

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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DanceHouse Presents Brazil's Prodigious Grupo Corpo in Double Bill
— *Dança Sinfônica* and *Gira* —

South American contemporary dance company fuses Afro-Brazilian rhythms with modern athleticism in stunning celebration of movement

Vancouver, BC — DanceHouse proudly presents an energizing, two-part program from Brazil's iconic contemporary dance company **Grupo Corpo** with the Vancouver premiere of ***Dança Sinfônica*** and ***Gira***, **February 28 & 29, 2020 at 8pm** at the **Vancouver Playhouse**. In the company's third presentation with DanceHouse, Grupo Corpo's visionary siblings — Artistic Director Paulo Pederneiras and Choreographer Rodrigo Pederneiras — open the evening with *Dança Sinfônica*, a reflection of its 40-year history. The electrifying work draws upon an eclectic fusion of ballet, samba, jazz, Afro-Brazilian rhythms and more, in a jubilant synthesis of the juggernaut's signature vocabulary of movement. The second half of the program will showcase the brothers' riveting work *Gira*, exploring the rituals of Umbanda — one of Brazil's most widespread religions — in a carnal meditation on humanity's pursuit for divine enlightenment.

"It is a privilege to enter into a new decade with the highly anticipated return of the internationally-lauded Grupo Corpo — 10 years after the company made its unforgettable Vancouver debut in 2010," says Jim Smith, Artistic and Executive Director of DanceHouse. "The virtuosic company embodies the vitality and diversity of Brazil, reflecting at once its colourful folkloric traditions and contemporary spirit. Audiences are invited to revisit some of the company's best works from its repertoire with *Dança Sinfônica*, and then channel the metaphysical with their breathtaking new work *Gira*, which made its premiere at Teatro Alfa, São Paulo, in 2017."

Created in 2015 in celebration of Grupo Corpo's 40th anniversary, *Dança Sinfônica* is a delightful musing on memories, in which Rodrigo mines his body of work to re-envision the contemporary dance company's most memorable choreographic narratives. Renowned for its hallmark blend of technical precision and eye-catching lines, *Dança Sinfônica* showcases a stunning retrospective featuring 19 dancers with swiveling shoulders and gyrating hips, paying homage to the company's "appealing aesthetic and dazzling energy" (The Boston Globe).

Dança Sinfônica is set to the company's first original symphonic score in more than two decades, composed specially for Grupo Corpo by four-time company collaborator Marco Antônio Guimarães. His masterful work elaborately unfolds, referencing folkloric percussion, an enchanting waltz, a classical suite, and other notable musical passages from ballets recently produced by Grupo Corpo. The composition is performed by the 90-member Philharmonic Orchestra of Minas Gerais and interspersed by the unique sounds of Brazilian experimental group Uakti. The set, designed by Paulo, features a large-scale, mosaic-like backdrop panel, with more than 1,000 intimate and informal snapshots captured by the many people who have played a part in the company's success, framed by rich, red velvet curtains.

Grupo Corpo explores a different facet of Brazilian culture with *Gira*, a mesmerizing work inspired by the chants and ritual dances of Umbanda, an Afro-Brazilian religion that blends African traditions with

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Roman Catholicism and Spiritism. Greatly influenced by Rodrigo's personal study of Umbanda worshippers, *Gira* — meaning to spin — the work is a poetic view of man's primordial need to connect with the divine. A decidedly sensual piece, *Gira* is "irreverent, electrifying, sometimes aggressive, otherworldly and...something that can transport you" (Broadway World).

During the performance of *Gira*, audiences will witness an intimate and vulnerable ritualistic celebration showcasing 19 dancers in stripped down costumes exposing naked torsos and white skirts made from raw linen. The minimalist set designed by Paulo features a brightly lit, black linoleum square installation in the centre stage representing the traditional *terreiro* (a site of worship). When the dancers are off stage, they are covered in black tulle that is the same as the walls of the black box, transforming them into the spirit world and creating an eerie atmosphere of endlessness. The corporeal melds with the supernatural, invoking a state of near-transcendental ecstasy.

Gira is set to an original soundtrack recorded by São Paulo band Metá Metá, featuring 11 musical themes that move from rhythmic chanting to lively jazz to slower, bass-heavy melodies that guide the undulating choreography. Group formations of up to seven dancers are interspersed with brief trios, duos, or solos. The composition also features two guest artists: celebrated Brazilian poet and artist Nuno Ramos and legendary Brazilian samba singer Elza Soares.

Rodrigo Pederneiras began his career as a dancer with Grupo Corpo in 1976. After choreographing *Cantares* in 1978, Rodrigo assumed his current role of company choreographer in 1981. He continues to choreograph works nationally and internationally for the Theatro Municipal do Rio de Janeiro; the Balé Teatro Guaíra; the Ballet da Cidade in São Paulo; the Companhia de Dança de Minas Gerais in Brazil; the Deutsche Oper Berlin in Germany; Les Ballets Jazz de Montreal in Canada; Stadttheater St.Gallen in Switzerland; and Opera national du Rhin in France.

Grupo Corpo was founded by Paulo Pederneiras in 1975 in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, following the company's debut work *Maria Maria*, which travelled to 14 countries over six years to great international acclaim. In 1981, Rodrigo Pederneiras joined the company as resident choreographer, and together with brother Paulo, who serves as Artistic Director as well as lighting and stage designer, began shaping the group's artistic identity.

The company established its name — Grupo Corpo — on the Brazilian dance scene in 1985, and at the International Dance Festival of Rio de Janeiro. Following the creation of the work *21* in 1992, Grupo Corpo committed to commissioning original compositions for each of its new dance works (with one exception in 2004, *Lecuona*). "Energy is a synonym for Grupo Corpo, the indefatigable and admirable Brazilian company of virtuoso dancers"(The New York Times). Today, the company has created 40 works and is renowned for its physicality, athleticism, and vitality around the world.

DanceHouse recognizes In the Trench Productions for their generous support of this presentation.

For tickets and further information, visit: dancehouse.ca

About DanceHouse (dancehouse.ca)

DanceHouse connects Vancouver audiences and the local arts community to the international world of dance by presenting exceptional companies that are recognized for their excellence, innovation, and international reputation. Since 2008, DanceHouse has presented vibrant and inspiring companies from Canada and around the world. In addition to the performances on stage, DanceHouse offers a suite of engagement opportunities and a chance for the general public and local artistic community to engage with the presented artists and their work.

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Production Sponsor



Consulate General of Brazil in Vancouver

LISTING INFORMATION

DanceHouse presents Grupo Corpo's *Dança Sinfônica & Gira*

Dates: February 28 & 29, 2020
Pre-show Talk at 7:15pm. Host: Janet Smith
(The Georgia Straight). Guest: Company Representative

Ticket Prices: From \$35

Address: Vancouver Playhouse
600 Hamilton St, Vancouver, BC, V6B 2P1

Box Office: dancehouse.ca/tickets/single-tickets/ or call 604.801.6225

Website: dancehouse.ca

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