



THE KENNEDY CENTER

Performing Arts Series

ARTS-BASED PROGRAMMING VIA SATELLITE/WEB

presented in cooperation with PRINCE WILLIAM NETWORK

Grupo Corpo Brazilian Dance Theater

Wednesday, April 24, 2002

Grades 7 – 12

When viewing *Grupo Corpo Brazilian Dance Theater* and participating in this guide's suggested activities, the following National Standards for Dance will be addressed: 1, 2, 3, 5.

Background Information

The Brazilian dance company Grupo Corpo, which literally means “Body Group,” began as a family affair. In 1975, in the city of Belo Horizonte, brothers Paulo and Rodrigo Pederneiras established a dance school in the home of their parents. With dreams of creating a dance company, Paulo and Rodrigo enlisted their sister Miriam as a dancer and brother Pedro as stage manager. Three of their closest friends also joined, making up the rest of the company. Paulo became the company's artistic director while Rodrigo choreographed all the dances. Over the course of 25 years, this “family business” has grown to become the most successful dance company in all of Brazil.

Grupo Corpo's goal is to create a uniquely Brazilian dance experience by combining ballet and modern dance with the Afro-Brazilian traditions of their country.

Grupo Corpo dancers move with the precision and control of ballet, but wear modern costumes and move in ways that ballet dancers never would. Their feet and arms move in all different rhythmically complex directions—much like the music of the Afro-Brazilian traditions that inspire their choreography.

It is the company's collaboration with artists and designers that completes the total theatrical experience of Grupo Corpo. Working together with the choreographer and dancers, Freusa Zechmeister creates their costumes and Rodrigo's brother Paulo designs the lighting, with stage scenery by Fernando Velloso. It is this combination of movement and art, which has earned Grupo Corpo its reputation around the world.

Dance in Brazil

Grupo Corpo is a product of the “New Brazil” —a diverse

culture combining Native American, African, and European heritages.

In the 16th century, Portuguese explorers colonized Brazil, displacing the country's indigenous population and importing enormous numbers of West African slaves. African dance has influenced almost all of Brazil's popular dances through its use of rhythm and hip movements, from the samba to the maxixe. Their influence on Brazilian traditions has contributed to Grupo Corpo's distinct, signature style.

When the Portuguese royal court fled to Brazil to escape the Napoleonic Wars in the 19th century, they brought European forms of dance, including ballet. Throughout the 1930s and 40s, famous ballet companies such as Ballet Russe toured Brazil. Modern dance was added to this mix when legendary dance pioneer Isadora Duncan toured Brazil in the 1920s.

What to Look and Listen for in Jazz

- **Notice** the repetition of phrases and gestures. Also, notice how the choreographer creates patterns with the dancers.
- **Listen** to the music Grupo Corpo has chosen. How is the music uniquely Brazilian? What kind of instruments do you hear? How does the music make you feel?
- **See** how the dance is the sum of its parts – lighting, costumes, stage scenery and movement. How does the lighting enhance the choreography? What kind of mood does it create? How do the costumes and scenery affect the choreography?

About the Program

Grupo Corpo is especially known for performances where the entire company creates large visual patterns. Dancers move as one, arranging and rearranging movement patterns to music. Watching Grupo Corpo perform is like looking through a kaleidoscope.

You will see excerpts from two of the company's most well-known works, *Parabelo* and *Benguelê*. *Parabelo* features Grupo Corpo's signature style—swinging hips and twitching shoulders, indicating the dance's Afro-Brazilian influences. The dance is performed to the music of Tom Zé and Zé Miguel Wisnik, whose insistent rhythm drives the dance.

The dance *Benguelê* is a celebration of Africa's deeply felt influence on Brazilian culture. *Benguelê* translates as a longing for an African homeland. Set to the music of composer, singer and guitarist João Bosco, the performers become members of an African tribe—combining contemporary dance technique with ritualistic dance expressions.

Instructional Activity

Create a Movement Phrase

If you watch Grupo Corpo closely, you will notice that a series of movements or gestures may be repeated over and over again. Or, a gesture you see at the beginning of a dance may be repeated again later on. Choreographers, like Rodrigo Pederneras, string together these phrases to make a dance. To make up a movement phrase, try this choreographic trick – called

“The Telephone Game.”

1. Each number from 0-9 represents a different part of the body or a different gesture.

0 = head	5 = legs
1 = arms	6 = kick
2 = shoulders	7 = jump
3 = hips	8 = turn
4 = feet	9 = fall

2. Take your phone number and write out which body parts or movements correspond with the numbers. For example, if your phone number is 555-7802, this is what you would write down:

5 = legs
5 = legs
5 = legs
7 = jump
8 = turn
0 = head
2 = shoulders

3. Make up a movement to correspond with each number.
4. Once you have decided what movement you will do for each number, string all the movements together to create a movement phrase.



Resources

On the Web:

kennedy-center.org/pwtv
dancemagazine.com
danceonline.com
lonelyplanet.com/destinations/south_america/brazil/

Print:

Cohen, Marshall, ed. What is Dance?: Readings in Theory and Criticism. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1983.

Levine, Robert and John Crocitti, eds. The Brazil Reader: History, Culture, Politics. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999.

Warren, Gretchen Ward. Classical Ballet Technique. Tampa, FL: University of Southern Florida, 1990.

Recordings:

Tom Zé. Hips of Tradition. (Luaka Bop)
Joao Bosco. Na Es Quin. (Sony Discs)

Credits:

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