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# Dance

Time Out Chicago / Issue 211 : Mar 12-19, 2009

## Taisha Paggett

The L.A.-based dancer returns with David Rousseve/REALITY. By Asimina Chremos



A STEP AHEAD Paggett stands apart from the group in Saudade. Photo: Jorge Vismara

"Isn't that beautiful?" a woman asked from her seat in the audience, where she was playing a speaking role in a performance of the dance *Not About Iraq*. All eyes were on the serene, graceful, space-embracing dancer on the stage. Taisha Paggett was dancing quite beautifully indeed. This was at Links Hall a year ago in March, the voice belonged to Victoria Marks, and the performance was Mark's ironic political dance. Paggett's solo, which opened the work, was a highlight of the evening.

Lucky us, we get to see Paggett again this weekend. She also works with choreographer David Rousseve, whose troupe, REALITY, performs his work *Saudade* this weekend at the Dance Center. Rousseve is a master of combining dramatic narrative with rich, embodied dancing, and *Saudade* powerfully tells stories of lives affected by slavery and the history of the African diaspora.

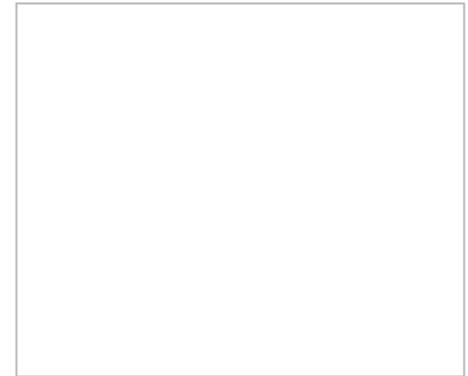
Paggett enjoys the free range of creativity that Rousseve allows his dancers. She also marvels at his method of keeping the narrative structure of the work to himself while coaxing rich material out of the cast members. "He'll say something like 'Make a movement phrase that captures the feeling of joy, goes to the floor two times, moves through space, and uses another prop or a body, '\_,'" she says. "But he keeps the dramatic logic to himself." The dancers won't know how it all fits into the story of the dance until later. "Sometimes [as a choreographer], I've told dancers too much. [Rousseve] has a way of reserving information. It's quite great."

Paggett, like almost all the other cast members of *Saudade*, met Rousseve when they went through grad school at UCLA in the World Arts and Cultures program, where he teaches. WAC is a unique academic program, one of the few dance departments in the world that combines a very high level of up-to-the-minute critical theory with an equally strong emphasis on artistic creativity and performance.

For an experiential taste of this combination of mental and physical acuity, take the workshop "Freedom of Speech and Movement Acts," which Paggett will teach Thursday 12 at the Hull House in conjunction with Rousseve's appearance. "I'm excited and totally curious [about teaching it]," she says. Open to "citizens of the world"—not just dancers—the class will lead participants through explorations of space and personal boundaries. "We're going to play with social issues that exist in the world and bring those into the dance studio," she says.

Paggett also plans to introduce a respectful exploration of touch and physical contact in the workshop. "I thought of including touch, because in *Saudade*, touch is always the answer. It's always the solution, always gets someone out of a bad situation." Now, that's something beautiful.

See Paggett in *Saudade* Thursday 12 through Saturday 14, or take her workshop on Thursday 12.



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