



[NYTimes.com](#) > [Arts](#) > [Dance](#)

DANCE REVIEW | RISA JAROSLOW & DANCERS

Feeling Whole in a Response to Sept. 11

By JENNIFER DUNNING

Published: November 12, 2004

Risa Jaroslow has carved a niche for herself in New York dance over the years with choreography based in mainstream modern dance techniques but focused on building onstage communities. Sometimes those communities are drawn from actual people, like the female musicians struggling in a man's world in one piece. But Ms. Jaroslow's new "Whole Sky" creates an abstract community of dreamers in a dance built on people's responses when the choreographer asked what made them feel whole.

"Whole Sky" is in part a response to the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11. It includes taped musings about them by a New York City fireman who is also one of several untrained performers in the piece. "Whole Sky" also touches on the idea of death and how its imminence brings a new delight in the small pleasures of life.

Advertisement

The dance ends with a video projection of the New York skyline onto the bodies of the performers. But the key to the piece is the opening projection of an abstract design that might have been created by Milton Avery with what looks like layers of sea and horizon across the back of the stage with the shoreline at the top. The sound of steady, even breathing is heard, and Ms. Jaroslow's opening of her arms, also as slow and expansive as breathing, is an early motif.

"Whole Sky" flows along with the 11 performers melting together and dispersing, also with the gentle inexorability of taking breaths. The dance is lulling even-paced at times but exquisite, like a drop of air suspended in honey. Steve Elson's quietly incidental score adds greatly to the effect, as do Chloë Z. Brown's lighting and Barbara Bickart's video.

