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## Review *Dance*

# Brazilian dancers are electric

By Marilyn Jackson  
FOR THE INQUIRER

Benjamin Franklin may have harnessed electricity in Philadelphia, but for the audience at the Annenberg Center for the Arts Thursday night, Grupo Corpo Brazilian Dance Theater embodied it.

Grupo Corpo commissioned Philip Glass and Uakti (wah-kee-chi), the renowned Brazilian ensemble that makes its own instruments, to create the opening work *Seven or Eight Pieces for a Ballet*. Evoking rivers of the Amazon basin, it has since been recorded on the CD *Agua da Amazonia* (Point Music), to which the dancers performed.

The 20 beguiling dancers, wearing strange leather “electric-chair” skullcaps, black tops, and multicolored striped leggings, ignite like a slow-burning fuse. To the prayerlike, organ and harp sounds in the first section called “Tiquié River,” they undulate in pairs like exotic fish, rippling across the stage in perfect lines. Occasionally a pair breaks rebelliously away from the group, disappearing in the wings.

In each new section, they seem to flow into the rivers the music evokes, metamorphosing with costume changes into ever more electrifying creatures. The movement, lighting, even the colors — cadmium green, chromium yellow, and amber (which sparks when struck and



Grupo Corpo performs “Seven or Eight Pieces for a Ballet,” which features music by Philip Glass and Uakti.

inspired, through its name in Greek, the word *electricity*) — suggest a highly charged atmosphere of river and jungle.

An apotheosis in the seventh section (called “Paru River” on the CD) exalts the dance and the dancers’ bodies. Its bubbling vibraphone sounds match the adventurousness and playfulness bubbling beneath the surface of the dancers’ smiles. They underscore each note with darting feet, nodding heads, swiveling hips and hands elegantly swishing aside what perhaps could be humid air, water or jungle growth. All the dancers are almost always on stage and they plug into dance currents, like ballet, modern, samba, and capoeira, effortlessly melding them into a new look.

Artistic director Paulo Pederneiras’ lighting and Freusa Zechmeister’s costumes deserve the highest praise, especially her scoop-necked jumpsuits for the after-intermission dance, “Parabelo.” All shimmer and sheen in red latex and black net, they gorgeously show off the dancers’ bodies.

Paulo’s brother, and co-founder of Grupo Corpo, Rodrigo Pederneiras, choreographs clean and clear movements that have space enough to be seen. One dancer’s kick is not lost against another’s lunge. If a movement is backgrounded by another dancer, the contrasting color of his costume brings the movement into relief. He often composes his dancers in clusters of twos and threes in geometric lines that cut through each other as quirkily as animated figures in a video game.

“Parabelo” was a grand work with a heart-stopping duet danced by Sylvia Gaspar and Diogo de Lima. Its high-voltage ending brought cheers, whistles, and a standing ovation, a fitting reception for this transcendent performance.

Additional performances: today 2 p.m. (with live music by Minas, a local Brazilian group), 8 p.m. (recorded music), Annenberg Center, 3680 Walnut St. Tickets: \$28 to \$35. Information: 215-898-3900, [www.pennpresents.org](http://www.pennpresents.org).