.org](http://www.spahouston.org)



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Legendary ensemble Grupo Corpo of Brazil performs "Sem Mim (Without Me)" as part of its program this week at the Wortham Theater Center.