



Dance Magazine Online

Risa Jaroslow and Dancers
Dance Theater Workshop, New York, NY
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Reviewed by Jim Dowling

In her reassuringly titled *Whole Sky*, Risa Jaroslow evokes a wish to heal a broken skyline—and ourselves—suggesting that we can counter the world’s dislocations by reaching out to those we’ve kept at a distance. While her lithe company articulates themes of discovery and support, she introduces a succession of guests who are new to performing, to explore what outsiders can teach us.

Jaroslow sets the tone herself with an opening solo of easy skips and pauses. Her hands reveal a quirky personality: now shooting like an impulse across the chest, then tilting upward from her sides like small wings.

Lifted by Steve Elson’s score, which ranges from expressive baritone sax to occasional calypso, five company members slip from offhand play to timely assistance, all within a phrase. Voice-overs, recorded by the dancers, add texture to their vignettes. A kneeling Takemi Kitamura bolsters her wilting partner, then shifts him back onto his own feet. Christopher Williams, inverted, extends a leg like an architectural buttress to steady another dancer. When Elise Knudson steps into what promises to be an easy arabesque, the loose momentum of her limbs makes her instantly enormous.

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Chris Cruz and Attila Pomlenyi, the youngest of the guest performers, tag the shirts of company members Williams and Rommel Salveron with imaginary signatures while their disembodied voices gossip lightly about high school girls. Omagbitse Omagbemi, Kitamura, and Knudson caress and guide psychologist Adwoa Akhu, who talks of dropping an ex-husband’s name, encouraging her to begin a new phase of life.

Fire department lieutenant John F. Regan Jr. dances a fine waltz with Knudson. His voice describes the probies who will replace his fallen comrades with just enough formality to suggest the depth of his loss. Finally, Jaroslow offers herself into the hands of Nancey Rosensweig, a former dancer turned nurse and midwife. Rosensweig checks her patient’s knees and back and releases her neck, while their conversation ranges from a baby’s first breath to a dying patient’s greetings to departed loved ones.

Jaroslow displays a gift for affirming more in others than one would think likely or possible, and in the process, she shows how we can make ourselves whole.