

Sharing in support, and smiles

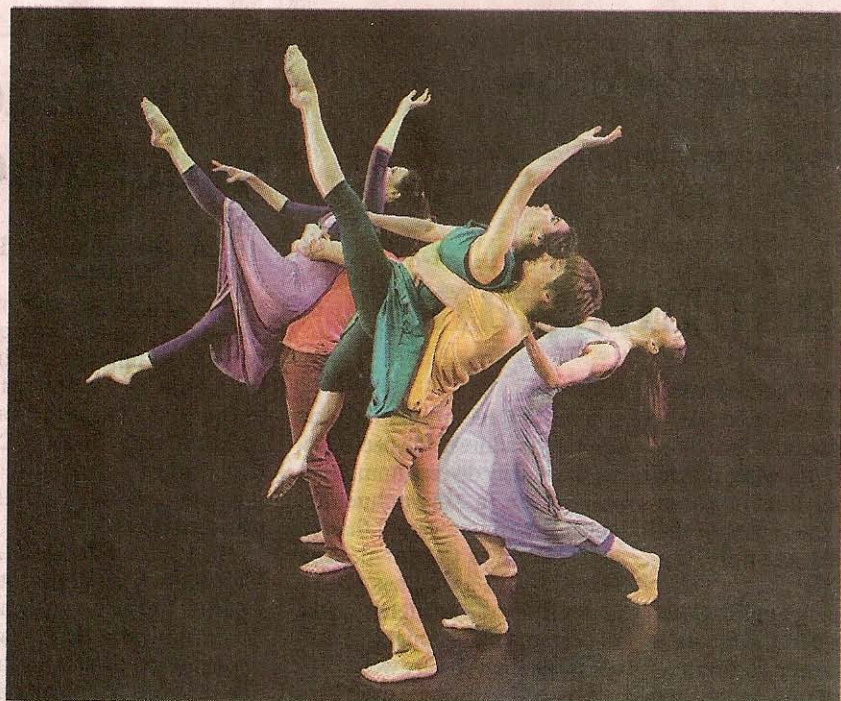
By Karen Campbell

GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

For choreographer Deborah Abel, community is much more than bodies moving together in ensemble. In her new work, "The Beauty Road," presented last weekend at the Tsai Performance Center, Abel's seven dancers really connected: They supported, lifted, and carried one another. They embraced, looking into each other's eyes. Sometimes they even smiled, a relatively rare occurrence in serious modern dance these days.

At times, it almost touched on being cloying, except that the choreography was so substantial. Abel sent her dancers through space with a luxurious, visceral sweep and flow, alternating long, clean lines with fluid curves. Lifts cartwheeled and spiraled. Leaps and turns seemed to ride on currents of air. Perhaps the dancers smiled because the lyrical movement was so gratifying to perform.

"The Beauty Road" is all about community, both thematically and structurally. The work's four movements are danced to and connected by live music created collaboratively by a terrific ensemble of eight musicians, led by Abel's husband, composer-singer-songwriter Lee Perlman. The danced score is an appealing, accessibly tuneful new age-style fusion of folk and modal melodies improvised over drones and repetitive harmonic changes. The musical in-



MEG LANDERS

Deborah Abel Dance stressed lyrical movement in "The Beauty Road."

DANCE REVIEW

THE BEAUTY ROAD

Deborah Abel Dance Company
At: Tsai Performance Center, Sunday

terludes are original songs. (Barbara Kessler's soulful "Persephone" and Mary Elizabeth Wheeler's heartfelt "Shining Through" were standouts.) The music provided connective tissue while setting the tone of each movement.

"The Beholding" depicted a joyous wedding, inspired by the nuptials of two of Abel's friends. "Ash and Honor" evoked scenes of war, as three men

bonded over confronting an unseen enemy. In the work's most muscular, athletic choreography, the men ventured forth one by one, kicking and stabbing the air before collapsing to the ground, the other two dragging their fallen comrade to safety. A women's quartet, "Faces of the Moon," blended feminine sensuality with the clenched fists and deep weighted lunges of determination. In between cradling and comforting, one woman spun frenetically in place.

The final "Step by Step" was a touching, beautifully layered portrayal of separation and moving on. The dancers created human stairs and bridges, passing over and under one another before taking their leave, one by one.