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### Dance review: Viver Brasil at the Ford Amphitheatre

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Chelsea Clinton wasn't the only woman glowing in white on Saturday. Members of the locally based award-winning dance troupe Viver Brasil opened their eighth appearance at the Ford Amphitheatre also clad in the cloth that traditionally represents purity. The stage was awash in snowy hues as eight female dancers swathed in flowing skirts and manipulating squares of the fabric swirled ebulliently in the premiere of "Alaafia/Harmony."

The title of the program, a 30-minute suite choreographed by Rosangela Silvestre, was a plea for peace, Bahian style. Under the direction of the husband-and-wife team of percussionist Luiz Badaró and Linda Yudin, Viver Brasil continues to evolve aesthetically in both dance and music since its founding in 1997.



Enlivening the world of ancient deities (orixas), in intoxicating ways, including exploring the white-magic religion of Candomblé, this year the troupe brought even more of Bahia -- home to the region's large Afro-Brazilian population on Brazil's northeastern coast -- to L.A.

Featured were six Bahian artists: dancers Nildinha Fonseca and Vera Passos (the latter also choreographed the program's finale, "Suingue Carnavalesco/Carnival Swing"); composer and percussionist Jose Ricardo Sousa (he and Silvestre wrote and arranged much of the music); singer Vania Amaral; and a pair of esteemed elders, who, despite their advanced years and slow gaits, could shake their booties, albeit briefly, with the best of them.

And what booty-shaking there was: Undulating to native polyrhythms, the beaming dancers proved indefatigable, their moves embodying the lush percussive sounds of cow bells and gourds, triangles, timbaus and surdos. The call-and-response atmosphere showcased the dancers in deep pliés, with arms upraised and often in prayer position, Dervish-style whirling and endlessly enthusiastic leaps.

At 2 1/2 hours, however, the program could benefit from editing. "Three Waters" (from 2008) and "Orixas" (2007), though festive and powerfully performed, took on similar patinas, save for the orgy of costume changes. Adding testosterone to the terpsichorean mix might have helped too.

The concert also suffered from odd pacing, with an extended musical interlude coming near evening's end. A pity, really, as the six players and two singers (including a soulful Katia Moraes) rocked, with guests Derf Reklaw (aka Fred Walker) killing on flute, saxophone and African drums, and cellist Joyce Rooks, who, though fighting the evening's cold to stay in tune, added a lyrical quality to the otherwise sizzling scores.

That said, the night held particular joys, including a riveting Laila Abdullah, whose effervescent solos compelled; the exotic Passos, strong but sylphlike in kicks and elbow stands in the neo-capoeira number, "In Motion (2007/2010)"; and Katiana Rush, whose back-bending prowess was a study in stamina.

-- Victoria Looseleaf

*Photo: Viver Brasil performs "In Motion (2007/2010)." Credit: Jorge Vismara*

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