

Review: Parabelo / Onqoto

MICHELLE COOKE

Last updated 16:44 25/02/2012

Arts

Parabelo / Onqoto by Grupo Corpo

St.James Theatre, February 24

The Brazilian dance company Grupo Corpo's first performance in New Zealand was so intimate and powerful it was if the dancers had crept inside of me and were dancing on my beating heart.

Every movement sent shivers through my veins; Every shake of the hip, twist of the body and leap had me in awe.

The successful contemporary dance company has travelled extensively since it was founded, by just 11 people, six of them siblings, more than 30 years ago.

But they have never ventured to New Zealand before.

Their opening night performance, on the first night of the New Zealand International Arts Festival, had the audience captivated

from the very first scene.

It was simple, but dramatic, emotional and cheeky, and a feast for the senses.

The 18 dancers' bodies formed a tangled mass: Sometimes their moves were unique from each other, and sometimes, when you would least expect it, they would mirror one another. And then stop, without warning.

When they attempted to be in sync they carried it out almost flawlessly. It was if the stage was breathing, and they all knew what to do, with every breath.

If the choreographer was a pianist, his dancers were the piano's keys.

The music, light, colour and costumes gave the group's performance a distinct Brazilian flavour, and the constant sway of the dancers' hips spoke boldly of how although they may be trained ballerinas, they have a different style, a style unique to this company and which is the result of 30 years of hard work and nurturing.

At the helm of Grupo Corpo are two brothers: artistic director Paolo and choreographer Rodrigo Pederneras. While they no longer perform, the brothers steer the ship, leading their troupe throughout the world, spending upwards of 70 days each year performing in front of audiences.

The group performed two separate pieces for its first New Zealand audience last night. The first, Parabelo, a 1997 work, was sharp and edgy. The second, 2005's Onqoto, was more intimate and experimental. They each had their own unique taste, but shared the distinct dance style which has made Grupo Corpo world-famous.

A delicate scene towards the end, of a female and male dancer huddled into each other on one side of the stage, with a female on female dancer intertwined into each other on the other side, was one of the highlight pieces. Moments later a naked body shines from amidst the darkness on the stage. His beauty, strength and agility were incredible, and he was on display, in all his glory.

While each segment of each performance added something different to the show, the flow was never interrupted. It was fluid, powerful, and is a show for those who frequent dance performances, and those who appreciate art in all its forms.

[Parabelo / Onqoto by Grupo Corpo](#) runs from February 24-27 at Wellington Opera House as part of the New Zealand International Arts Festival.