Tangueros Del Sur presented Romper El Piso at the Soraya Center for the Performing Arts on Saturday Nov. 17, 2018. This passionate and fiery 95-minute tour de force under the superb conceptual and choreographic leadership of world-renowned Natalia Hills traces the history and soul of the Tango from the African influences of the “candombe” originated in the Afro-Uruguayan communities and merged with the “Habanera, a Spanish-American contradanse. It is a lively and rhythmic genesis to this intoxicating evening of thrilling dance and equally captivating music, beginning with the first of four segments called Los Morenos.

Los Morenos (dark skinned) begins with a provocative combination of drums and accordion in anticipation of where the exciting rhythms will lead. The lively milongas and folk dances, with nimble footwork swaying under cummerbund shirts, full pants and slatted skirts of browns and earth tones, starts our adventure back in time. Then countering the folk motif, we are swiftly transported to the tango expertise of the brilliant Natalia Hills in white high necked blouse, black swirl skirt and 2.5 ” heels awaiting the arrival of the dashing Alejandro Aquino in dark suit and ascot. Their fervor heats up and boils over into a flurry of impossible footwork, finally ending with the couple in each others’ arms.

The orchestra then seamlessly bridges the dance to instrumentation, directed and arranged by Patricio Villarejo, introducing its skillful and expressive Bandoneon player, Ivan Talanin, masterful pianist, Dimitri Kiselev, Violin Anton Semke, Percussion, Richard Niego, and Guitarist, Thodoris Skondras, allowing these experts to show off their powerful mastery of both the classic and contemporary Argentine composers and musical artists. Throughout the evening they thrill us to Gardel, Berlingieri, and the incomparable, Piazzolla’s, soundscapes of cacophonous street sounds, as though walking us through the streets of Buenos Aires.
With not a moment to catch our collective breath, our attention is directed to the lovely backs of two swaying women in pink silken layered knee length dresses joined by handsome men in open neck shirts and dark suits, joined then by two more couples. Costumed and makeup by the talented Hills herself in collaboration with Jean Luc Don Vito, the dancers move with and counter to each other, and all fulfill the playful joy of the enchanting contradanse.

Then moving in time, we are treated to the second movement, the seductive and passionate En el Abrazo (in the embrace). Hills and Aquino’s long striding leaning bodies in black silk and dark tux. Experienced and leopard-like, they stalk, they stride, executing their Molinetes (windmill), Ochos (figure 8’s) and Goncho’s (hooks). Their foreplay in this dance of passion, his hands on her waist and back are subtle, artful and thrilling. Then in a flurry of footwork, they circle then pursue, only to hesitate – to hold, resist, to breath; and finally, to embrace (Abrazo). Each of the couples, Carlos Barrionuevo, Mayte Valdes, Rojer Zalazar, Ana Thomas, Gerardo Moyano, Gloria Zhang, Alexander Moncada Rojas, and Yuliana Bamaiyan are distinctly brilliant in their approach, style, and interpretation; each are masterful ending intertwined and wrapped en el Abrazo (hug). Its masterful.

There were so many exquisite moments in the evening of numerous emotional peaks and valleys that one can only pick a few artful ones to mention here. In particular a stirring “rite,” a type of requiem that leads to the support of black draped companions holds back the grieving gray clad beauty, understated and constrained, walking dirge-like writhing with partners of men and women, she eventually transcends in a sudden escape, running with a generous grey scarf trailing behind into the darkness of the night.
Not to be outdone, Hills and Aguino in their brilliance, follow through in another eye-popping feat, and with every kick, we see a hint of hot pink under Hills’ solemn black dress. When finished, lights go to black, the crowd applauds and when the spot hits her once more, she is transformed, wearing a solid hot pink sequined dress, as they continue their final and stunning dance together.

And in the final gift of tango through time, a now sophisticated contradanse with the entire company moving stealthily, unified in black and reds and culminating in a cluster of bodies, still, silent and focused. No big “Tada!” They wait, as if looking to the future of where tango will find itself. The audience sits stunned, then realizing the end has come, they break into soaring applause wishing that they could continue to host such a feast for others to see.

Congratulations to The Soraya Center for the Performing Arts, and Thor Steingraber for this important gift of dance, art and music.