

# GRUPO CORPO



[2011]

choreography RODRIGO PEDERNEIRAS

music CARLOS NÚÑEZ and JOSÉ MIGUEL WISNIK  
(on songs by Martín Codax)

set and lighting PAULO PEDERNEIRAS

costumes FREUSA ZECHMEISTER

[47 minutes]

The ocean (in Vigo), that takes and brings back the beloved one, the friend, is also the one that gives life and movement to *Sem Mim*, which had its debut in 2011.

With a choreography by **Rodrigo Pederneiras**, scenography and lighting by **Paulo Pederneiras** and costumes by **Freusa Zechmeister**, the creation of the Brazilian dance group is rocked by the original soundtrack woven by the hands of the Viganese musician and composer **Carlos Núñez** and by the Brazilian from ("the ocean") of the city of São Vicente **José Miguel Wisnik**, from the only set of pieces of music from the Galician-Portuguese medieval profane songbook that got to us with their respective original sheet music: the famous cycle of the ocean in Vigo, by Martín Codax. The seven chants, dated from the XIIIth century, are the oldest testimony and the most appreciated survivals of one of the aspects of the troubadoursque tradition in the region at that time: the so called "friend chants". There, the poet always speaks in the name of the woman; more specifically, young women that mourn the absence or celebrate the imminent return of the beloved-friend. Avid for the reunion, they confide sometimes with the ocean, sometimes with the mother, sometimes with friends. And to pacify or fustigate the desire, they bathe in the waves of the ocean. (In case of the Codax girls, in the waves of the ocean in Vigo.)

The lyric of the Viganese medieval troubadour inspires Rodrigo Pederneiras to rule his movement music sheet by the alternation between the calm and the fury, and by the seesaw that is typical of ocean waves, and, also, to (re)produce, on the stage, the separation between feminine and masculine, where one always claims the absence of the other.

## Galician, medieval, Brazilian, contemporary

Inseparable from the origins and from the creation of the Portuguese language itself, the Galician-Portuguese troubadoursque songbook and, with it, the revered verses of the "friend chants" by Martín Codax were old friends with the Brazilian Literature professor at USP (University of the City of São Paulo), José Miguel Wisnik. From the musical point of view, however, only in 2008 the author of *O Som e*

*o Sentido* (The Sound and the Sense) would make contact with all the chants that form the Codaxian cycle, from the hands of Carlos Núñez.

Native from the port city of Vigo, nowadays the most populous in Galicia, defined by the reviewer Scott Lewellyn, from *Billboard*, as the “Jimmy Hendrix of the bagpipe”, and one of the greatest icons of the Celtic music in the planet, Núñez would then run a research on the traces of the Galician medieval music in the Brazilian popular tradition, which resulted in the album *Alborada do Brasil*, launched last year. And he confided to the Brazilian colleague a dream he would lull for long: the one that the complete cycle of the songs composed by his fellow citizen about 800 years ago was given to the Brazilian music – the only one, according to him, that would be able to reencounter their real life.

Full of melismas (melodic parts characterized by the presence of more than one musical note for a same syllable), the “friend chants” by Martín Codax – whose parchment with six of the seven original sheet music was discovered in 1913 by the Madrilian bookseller Pedro Vindel, published the following year in a facsimile edition limited to ten books, and then lost again for decades – had motivated, since they were rediscovered in the end of the seventies, tens of recordings in Europe. The great majority of them, partial. But all of them, invariably, marked by a certain erudite posture.

From the point of view of the Viganese musician and researcher, due to its vitality, its tradition with the words said with rhythm and its close linguistic connection with the Galician-Portuguese, the Brazilian popular music would gather, as no other, the basic conditions to process a new reading that would be able to (re)approximate Codax medieval repertoire from the contemporary listener. And he called the Brazilian pianist, arranger and composer to be his partner during that journey.

Author of three soundtracks that generated memorable ballets of GRUPO CORPO – *Nazareth*, from 1993, *Parabelo*, from 1997, and *Onçotô*, from 2005 (the last ones in a partnership with Tom Zé and Caetano Veloso, respectively) –, José Miguel Wisnik soon understood the choreographic potential in that set of chants from the XIIIth century.

The idea was received with enthusiasm by the Pederneiras brothers and soon Wisnik and Núñez started to work. However, even after the arrangements were extended, the seven “friend chants” together would not take more than fifteen minutes of recording. And, to sustain a ballet, it was necessary to enlarge them, allowing interludes, preferably instrumental ones, to help give the soundtrack a choreographic dynamics.

Thus, the interpretations of the songs from Codax by Milton Nascimento (Chant II), Chico Buarque (Chant V), Mônica Salmaso (Chant IV), Jussara Silveira, Ná Ozzetti and Rita Ribeiro (in a collective voice, in Chant III), Rita Ribeiro (that time, soloing Chant VII) and by Wisnik himself (Chant I and Chant VI), were intermingled by versions of traditional themes in the Brazilian, Portuguese and Galician popular instrumental repertoires, chosen between the XVIIth and the XXth centuries – most of which were collected by Núñez during his researches. From *vilancicos*, instrumental forms that became popular in the Iberian Peninsula in the Middle Ages and that got to Brazil, where they still persist, especially in the State of Minas Gerais, to the fusion of the *muiñeira*, Galician rhythm in its essence, with the *samba* and the *cavalo-marinho*, created from the reunion of Marcos Suzano and the tambourine players at Asociación Xuvenil Xiradela.

Archetype of the ocean cycle protagonists from Vigo, the young la Coruña tambourine players keep alive a secular Galician tradition to sing collectively, and at a very high register, followed by small tambourines, and they take part in the soundtrack of *Sem Mim*, offering a second version to Chant V, previously interpreted by Chico, and singing two popular Galician themes, in a participation that – similar to the interference of *Caixeiros do Divino*, from the Menezes family, in the State of Maranhão, in the final chant – embodies one of the dimensions of Núñez and Wisnik’s work: to cut the time and link the ancient and the contemporary.

Recorded between August and December, 2010 in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Salvador and Vigo, the soundtrack of *Sem Mim* was produced by Alê Siqueira and directed by José Miguel Wisnik, who, in another incorporation of the dialogue between past and present, Galicia and Brazil, intrinsic to the Project matrix, becomes Martín Codax’s partner when he signs the melody for Chant VI – the only one whose sheet music was not in Vindel’s parchment – and prepares a free version of the lyrics created eight centuries ago by the most famous Viganese troubadour.

## The *Corpo* dives in the Ocean in Vigo

The ocean, impetuous and lascivious, this Codaxian ocean, a mixture of desire and drift, master and vector of the (re)approximation and the distance, element of origin and instrument of cure of the most intimate turbulences of love. The ocean, the Codaxian ocean, is a great source of inspiration for the three creators who, for exactly 30 years, give light, shape and movement to *GRUPO CORPO* creations: Rodrigo Pederneiras, who left the Corps de Ballet in 1981 to take over the position of resident choreograph; Paulo Pederneiras, artistic director since the foundation in 1975, who, in that same year, also accumulated the position of lighting designer and, since 1997, also signs the spectacles as a scenographer; and Freusa Zechmeister, architect, transformed since then into the official costume designer and inseparable member of *Grupo CORPO*.

The swing of the waves, their permanent comings and goings, the surf on the rocky scarps flow to the repetition of movements, sinuous or abrupt, of the trunk, and incisive knee bendings by the dancers, in a spatial displacement marked by the constant flow of advances and retrocessions, in the one that Rodrigo Pederneiras considers his most stripped choreography.

From the combination of a geometric shape (a huge hollow aluminium square) and an organic shape (meters and meters of a synthetic wool used to shadow agricultural cultures), both of them vertically manageable, Paulo Pederneiras builds a metamorphic scenario that, along the spectacle, changes and forms representations of sceneries and different elements: ocean, mountains, clouds, boat, fishing net, dawn. The light he makes fall on the ballet dancers goes from white to light yellow, while a cyclorama on the background allows the color to invade the scenic space in punctual moments.

Over thin meshes dyed according to the color of the skin of each ballet dancer, Freusa Zechmeister applies inscriptions and textures based on adornments from the Middle Ages and the Pre-Raphaelite period, transforming the body of the ballet dancers into a support for all the simbology from that time, and creating the illusion that the scene is populated by “naked” men and women, whose “nudity” is just covered by one of the most archaic signs of the marine imaginarium: the tatoo.

Text: Angela de Almeida  
July/2011