

# CÃO SEM PLUMAS

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**DOG WITHOUT FEATHERS**

Deborah Colker Dance Company

Artistic Director

Deborah Colker

Executive Director

João Elias

Deborah Colker Dance Company is funded by Brazil's Ministry of Tourism

**Creation, Choreography and Direction** DEBORAH COLKER

**Executive Director** JOÃO ELIAS

**Art Direction and Set Design** GRINGO CARDIA

**Cinematographic Direction** CLÁUDIO ASSIS and DEBORAH COLKER

**Dramaturgy** CLÁUDIO ASSIS

**Musical Direction** JORGE DÜ PEIXE and BERNA CEPPAS **special collaboration** LIRINHA and ARTO LINDSAY

**Light Design** JORGINHO DE CARVALHO

**Costumes** CLAUDIA KOPKE

**Photography** CAFI

**Choreography Assistant** JACQUELINE MOTTA

**Rehearsal Coachs** JACQUELINE MOTTA, KARINA MENDES

**Urban Dances Coach** FILIPI URSÃO

**Collaboration on Choreographic Creation** DANCERS and ASSISTANTS

**Production Manager, Booking and Tour Manager** CAROLINA TAVARES

**Technical Director and Lighting Operator** EDUARDO DANTAS

**Stage Manager** THIAGO MERIJ

**Technical Director Assistant** CAROLINA DWORSCHAK

**Development** JE PRODUÇÕES LTDA.

**Duration** 1h10 MINUTES (no intermission)

## ABOUT THE WORK

### João Cabral de Melo Neto and *O Cão Sem Plumas* (The Dog without Feathers)

João Cabral de Melo Neto was living in Barcelona when he read, in the magazine *El Observador Económico*, that life expectancy in Recife was less than that in India. The news inspired him to write *O Cão Sem Plumas* (The Dog without Feathers). The poem was written in Spain, and when it was published in Brazil in 1950, the author was still working in the Consulate General in Barcelona. Many of the verses have the verbs in the past, as if the river was being remembered. The Capibaribe never let go of those who stray from it.

*That river*

*Is in the memory*

*like a live dog*

*in a living room.*

*Like a live dog*

*inside a pocket.*

*Like a live dog*

*under the sheets,*

*under the shirt,*

*the skin.*

João Cabral was born on January 9, 1920, in Recife, Brazil, where the river Capibaribe flows through the center of the city. His cousins were Manuel Bandeira and Gilberto Freyre, and the family's wealth came from sugar-cane plantations. He spent his childhood in the mills of Poço do Aleixo, Pacoval, and Dois Irmãos. In Rio de Janeiro he became a diplomat and friends such as Carlos Drummond de Andrade, Murilo Mendes, Vinicius de Moraes, and others influenced him. The change of city and his postings abroad helped him to better understand the social inequalities in the Pernambuco region and in Brazil. *O cão sem plumas* is proof of this. He portrayed—in parentheses—the “stagnation” of the “Pernambuco dining rooms.”

*(It is in them,*

*but with their backs to the river,*

*that the city's “great spiritual families”*

*hatch the fat eggs of their prose.  
In the encircling peace of the kitchens  
where they viciously stir  
their cauldrons  
of viscous laziness.)*

He returned to Rio de Janeiro in 1952 to respond to an inquest for “subversive activities linked to the Communist Party.” Though he was never a member, he stayed until the end of the case and then moved to Recife. In 1953 he wrote his second poem about the Capibaribe: *The river or Narrative of the Voyage of the Capibaribe from its source to the city of Recife*. He added personal memories and precise information to tell the detailed history of the river and all that happened along its course. The trio of radically northeastern works ended with what would become his best-known work—*Morte e vida severina (The Death and Life of a Severino)*—a Christmas story commissioned by the theatrical director Maria Clara Machado and published in 1956. He was a poet in the strictest sense. He claimed that poetry is construction and composition. He always rejected the confessional art and sentimentalisms. He believed in reason more than emotion—which did not prevent his verses from being moving. “To me the interior world is a source of torment, a nuisance,” he said towards the end of his life.

*O cão sem plumas* is dedicated to Joaquim Cardoso, “Capibaribe poet” and notorious structural engineer, who worked on some of Oscar Niemeyer’s major projects. His admiration says a lot about João Cabral, who was also influenced by the modern and precise architecture of Le Corbusier. *Uma faca só lâmina (A knife all blade)* was one of his most important poems. His writing and living demands were unnecessary, difficult, and incessant—just as in the poem where the knife had no handle.

*The bare blade  
Which grows as it wears,  
Which the less it sleeps  
The less sleep there is  
The more it cuts  
The sharper its edge  
And it lives to be born  
In others, like a spring.*

Due to his diplomatic career, Cabral spent most of his life abroad in Barcelona, Seville, Marseille, Madrid, Geneva, Berne, Dakar, Quito, Tegucigalpa, and Porto. His poems were especially influenced by Spain, but above all by Seville. He became a friend of the painter Joan Miró, writing

an important essay about her, and of poet and artist Joan Brossa. He had a life full of awards and honors, and he was decorated in various countries. He was a member of the Pernambuco and Brazilian Academies of Letters, but was always a reticent poet, uninterested in promotions, publicity, and interviews.

Cabral had chronic headaches and towards the end of his life, suffered loss of sight. He used to say that his true vocation was to be a literary critic and he did not know why he had continued writing for decades. "Whether or not this work will survive, I have not the least idea," he stated in a 1996 interview, three years before his death in Rio de Janeiro. The strength of *O cão sem plumas* and his many other poems indicates the works will survive for a very long time.

### **The show by Deborah Colker**

My first husband, Cafi, showed me Pernambuco and thanks to him I learned about the work of great North Eastern artists such as Mestre Vitalino, Gilvan Samico, and João Cabral. "How much, much thicker/ is the blood of a man/ than the dream of a man." I was only 20. It was all very intense. João Elias re-introduced me to *O cão sem plumas* in 2014. I started to read and to cry. Right there I decided it would be the next show. Cláudio Assis and I already wanted to do something together. A project about Pernambuco was perfect. Thanks to João Elias, we spent almost a month in Pernambuco, in the mud. We saw folk dances, caboclinho, cavalo-marinho, maracatu... We saw people, the Capibaribe, the mangroves. We filmed everything.

I decided to build an animal-man with the dancers. With them I built the body of a crab. There were many musical references, not only northeastern: samba, jongo, kuduro, mangue beat...

I did not intend *Cão Sem Plumas* to be political, but it ends up being so, because of the content of the poem and the images on film. It is my most explicitly Brazilian work. The show is about inconceivable things, which should never be permitted. It is a challenge to human ignorance. We destroy nature, children, everything that is full of life.

My history is a history of mixtures; *Cão Sem Plumas* includes the elegance of the classical, the mud of the roots and a contemporary vision. For me, the name for this is João Cabral.

## **Screenplay for the show (based on the poem)**

João Cabral de Melo Neto divided *O cão sem plumas* into four parts: “Capibaribe Landscape I”, “Capibaribe Landscape II”, “Capibaribe Fable” and “Capibaribe Discourse”. Deborah divided it in eight scenes.

### **Alluvium**

The Capibaribe is an intermittent river, sometimes it hides and - who knows? sleeps. Alluvium in the dry season, it sinks to a bed composed of sand, gravel and mud. When the rain comes, the river reclaims its space. This dance calls the rain.

### **River and streams**

We hear words and verses by João Cabral interpreted by Lirinha. The two protagonists of the poem are presented: the River and its streams.

### **Big crab**

The main movement of the dancers.

### **Sugar cane field**

The sugar cane field and its cane cutters. The theme is in the final of Landscape II, as in the verse “se a moenda lhe mastiga o braço” (“if the mill chews the worker’s arm”).

### **Dog river**

The Capibaribe appears “as a dog/ humble and thick-set”, verses at the start of Landscape II. The viscous quality of the “thick” muddy river, fundamental in the poem, is used in the performance. The first heron appears, a white bird that does not mix with the other beings in the river.

## **Mangrove**

“Where the skin/starts from the mud/ where man starts/ in that man”. The bodies express João Cabral’s verses and the peculiar nature of the mangrove, a very rich ecosystem. The “coco” enters, a Pernambuco rhythm, which interprets the meeting of the river and the sea, narrated in “Fábula”.

## **Hérons**

Three dancers represent the grace and beauty of the region. And also the elite that take nourishment from the Capibaribe, but turn their backs on poverty.

## **City**

The stilts in the river, iconic image of Recife’s favelas, are seen in the film and also on the boxes moved by the dancers. The huge crab makes its last appearance. Resistant, stubborn, it will not abandon its habitat.

## **Music Credits**

### ***ALLUVIUM***

**ABERTURA CÃO** BERNAL CEPPAS

Keyboards and electronic programming BERNAL CEPPAS

**ALUVIÃO** BERNAL CEPPAS

Keyboards, percussion and electronic programming BERNAL CEPPAS

### ***RIVER AND STREAMS***

**RIO RIBEIRINHO** LIRA

Keyboards and percussion LIRA

Rabeca MACIEL SALU

Keyboards, percussion and electronic programming BERNAL CEPPAS

### ***BIG CRAB***

**BAIÃO DA RUA DO RIO** JORGE DÜ PEIXE

Keyboards, melodica and percussion JORGE DÜ PEIXE

Vocals JORGE DÜ PEIXE and TAINÁ

Electric guitar and electric bass THIAGO DUAR

### ***SUGAR CANE FIELD***

**CALDO DE CANA AZEDO** JORGE DÜ PEIXE

Keyboards and percussion JORGE DÜ PEIXE

Electric guitar and electric bass THIAGO DUAR

### ***DOG RIVER***

**SAQUEADO** JORGE DÜ PEIXE

Keyboards, percussion and electric guitar JORGE DÜ PEIXE

Electric bass THIAGO DUAR



## **MANGROVE**

**RAIZES DO ALTO JORGE DÜ PEIXE**

Keyboards and percussion **JORGE DÜ PEIXE**

Electric bass **THIAGO DUAR**

**MANGUELÁSTICOS BERNAL CEPPAS**

Keyboards, percussion and electronic programming **BERNAL CEPPAS**

**TAMANCOS GRITADOS JORGE DÜ PEIXE**

Keyboards and percussion **JORGE DÜ PEIXE**

Electric guitar **THIAGO DUAR**

Electronic programming **BERNAL CEPPAS**

## **HERONS**

**MAIS ESPESSO DO QUE UMA MAÇÃ JORGE DÜ PEIXE**

Keyboards and percussion **JORGE DÜ PEIXE**

Electric guitar and electric bass **THIAGO DUAR**

**ARISTOCRACIA DOCE JORGE DÜ PEIXE**

Keyboards and percussion **JORGE DÜ PEIXE**

Electric guitar and electric bass **THIAGO DUAR**

## **CITY**

**BAIÃO DA RUA DO RIO JORGE DÜ PEIXE**

Keyboards, melodica and percussion **JORGE DÜ PEIXE**

Vocals **JORGE DÜ PEIXE and TAINÁ**

Electric guitar and electric bass **THIAGO DUAR**

**PALAFITAS DE VIDRO BERNAL CEPPAS**

Keyboards and electronic programming **BERNAL CEPPAS**

**MÃES DA FAVELA BERNAL CEPPAS**

Keyboards, electric bass, percussion and electronic programming **BERNAL CEPPAS**

**CÃO CASTELIANO BERNAL CEPPAS**

Keyboards, electric bass and percussion **BERNAL CEPPAS**

**CABARET SEM PLUMAS JORGE DÜ PEIXE**

Keyboards and percussion **JORGE DÜ PEIXE**

Guitar **MARCELO CAMPELLO**

**O TROCO SECO BERNARDO CEPPAS**

Keyboards and electronic programming **BERNARDO CEPPAS**

**BARCOS NA FAVELA BERNARDO CEPPAS**

Keyboards, electric bass, electric guitar, percussion and electronic programming **BERNARDO CEPPAS**

Rafaela **SILVA**

Poem declamation **"O CÃO SEM PLUMAS"** **JORGE DUTRA PEIXE,**

**LIRA, TAINÁ and CAMILO BECHAR**

## **Deborah Colker**

Born in Rio de Janeiro in 1960 she dedicated, prior to dancing, 10 years to the study of classical piano, and five more to the practice of a team sport, volleyball.

The eight years acting as a dancer of the "Coringa", an expressive group in Rio during the 1980s and one of the precursors of contemporary dance in Brazil, helped to forge her interest in working with professionals from different backgrounds and pursuing a dance capable of promoting a synthesis between Art and the everyday life of the common man. During the foundation of her company in 1994, she gathered under the same roof a troupe of two classical dancers, three contemporary dancers, a break-dance champion, an Olympic gymnast, a model and an actress - besides herself.

As a choreographer she stood out by the exploration of "Beauty" in physical activities historically unrelated to the artistic universe. The excellence of her work at the head of the company, widely recognized by international critics, was honored in 2001 with the Laurence Olivier Award in the "Outstanding Achievement in Dance" category.

Deborah was the first woman to create and direct a show for the Canadian company Cirque du Soleil: "Ovo" (Egg), 2009. In 2016, she was the movement director for the opening ceremony of the Rio de Janeiro Olympics, commanding over 3,000 people.

Deborah Colker was the winner of the 2018 Prix Benois de la Danse, one of the most important dance awards in the world, for the show "Cão Sem Plumas", inspired on the poem of the same name by João Cabral de Melo Neto.

## **Cia. de Dança Deborah Colker (Deborah Colker Dance Company)**

The Companhia de Dança Deborah Colker went on stage for the first time in 1994, with Vulcão (Volcano), in Rio's Municipal Theater, one of the most important theaters in Brazil. The great explosion happened the following year with Velox. The show, famous for its scene on a climbing wall, became a pop phenomenon. In 1995, Cia Deborah Colker was given sponsorship by Petrobras, which continues until the present day.

Staged especially for the prestigious Lyon Dance Biennial, *Mix* (a mix of *Vulcão* and *Velox*), 1996, launched the Company internationally, and five years later the show received the stamp of excellence by the Society of London Theatre, receiving the 2001 Laurence Olivier Award, in the category "Outstanding Achievement in Dance", an honor never before granted to a Brazilian artist or group. Since then, the Cia de Dança Deborah Colker has toured on four continents, performing on some of the most important stages in the world.

With *Cão Sem Plumas* (Dog without feathers), in 2017, the company sets out for a new relationship with words, the poetry of João Cabral de Melo Neto, confirming continual transformation. *Cão Sem Plumas* was granted with the Benois de la Danse Award 2018 at Moscow for its choreography.

### **João Elias**

With the experience of one who helped to found the Cia. de Dança Deborah Colker and commanded the production of all the performances, Executive Director João Elias claims that *Cão sem plumas* is the most difficult venture undertaken since the opening in 1994. There is no climbing wall, as in *Velox*, or Ferris wheel, as in *Rota*. There is, at the back of the stage, a film being shown that is made and projected with high definition equipment. And the film by Cláudio Assis and Deborah Colker, like much of the concept of the show, is the result of 24 days spent in Pernambuco, in November, 2016: from the frontier between brushland and desert to the capital, Recife. The journey, entitled "From the backlands to Ground Zero", followed the course of the Capibaribe river, ending with a presentation on a raft, on the day on which the river is paid homage. In Belo Jardim, Brejo da Madre de Deus, Limoeiro, Nazaré da Mata, Recife and Carneiros, the dancers and Deborah create exchanges between artists and local residents. More than just teaching, the company learned things. They are in *Cão sem plumas*.

"I think it is our duty to submerge ourselves in João Cabral's universe. This experience changed our view of the world", declares João Elias.

Having started in theater in Porto Alegre in 1976, he remembers that in previous eras, groups such as Arena, Oficina and CPC (Centro Popular de Cultura) developed artistic and educational works similar to those done by the company in Pernambuco.

Difficulties in production did not prevent filming every day of the journey, always with the dancers covered in mud. And nor did Deborah cease to count on elements she considered

necessary for adapting João Cabral's poem. João Elias even invited professor and critic Antonio Carlos Secchin to advise the group, during rehearsals, regarding the work of the poet.

"It would be easier to follow lines of work already known to the public, but our motivation follows Deborah's desire to renew with each show, every three years. *Cão sem plumas* is a landmark, because it is very different to what she has always done, the search for beauty that marks her career", says the executive director.

João Elias Alvares da Silva was actor and producer in various theatrical productions in Porto Alegre, Rio and Salvador. He worked for TV Globo in journalistic programs, and in 1992 created J.E. Produções, making publicity films, video clips and documentary series. In 1997 he founded Giros Produções, with Belisario Franca. Since 2000 J.E. Produções has worked exclusively with the Deborah Colker Dance Company.

With *Nó* (Knot) (2005) and *Cruel* (2008), Deborah entered a phase she considers more existential, touching on themes such as love and desire. Between the two she created *Dínamo*, which was still called *Maracanã* when it was included in the programming for the 2006 World Cup, in Germany.

Approaching literature became the next challenge. *Tatyana* (2011) was based on the novel in verse *Evguêni Oniéguin*, by Russian Aleksandr Púchkin. And *Belle* (2014) was freely inspired by *Belle de jour*, by the Franco-Argentine writer Joseph Kessel – and transformed into film by Luis Buñuel.

With *Cão Sem Plumás*, in 2017, the company sets out for another relationship with words, now the poetry of João Cabral de Melo Neto, confirming continual transformation.

*Cão Sem Plumás* has won the Benois de la Danse Award 2018 at Moscow for its choreography.

### **Gringo Cardia**

Gringo Cardia considers *Cão sem plumas* a "film-dance" or a "film in 3D for which you don't need glasses". The opinion would already carry weight if Gringo were stage designer and director of the show. But he is more: he has been with Deborah since work in the theater and in the

Intrépida Trupe, being her most constant partner in creation. From *Vulcão* (1994) to the new production, he has taken part in all the company's productions, and also in *Ovo*, the show conceived for the Cirque du Soleil.

"Deborah Always worked with technology. Now she had to dig into the earth, into something more organic, bury herself in Brazil", said Gringo, who took part in the 2016 journey in Pernambuco.

To him, the film provides 50% of the scenery. The challenge was to make the images on the screen overflow onto the stage, establishing dialogs with the dance. The use of mud in the film and of paint on the dancers' skin constitutes an element. Another is the earthy colors of the costumes and the scenery, composing a result that he calls monochromatic, despite the variations in intensity.

The boxes that are among the few pieces of scenery in the show represent Gringo and Deborah's perpetual intent – for them the scenery is not decorative, it is interactive. "It functions like one more dancer", says Gringo, who has worked, in various roles, with Maria Bethânia, Chico Buarque, Bia Lessa and many other artists, with devotion in all the areas in which he works.

### **Cláudio Assis**

Cláudio Assis was born in Caruaru and wanted to be a poet. He became a filmmaker, one of the most important in the country, with works that show aspects of Pernambuco that the elite of the state would prefer to conceal. His esthetic and social ideas echo the verses of *O cão sem plumas*.

"My job was to help Deborah understand the nation that is Pernambuco. What did João Cabral see? Why the sugar cane aristocracy, which dominated and dominates Pernambuco, built their houses with their backsides to the river?"

He acted as guide to the choreographer in trips down the Capibaribe and accompanied her on the 24-day journey in November 2016, recording, among other situations, exchanges with residents of the towns.

"It wasn't enough to gather information. We needed to contribute to the transformation", he said.

The images projected on the stage backdrop are part of the many he and his crew filmed. They are all in black and white.

“It is all to do with the poem, helps to think.”, he says, convinced that what João Cabral wrote is true today. “The Capibaribe, that was bad in 1950, is much worse today. We continue adding to the disgrace: sewage in the river, the favelas.”

Cláudio toured the poor district of Coelhos, on the banks of the river, with his camera. He filmed, for example, the singer/composer Cannibal, pioneer of the punk scene in Recife and leader of the Alto José do Pinho community. He was born before the mangue beat generation, but saw the movement grow from close up, shared with these new artists admiration for the work of Josué de Castro and kept in contact with them.

“To speak of João Cabral, you have to speak of Josué de Castro. To speak of the mangue beat, you have to speak of them both”.

His first experience of directing feature films was *Amarelo Manga*, (Mango Yellow) em 2002. He concluded a trilogy with *Baixio das Bestas* (Bog of Beasts) (2006) and *Febre do Rato* (Rat Fever) (2011). In 2015 he released *Big Jato* (Big Jet) based on the book by Xico Sá and chosen best film at the Brasilia Festival. In 2017 he made *Piedade* (Pity) with Fernanda Montenegro in the cast.

### **Musical Direction**

Jorge Dü Peixe has no doubt that *O cão sem plumas*, the poem, is as regional as it is universal. The musician knows what he’s talking about: exponent of the “Mangue Beat” movement, he has spent the last three decades mixing Pernambuco and the world, tradition and technology. A member of Nação Zumbi since the start in 1991, he also took over the vocals after the death of Chico Science, in 1997.

"João Cabral stands high in Pernambuco’s history. He was a visionary. He wrote the poem in Barcelona, but he had taken Recife with him, encrusted."

For the sound track of *Cão sem plumas*, Jorge recorded verses and created melodic phrases for sections of the poem. He played various instruments in the studio – explored coco, maracatu,

but also sounds not related to Pernambuco. The result is universal, even more so when combined with dance and the cinema.

"It is a great opera of the mud, of the river. An acid opera like the true words of João Cabral."

Another voice one hears in the show is that of Lirinha, poet, actor, composer who became famous as vocal in the band Cordel do Fogo Encantado. He is from Arcoverde, where the traditional music is the coco. Louise Taynã, Chico Science's daughter, performs reciting verses in English. Carioca (born in Rio) Berna Ceppas has worked with Deborah Colker since the company's first performance. In the new partnership, he uses electronic resources, as usual, but tuned with Pernambuco sonorities. He produced the CD *Nação Zumbi*, released by the band in 2014.