

## Grupo De Rua 'H3' - Brazilian Hip-Hop at REDCAT

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*Los Angeles, California* – REDCAT, the Roy and Edna Disney/CalArts Theatre, is CalArts' Downtown Center for Innovative Visual, Performing and Media Arts in the Walt Disney Concert Hall Complex. This is much too humble a description of REDCAT. It is all this and so much more. As usual, last night was an evening based on “always expect the unexpected” and be ready to be “engaged.” The audience was all this and so much more.



Grupo De Rua presents raw Brazilian street hip-hop as a most accomplished and thoughtful dance form, blurring its elusive line between theatre and the street. The working stage at REDCAT lends itself to all sorts of performances, and this dance troupe, with a minimal number of nine young men on the empty stage in street clothes, was all this performance required. With just this, they were able to create scenes and evoke intensity that involved the audience as emotionally as the dancers were physically.

The creator of Grupa De Rua, Bruno Beltrão, is currently ranked as one of Brazil's finest choreographic talents, celebrated for his bold reinvention of hip-hop as modern dance theatre. He has been a street performer since he was nine, has known the streets as a battleground, and has experimented with the urban dance in several forms. His current work, *H3*, demonstrates his knowledge by blending various elements of hip-hop and break-dancing. There's krumping, which is a type of street dance characterized by free, expressive, exaggerated, and highly energetic moves involving the arms, head, legs, chest, and feet. “Krump” is professed to be an acronym for *Kingdom of Radically Uplifted Mighty Praise*. The youths who started krumping saw the dance as a way for them to escape gang life and “to release anger, aggression and frustration positively, in a non-violent way.” Krumping is now a major part of hip-hop dance. The move called “popping” is based on the technique of quickly contracting and relaxing muscles to cause a jerk in the dancer's body, referred to as a “pop” or a “hit.” In the dance forms used in this creation, was a hint of Capoeira, a centuries-old Afro-Brazilian fighting style designed for rebellion but disguised by a façade of dance. The goal of Capoeira is not to defend oneself through violence but to redirect and avoid violence. The evening's fusion of these movements to express emotions certainly joins this dance form to the 21<sup>st</sup> century.



In *H3*, the nine dancers of Beltrão's Grupo De Rua enthusiastically push themselves to their limits of their coordination and skill as they deconstruct their bodies into individual joints, muscles, and tendons to create their work. They came on stage as if microbes in a symbiotic relationship, colliding and balancing against each other — almost merging into one and then suddenly violently recoiling. They began “oh so

slowly” with such impossibly controlled contortionist sorts of moves that the audience held its breath in unison anticipation. Initially, the dancers' relationships seemed confrontational and hesitatingly explorational. It was one of those “wait for it” moments. It was almost as if they were marking their territory before continuing. One moment, they were gladiators pitted against each other. Then they were unified by similarities of movement that hurtled them across the stage at a blistering pace. A mesmerizing, languid fatigue took over and they meltingly lazed around the stage — a large empty arena of a stage which provided invisible boundaries in which they set, explored, and broke. With the stage's black, high-gloss floor and effective lighting design, there were times when the nine dancers seemed to double in numbers with their reflections on the floor. An illuminated expansive length of white cord defined the perimeter of the stage toward the end of the performance. It went from being stationary to truly defining the elimination of boundaries as it was shifted to reconfigure the space.

Grupo de Rua's non-traditional form of dance theatre creates a complex feeling of intimacy with the tone and mood it establishes. As opposed to homoerotic with its interpersonal sexual denotations, this is homo-eroticism as a recognizable set of artistic and performance traditions in which feelings can be an expression of culture, possibly expanding into wider society. There was a repeated movement that became a familiar sort of signature movement throughout that evening. When a piece has been defined, the dancer or dancers would arch over backwards and slowly walk backward with their face looking upwards as they went to the side of the stage. They were going backward yet looking upward and forward at the same time; sort of taking a “leap of faith” but in a multi-directional manner.