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Grupo Corpo
(Brazil)

Breu
&
7 or 8 Pieces For A Ballet

Fleck Dance Theatre
207 Queens Quay West
March 24-28, 8:00 p.m.
\$15-30

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Grupo Corpo

Breu and *Seven or Eight Pieces for a Ballet*

Production Notes and Overview

Toronto's favourite Brazilian dance troupe returns with the Canadian Premiere of *Breu* and their signature partnership with Philip Glass, *Seven or Eight Pieces for a Ballet*. Known for its sexy physicality and dramatic visual flair, Grupo Corpo creates a vibrant blend of balletic grace and modern dance.

Breu features a dark score by multiple Latin Grammy-winner Lenine and showcases some of the troupe's most aggressive and confrontational choreography to date, infused with the polyrhythms of Latin and African dance.

Seven or Eight Pieces for a Ballet is based on eight themes written by American composer Philip Glass and Brazilian instrumental ensemble Uakti. Movements appear as a series of sketches, annotations or studies for a choreography. Dancers' movements come in variations, from a "dirty" aesthetics resembling rehearsals to a pristine final result.

The combination of *Breu* and *Seven or Eight Pieces for a Ballet* on stage prove just why Grupo Corpo is considered one of (if not the) best dance troupes in the world.

Company History

Grupo Corpo was created in Belo Horizonte in 1975. It is a contemporary dance company, which is for the most part Brazilian in its creations. Corpo has gone through several metamorphoses throughout its history but has been guided by three main concerns: the definition of an identity linked to the idea of a national culture (with all the subtlety it implies); the continuity of the work, thinking in terms of future; and the integrity in maintaining the self-imposed elaboration standards.

Grupo Corpo was founded by Paulo Pederneiras who is now the general director and in charge of lighting projects of the ballet. Rodrigo Pederneiras began as a dancer with Grupo Corpo and is now the choreographer of practically all of Grupo Corpo's work. Grupo Corpo's first major hit with Rodrigo as their choreographer was *Prelúdios* in 1985, a ballet with music by Chopin.

Since their formation in 1975, Grupo Corpo has created and performed over 32 dances. They concentrate not only on the music and choreography of the ballets but also on elements of their presentation. Each element, such as the stage setting, costumes and lighting, play an active part in helping to create complex presentations, whereby various arts multiply their own virtues.

Grupo Corpo believes that one ballet leads into another and also that one ballet re-invents the prior one. This type of reinterpretation shows that Grupo Corpo is no longer just the name of a company, but also of a repertoire and even of a tradition.

Biographies

Paulo Pederneiras founded Grupo Corpo in 1975. He is the general and artistic director and is also responsible for the lighting of the ballets. Besides his work with Grupo Corpo, Paulo has done lighting projects for several operas, such as Don Giovanni, Suor Angelica, Lucia de Lammermoor, La Voix Humaine, Salomé and Orfeo, among others. He has also done the set designing for exhibits such as the section for "Indigenous and Anthropologic Art" at the Brazil 500 Years Exhibit in São Paulo in 2000.

Under the direction of Paulo, Grupo Corpo has made a virtue out of its diversities. It continues to make these diversities the principle behind its creation: a way of knowing and not knowing and a bet on the unknown. Paulo encourages all members of Grupo Corpo to reach out to new dance and turn it into their own dance.

Rodrigo Pederneiras has been Grupo Corpo's choreographer since 1978; his work is now known and recognized nationally and internationally. He has choreographed for the Ballet do Theatro Municipal do Rio de Janeiro, the Ballet do Teatro Guaíra, the Ballet da Cidade de São Paulo and the Companhia de Dança de Minas Gerais. He has also choreographed outside of Brazil for several companies in several countries including: Deutsche Oper Berlin Company (Germany), Gulbenkian (Portugal), Les Ballets Jazz Montréal (Canada), Stadttheater Saint Gallen (Switzerland), and Opéra du Rhin (France). However, creating for Grupo Corpo remains his main interest.

"It was only in 1988, when working in Uakti, that I started thinking about what it would be like to make a dance which would be more inside our body". Rodrigo's words define a crucial moment not only for his own career but also for Grupo Corpo. Since then, his work explores this idea of dancing "inside our body."

In his own way, Rodrigo harbours the xaxado, the samba, the ball room dance, the celebrations and the capoeira. Everything is translated into a private world where dynamics and balance have even more meaning than movement. Always guided by music, Rodrigo "breaks" the classical movements in an intensely Brazilian way, entirely free from the exotic, from the boastful and from easy identities.

Fernando Velloso has been the stage designer for Grupo Corpo since 1989. Since 1992, he has also been the Program Coordinator for the company.

With thirty years of work experience, Fernando has consolidated his career as an artist with international recognition. Besides creating sets for Grupo Corpo, he has also created the sets for the "4º Encontro das Américas" at Minas Centro in 1997, for the Deutsche Oper in 1997, for "Uma Mulher Vestida de Sol" and for Rede Globo Televisão in 1994, among others.

Fernando's work reconfigures great themes of Brazilian culture within the characteristics of Grupo Corpo. For example, in *Seven or Eight Pieces for a Ballet*, he reaches a "tropical minimalism" through a big striped screen placed behind a curtain of plastic threads.

Freusa Zechmeister has been the costume designer of Grupo Corpo since 1981. In almost all of her costumes she uses a leotard as a "second skin": "I use the leotard because I notice that Rodrigo's work introduces movements in a micro scale and that the

only clothing that allows that these small details stand out is the leotard. If I add any accessory or detail to the leotard it's only to reinforce movement."

In *Seven or Eight Pieces for a Ballet*, inspired by a video game screen, she speeds up movement through the stripes on the leotards. The stripes fool the spectators' eyes and make the dancers' bodies more uniform.

Besides her work with Grupo Corpo, Freusa creates costumes and stage settings for operas (such as *Lucia de Lamemmoor*, at the Teatro Municipal from São Paulo) and dance companies throughout the world. She also works at her architecture and interior decoration office.

Performance History

1976 - *Maria Maria*

Music: Milton Nascimento / Fernando Brant; Choreography: Oscar Araiz

1978 - *Cantares*

Music: Marco Antônio Araújo; Choreography: Rodrigo Pederneiras

1980 - *Último Trem*

Music: Milton Nascimento / Fernando Brant; Choreography: Oscar Araiz

1981 - *Trípico*

Music: Wagner Tiso; Choreography: Rodrigo Pederneiras

1981 - *Interânea*

Music: Marlos Nobre; Choreography: Rodrigo Pederneiras

1982 - *Reflexos*

Music: Henrique Oswald / Bruno Kiefer; Choreography: Rodrigo Pederneiras

1982 - *Noturno*

Music: Alberto Nepomuceno; Choreography: Rodrigo Pederneiras

1984 - *Sonata*

Music: Serguei Prokofiev; Choreography: Rodrigo Pederneiras

1985 - *Prelúdios*

Music: Frédéric Chopin; Choreography: Rodrigo Pederneiras

1986 - *Bachiana*

Music: Heitor Villa-Lobos; Choreography: Rodrigo Pederneiras

1986 - *Carlos Gomes Sonata*

Music: Antônio Carlos Gomes; Choreography: Rodrigo Pederneiras

1987 - *Canções*

Music: Richard Strauss; Choreography: Rodrigo Pederneiras

1987 - *Duo*

Music: Heitor Villa-Lobos; Choreography: Rodrigo Pederneiras

1987 - *Pas du Pont*

Music: Heitor Villa-Lobos; Choreography: Rodrigo Pederneiras

1988 - *Schumann Ballet*

Music: Robert Schumann; Choreography: Rodrigo Pederneiras

1988 - *Rapsódia*

Music: Johannes Brahms; Choreography: Rodrigo Pederneiras

1988 - *Uakti*

Music: Marco Antônio Guimarães; Choreography: Rodrigo Pederneiras

1988 - *Mulheres*

Music: Krzysztof Penderecki; Choreography: Suzanne Linke

1989 - *Missa do Orfanato*

Music: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart; Choreography: Rodrigo Pederneiras

1990 - *A Criação*

Music: Franz Joseph Haydn; Choreography: Rodrigo Pederneiras

1991 - *Três Concertos*

Music: Georg Philip Telemann; Choreography: Rodrigo Pederneiras

1991 - *Variações Enigma*

Music: Edward Elgar; Choreography: Rodrigo Pederneiras

1992 - *21*

Music: Marco Antônio Guimarães, Uakti; Choreography: Rodrigo Pederneiras

1993 - *Nazareth*

Music: José Miguel Wisnik; Choreography: Rodrigo Pederneiras

1994 - *Sete ou Oito Peças para um Ballet*

Music: Philip Glass / Uakti; Choreography: Rodrigo Pederneiras

1996 - *Bach*

Music: Marco Antônio Guimarães on works of J. S. Bach; Choreography: Rodrigo Pederneiras

1997 - *Parabelo*

Music: Tom Zé / José Miguel Wisnik; Choreography: Rodrigo Pederneiras

1998 - *Benguelê*

Music: João Bosco; Choreography: Rodrigo Pederneiras

2000 - *O Corpo*

Music: Arnaldo Antunes; Choreography: Rodrigo Pederneiras

2002 - *Santagustin*

Music: Tom Zé / Gilberto Assis; Choreography: Rodrigo Pederneiras

2004 - *Lecuona*

Music: Ernesto Lecuona; Choreography: Rodrigo Pederneiras

2005 - *Onçotô*

Music: Caetano Veloso / José Miguel Wisnik; Choreography: Rodrigo Pederneiras

Press Notes and Reviews

Breu:

- "... arguably the best on the planet."
- *The Globe and Mail*
- "Masterfully crafted, riveting to watch, and executed with conviction and abandon by its dancers, *Breu* is easily one of Pederneiras's very best..."
- *www.exploredance.com*

Journal Do Brasil

Building a new vocabulary

Written by Roberto Pereira

Published August 17 2007

In dance, it's a daunting challenge for any choreographer to create his or her own vocabulary of moves. The problem is larger than just translating an idea into something that is relevant. Somehow, the translation must also preserve the choreographer's signature of style ---- a signature that has been created successively in other works over the years. Just like a language, it's about the ability to mould one's vocabulary into something that pulses with life and character. Rodrigo Pederneiras is perhaps one of the only Brazilian artists to successfully build such a vocabulary, a tool that allows him to weave a choreographed plot that is built on a structure of neologisms and poetic license of his own making. One more sign of just such talent is on display in the moves of Pederneiras' company, Grupo Corpo, and his latest work, "Breu", which opened Thursday at the Teatro Municipal.

That same inventiveness is apparent in the costume design by Freusa Zechmeister and the stage design by Paulo Pederneiras. Both are clear extensions of the ideas developed in the ballet and add to the quality of the performance. What you get is a cohesion of ideas manifest as a single expression. Nothing escapes. Nothing is wasted. The soundtrack, written by Lenine, reiterates the dance company's habit of working with top-notch Brazilian composers. In this case, the dialogue is established between tradition and modernity, between the backyard and the world at large, the "frevos" deconstructed by sound effects and the drums of Igor Cavalera, create the space the dance uses on stage. The stage design is aseptically dominated by black tiles,

costumes that undo the frontalities and by lighting that blurs contours. It's like something that shines in the darkness: a razor's edge ----sharp, hard, precise.

What is most impressive about the dance is the way the company responds to the challenge of something that lies in uncharted territory, somewhere between creation and choreographic discovery. That is the heart of "Breu". In Pedeneiras previous piece, Onqoto, he began brushing up against new floor movements. In this latest piece, he continues that line of experimentation, demonstrating once again his pulsing vocabulary and clearly shows the potential for exploring other themes, and for translating other ideas into dance.

Grupo Corpo rises to the challenges presented by this latest piece. It's not a victory that is rooted in certainty, but one that shows that the group is continually testing its talent and abilities. It's about creation in the midst of crisis and discovery as its only resolution.

O Globo

Alienation(Attraction) and conflict (repulsion) in a stew of urban allusions

"Breu": New ballet is intense, as quick as lightning

Written by Silvia Soter

Published August 18 2007

As tradition dictates, ballet fans in Rio de Janeiro are again welcoming a visit by Grupo Corpo. Curiosity builds every two years in expectation of another new creation by Rodrigo Pederneiras. This year, the sound track ---- the foundation upon which Pederneiras and his team always build their performances ---- was composed by Pernambuco pop song writer Lenine.

"Breu" is defined by shadows, the interplay of black and white, by tension and falls. Pederneiras' set design and lighting create a dark atmosphere, where the floor is an extension of the tiled black walls that reflect and distort what little light exists on stage. Using graphic design and the shades of grey that exist between black and white, the costume designer Freusa Zechmeister is able to highlight the dancers' bodies so that at times they become part of the floor where most of the choreography takes place.

By using an older play to begin the evening's entertainment ---- before starting the new piece ---- Pederneiras shows us just how much his writing has developed without losing his highly personalized traits. The idea of using an existing repertoire that is always contemporary and always changing and then blending that repertoire with his latest creation lends a duality to his work that allows one to flow back and forth between past and future.

Contrast with the piece that opens the program

Coreographed in 1994 and left to hibernate since 1999, "Seven or eight pieces for a ballet" highlights still further the contrast and tension of "Breu." The structure of the variations on the theme ---- underscored by the repetitiveness of the music composed by Philip Glass and Uakti ---- creates an automaton-like ballet that little by little is imbued with Pederneiras' jiggle, until at times, it becomes nearly out of control. Gradually added to the colors of the Brazilian flag are the red earth and purple hues of the dancers' costumes.

In “Breu”, Pederneiras’ dance becomes a curve. New contours are visible in this piece, whether in the gradual erasing of the lines, the fluidity of the stage movement, the entry and exit from scenes, or the “Brazilianess” that is stamped on hips and bodies. The lines blend and the group transforms itself into a mass that is almost always asymmetrical ---- a mass that pulses and explodes and returns to the floor , often with violence. Bodies are attracted and repulsed from one another as a group and in duos. The colorful, and joyful country, always created in many ballets, has been invaded by a more urban and competitive Brazil, part of a world which is full of references and rhythms that are highlighted by Lenine’s music. There’s everything from “frevo” and hard rock to hip shaking and “caboclinho”, silence and colliding bodies.

The fusion of light and darkness makes “Breu” an intense experience and the ballet’s 40 minutes go by as fast a lightning bolt... Pederneiras has created Alienation (Attraction) and conflict (repulsion) and transformed what he created in the past. He has issued a new challenge and translated it all into a new dance with his never-ending competence and creativity.