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A spectacle of nature: Deborah Colker Dance Company in *Dog Without Feathers*

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Deborah Colker Dance Company in *Dog Without Feathers*
Photo Pete Woodhead

Queen Elizabeth Hall, London

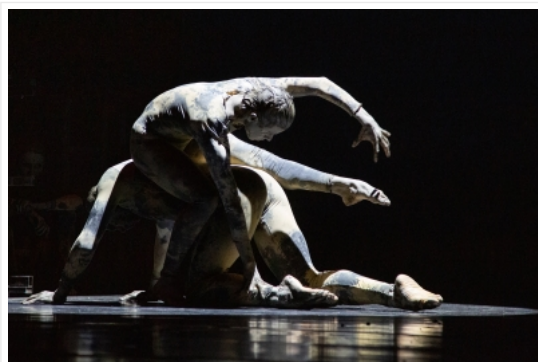
May 9, 2019

Maggie Foyer

The catchy title of Deborah Colker's new work, *Dog Without Feathers*, derives from the poetry of João Cabral and opens a door to the very soul of Brazil. However, this is not the multi-coloured exuberance of the Rio carnival but something more primal, rooted in the earth itself.

Colker's dancers are extraordinary, they throb with a life force, rhythm flowing through every sinew. Her choreography involves the whole body, the dancers' limbs used with animal dexterity or extending to classical stretch in elegant imitation of herons.

The dancers filmed on the vast mud flats of Pernambuco merge with the dancers on stage in earth encrusted unitards. Their heads and faces, caked with mud, conceal individual identity to create a collective life force pulsing with power. The visual onslaught, encased in a rich variety of sounds, music and words, is overwhelming as Colker draws the audience into her vision.



(<http://www.seeingdance.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Deborah-Colker-Dog-Without-Feathers-190513-1.jpg>)

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The landscape appears devoid of life but drawing closer the eye catches a figure as small as an insect, it grows to fill the screen and seems ready to walk onto the stage. When the rains come, the water ripples to the stage edge leaving the dancers isolated on islands of light. The effects are magical and draws us into the majesty of nature in all its harshness and beauty.

Colker's amazing dancers work together like elements of nature. They entwine and support, merge into a single powerful mass or break-out in explosive bursts of energy. Her 'Big Crab' figure composed of scuttling bodies is a masterpiece of construction as individuals apply their weight to balance the mass or tumble and roll the giant frames of slatted wood. This use of weight: copying the heavy clinging mud, the swell of the water, the impenetrable maze of the mangrove swamps, is embodied by each individual dancer then transferred collectively into these massive forms.

Nature seems all powerful but Colker is also delivering a message of human greed and impending catastrophe in the degradation of urban construction. The naked human footfall on the decaying planks of abandoned shacks or the dusty concrete of derelict factories speaks volumes.

This spectacle is a team effort. Cláudio Assis is credited with cinematographic direction along with Colker herself, musical direction by Jorge Dü Peixe and Berna Ceppas, and there is a welcome credit for the coaches and teachers in the various dance styles, urban, ballet and contemporary, but it is the dozen or so dancers interpreting Colker's imaginative choreography who bring this epic to life.

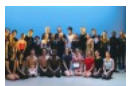
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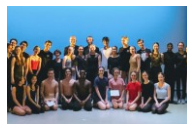


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