

Review: Acosta Danza: 100% Cuban

By Su Carroll

Acosta Danza: 100% Cuban, Theatre Royal Plymouth

Carlos Acosta, now artistic director of Birmingham Royal Ballet, set up Acosta Danza in 2015 in his native Cuba to give young dancers the opportunities that he was given. The work is influenced by Cuba's rich cultural heritage and this shines through in the programme the company presented at the Theatre Royal Plymouth – five diverse pieces that oozed energy and hypnotic rhythms.

History is at play in *Liberto*, which takes as its inspiration slavery. Afro-Cuban roots are at its core and the love story built to a fitting crescendo in terms of performance and story-telling. *Hybrid* had a similar feel with the 12 dancers immersed in the retelling of the myth of Sisyphus who was condemned to perpetually roll a boulder up a hill over and over again.

Liberto and *Hybrid* are both UK premieres and were well received. But I really warmed to the older work including *Paysage*, *Soudain la nuit* – a big hit on the company's 2020 tour. Maybe it takes an outsider (in this case Swedish choreographer Pontus Lidberg) to see the beauty of rhythms that are so familiar to Cubans. The intoxicating throb of the rumba coursed through its veins. It was joyful and uplifting.

At just seven minutes long, solo work *Impronta* really packed an emotional punch. A contemporary piece by Spanish choreographer Maria Rovira, it demonstrated how contemporary dance holds dear its cultural roots. Beautifully danced by Zeleidy Crespo, it was embraced warmly by the audience.

The final piece, *De Punta a Cabo*, took us closest to that cool jazz vibe that we associate with Cuba. Clever staging with a backdrop of dancers filmed against a Cuban landscape summed up the experience of the evening – a modern, contemporary dance performance with a visceral connection to its past.