

# The Register-Guard

## Dance like it's Brazil: This troupe – all the way from Roseburg – will bring some Latin flavor to Eugene

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For more than 10 years, Valéria Ball has struggled to run a small modern dance company in Roseburg. As you might suppose, convincing rural Oregon audiences to turn out for performances of contemporary Brazilian-American dance has been a bit tricky.

"People go to 'The Nutcracker' here," she said. "That's it."



Then last fall, Ball's nine-member Traduza Dance Company took part in a performance with Ballet Fantastique at Eugene's Hult Center.

She was stunned to see hundreds of people in the audience, and a Register-Guard reviewer later wrote that Traduza's "modern dance technique and body language were excellent."

Following on that success, Traduza is coming back to Eugene next week to perform on its own.

At Lord Leebrick Theatre, Ball and her dancers will present "Translation," a set of dances growing out of her own experience as an urban Brazilian - she's from Rio de Janeiro - coming to rural Oregon.

"Being a Brazilian in Roseburg? I want to say that's a challenge. And I think it would be for any other foreigner," said Ball, who first came here in 1990 and later married an American engineer. They have two children.

"Besides the extreme differences in culture, the weather is so different!" she said.

The differences can be immensely personal.

"Americans treasure their own personal space," she said. "Brazilians don't have personal space. You don't! You are invaded constantly, 24 hours a day. That is a good thing and a bad thing."

Ball, who is 39, has been dancing her entire life.

"I started dancing when I was just a little girl," she said. "I was always doing choreography wherever I was. It was always a passion of mine. I have a hard time doing other people's dance, myself."

It's also been difficult, she admits, to try to introduce modern dance to Roseburg.

She's been teaching classes and opened a dance studio to perform improvisational dance, but interest has been slow to build.

"I was not really patient to wait," she said. "I just couldn't wait 10 years for people to build the love."

Ball is the founder of Umpqua Modern Dance Project, a nonprofit organization she started to help sponsor dance in small communities like Roseburg.

"I decided to open something which would bring companies like my company to small towns," she said.

"Translation" is a sensual, sophisticated evocation of culture clash, with dancers moving to Brazilian rhythms.

The show will consist of two parts.

The first half is a set of eight short pieces in which the dancers explore life in Brazil, from the trials of Rio's street children to the exuberance of soccer. The dance is energetic and sometimes chaotic; some of the work is influenced by capoeira, a Brazilian martial art mixing dance and music with fighting techniques.

"The first act is almost like you are immersed in another country," Ball said. "You are going to feel like you're not in Eugene, Oregon."

The second half of the program begins with a short video by Eugene videographer Todd Trigsted, who interviewed five immigrant women about their experiences coming to this country.

After the video, dancers will perform three pieces, including one choreographed by Ball in which three dancers work between rows of low wooden stools.

The stools form an interesting grid for the movement but also lend a sense of hazard to the piece.

One dancer confessed during a rehearsal that the stools led to a lot of bruised legs, hips and ankles in early run-throughs.

The second half will also include works by Jacksonville choreographer Robin Stiehm and by The show will feature live music composed and performed by John Polese.