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WITH LITTLE MOVEMENT, VISITING SEVERAL CONTINENTS

By Claudia La Rocco
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In some ways, there is very little action in the first two parts of [Cabula6's](#) "Angola Project," which had their New York premieres this weekend at Dance New Amsterdam. (Part 3 began on Wednesday.) A sole performer, Jeremy Xido, spends most of his time sitting behind a desk between two large projector screens, guiding the audience through clips of various film projects.

And yet these two hourlong [performance-lectures](#) never stop moving, zigzagging back and forth between continents, cultures and forms as Mr. Xido (pronounced she-DOH), an American artist now based in Europe, charts the restless and propulsive energy driving him to tell disparate stories. As the various narrative threads unravel and knot, it becomes apparent that all of these stories about other people are on some level intimate stories about the self.

"I had no idea how I could tell a story about a place I didn't know," he says early on in Part 1, "Lisbon" (2008), which was, like the rest of the trilogy, created by Mr. Xido, Igor Dobricic and Claudia Heu. He sits with his back to the audience, speaking close to a microphone in warm, conspiratorial tones. A hazy rectangle of light sits farther downstage, but Mr. Xido is in relative darkness, as color-saturated images of Lisbon fill the screens on either side of him: red-tiled roofs, cobblestoned streets, billowing clouds in an impossibly big sky above the city and surrounding ocean.

"It is remarkable and singular and unlike any other place I have ever been," he says. And then he plunges into a tale involving elements like

Angolan immigrants, a childhood memory of eating mulberries and the marvelously quixotic attempt of an artist trying to figure out what he wants to say and how best to say it.

Image



Cabula6 Jeremy Xido of this performance group in “Lisbon,” Part 1 of “The Angola Project” at Dance New Amsterdam.

Credit...

Andrea Mohin/The New York Times

Fact and fiction blur throughout this attempt, as Mr. Xido zips between roughly shot clips, giving us only glimpses of the multiple layers he plans to weave into a screenplay he is creating for a film that is also a performance piece that is unfolding before the audience’s eyes. He eventually steps into the rectangle of light, adding a choreographed animation to his spoken urgency as he connects the

far-flung historical dots between the trans-Atlantic slave trade and his childhood as a white kid surrounded by black children in Detroit.

“I think you construct your roots,” a woman tells him in one of the numerous filmed interviews, and watching the scaffolding shoot up is one of the chief pleasures of “The Angola Project.” In the second part, “Angola” (2010), Mr. Xido is back at his setup of desk and screens, but facing the audience this time. Now the footage is of that African country’s rickety [railway](#), and of the dusty and ramshackle stops along the way, including a bar that he describes as something like that futuristic watering hole in “Star Wars.”

Mr. Xido now also appears in the recorded footage, his wiry hair braided in cornrows, joined by two companions as, he explains, he does research for a feature film that might, because of the vagaries of international financing, have to become a documentary. He is also, it seems, getting a bit lost, beginning to see his invented characters in himself and in his fellow travelers.

As in the first work “Angola” derives its structure and meaning from the disparate layers stacked up by Mr. Xido and then spread out to create a jostling collage, one that is intimate yet informed by sweeping issues surrounding class, race and identity. Detroit is back in the picture, joined by the cold war, the Chinese workers seeking to rebuild the railway and the Bruce Lee and [Jim Kelly](#) kung fu movies that so inspired Mr. Xido and his boyhood friends.

Kung fu, he explains, translates into something like “the daily sharpening of your blades.” This can apply to anything.

“Are you using this moment to sharpen your blade?” he asks. “To be here, to be alive?”

Mr. Xido surely is.

Cabula6 performs through Saturday at Dance New Amsterdam, 280 Broadway, at Chambers Street, Lower Manhattan; (212) 625-8369, [dnadance.org](#)

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