

Brazil's stunning Grupo Corpo defies convention

*By Jordan Levin
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Brazilian dance company Grupo Corpo made a stunning impression in its Miami debut at the Jackie Gleason Theater on Wednesday night, demonstrating an energy, style and striking sense of theatrical composition that brought the audience to its feet.

Presented by Miami-Dade Community College's Cultura del Lobo series, Grupo Corpo combines the uninhibited vitality of street and social dance with an exquisite clarity in the shape of the movements and the formal composition.

The movement style that choreographer Rodrigo Pederneiras has developed looks nothing like any American modern dance I've seen. Also striking is Pederneiras' multidimensional sense of composition and the theatrical unity of the group's costumes, sets and music.

In the exuberant *Parabolo*, a portrait of a remote region of Brazil, small groups of dancers clad in Freusa Zechmeister's brilliant tight red, yellow and orange tops and pants, explode in rapid bursts of movement amid a drifting group parade, reflecting the layered rhythms and sounds in Tom Ze and Ze Miguel Wisnik's music.

But the dance also presents a rich, dizzying sense of simultaneous slow and fast, solo and mass energy.

The sets by Fernando Velloso and Paulo Pederneiras (Rodrigo's brother, who also designed the lights) include a row of giant heads and a wall of family photos, contributing to the vivid, slightly otherworldly atmosphere.

Benguele had a more subtle power.

It was described as a tour of the various elements of Brazilian culture - African, Spanish and Arabic - reflected in Joao Bosco's score and in dancing that ranged from resolutely simple to bouncily good-humored.

Here the sets and lighting contributed even more powerfully to the work's defining images: a line of dancers walking slowly along the back wall and across the stage against a black backdrop that made space seem to extend indefinitely, evoked a sense of people parading through history.

A line of dancers snaking through a low crouch, silhouetted in a high, narrow band of golden light, could be cave hieroglyphs come to life.

Benguele was a marvelously haunting dance.