

Boys from Brazil break mould of the Festival

BRIAN FERGUSON

THEIR bone-shaking breakdance and hip-hop moves have been honed on the dusty back streets of Rio de Janeiro.

Now the contemporary dance world's "boys from Brazil" are heading to Scotland's capital to showcase their virtuoso talents at the Edinburgh International Festival.

Brazilian breakdancer-turned-choreographer Bruno Beltrao will be bringing a dance spectacular to the Edinburgh Playhouse which promises to be like nothing staged before at the world-famous Festival.

At least a dozen specially-selected teenage dancers are expected to wow the crowds in the latest show lined up in an attempt to shed the Festival's "high-brow" image.

It is thought Beltrao's Grupa de Rua de Niteroi - performing for the first time in the UK - will stage one of the Festival's hottest dance tickets for years.

Details of the dance maestro's debut were announced today as Festival organisers offered a sneak preview of the 2006 programme - the last put together by director Brian McMaster before he retires. Mr McMaster said: "I hope our audiences in Edinburgh will love Beltrao's company. I saw them in Brussels and it was wonderful stuff. He has basically taken this street dance and used it as the basis for contemporary dance, and all the performers were street dancers.

"We're hoping to have one big production at the Playhouse and a smaller one at somewhere like The Hub. We set out each year to provide challenges but also to entertain audiences. We're also looking to give people a potentially life-changing experience that they will remember for years to come."

Other highlights include Balanchine's full-length ballet Don Quixote, to be performed by US choreographer Suzanne Farrell's renowned Washington-based dance company. Next year's event will see the first appearance at the Festival for 20 years by the American Repertory Theater company, who will be tackling Chekov's Three Sisters, in the first English language venture by acclaimed Polish director Krystian Lupa.

Sir Simon Rattle is expected to conduct Berlin's celebrated Philharmonic Orchestra and there will also be a new full-scale opera - jointly staged with London's Royal Opera House - to be created by young Scots composer Stuart MacRae, who was appointed a "creative fellow" by the Festival earlier this year.

A new play to be written and directed by Scots playwright Anthony Neilson, who directed this year's opera The Death of Klinghoffer, in a co-production with the new National Theatre of Scotland, will feature. And German director Peter Stein will be at the helm of Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida, in a joint production between the Festival and the Royal Shakespeare Company.

The Festival will also see the return of the acclaimed Nederlands Dans Theater company, while controversial Catalan theatre director Calixto Bieito, famed for his bloodthirsty and raunchy productions, will be back for Mr McMaster's swansong.

Other big names lined up include American pianist Richard Goode, Donald Runnicles, the Edinburgh-born musical director of San Francisco Opera, the Orchestra of St Luke's, from New York, and the Budapest Festival and Minnesota orchestras. A Festival spokeswoman said: "

We hope that this information on our planned programme will help persuade potential visitors to book flights and for locals to start inviting friends to the Festival."

The full programme for the 2006 Festival is announced on March 22, with priority booking for Festival supporters due to open the same day. Public booking is due to open on April 8.