

GRUPO CORPO

Santagustin

(première 2002)

choreography: **Rodrigo Pederneiras**

music: **Tom Zé** and **Gilberto Assis**

set Design: **Paulo Pederneiras** and **Fernando Velloso**

costume Design: **Ronaldo Fraga**

lighting: **Paulo Pederneiras**

The main theme of Santagustin is love, but not the romantic ideal love. What predominates on stage is the bitter-sweet humor, influenced by pop culture, sometimes disparaging, but never skeptical or cynical, for love is indeed in evidence.

The choreography by Rodrigo Pederneiras may cause some sort of surprise, due to its tittle: Santagustin, which is an alteration, in a very Mineiro way, of the name of Saint Augustin, but the Ballet does not derive from the thoughts and confessions of the IV and V Century philosopher. It was Tom Zé who had him in mind while creating the Soundtrack, inspired by the contrast between his life of excesses before his conversion to christianity and his battle with the pleasures of the flesh. It is a kind of tension that appealed to the composer, who was trying to “harmonize unharmonizable things” in his work, the opposite aspects of the philosopher’s life. This tension also inspired Rodrigo in creating the choreography, which defies contrasts. That’s the way they appropriated, conceptually and linguistically, from Saint Augustin.

Rodrigo hardly remembers a time in which eroticism was so evident in any of his choreographies. But, through most of it, it translates into a playful kind of eroticism, with the kind of humor that permeates the whole show. “Our main idea was to laugh in the face of love, paying back what it does to us, by putting it in the same position”, Rodrigo explains with a laugh. “Love puts us through ridiculous, awkward and painful situations, and the paradox lies in the fact that, in the one hand it gives us great strenght to do things, in the other hand, it puts us in a extremely fragile position”.

Two *pas-de-deux* in the choreography illustrate well this paradox. They are embelished by romantic melodies that surprised even Tom Zé, who wrote them (as well as the whole soundtrack) together with Gilberto Assis. “I never thought I would be capable of writing such melodies. You are expected to be romantic when you are younger, but I guess I am discovering romanticism at 65.” The duos, one of them performed by men, oppose tenderness and violence, sharp movements contrasting with the soft music, attraction and repulsion. Not exactly romantic. Not totally harmonious. Just like love itself.

The image people get from Grupo Corpo as a Dance company that searches for beauty above all, dissolves during these Duos and in many other moments of *Santagustin*, which is something that pleases Rodrigo. “I don’t like this image, the search for beauty is just one of the elements of our work”,

he says. Scenography and costume design reinforce the lack of concern with beautiful and the search for the humor relying on signs that are commonly associated with love. "It is a well-humored look, desmistifying the drama of love's mishaps", says Fernando Velloso, who co-writes the scenography with Paulo Pederneiras, who is also in charge of the lightning and is the artistic director of the company.