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Author Carol Anderson began working with Dance Collection Danse in 1988 and has written numerous editions of *Carol's Dance Notes*. Her bank of work includes the books *Judy Jarvis Dance Artist: A Portrait* (1993); *Chasing the Tale of Contemporary Dance, Parts 1 and 2* (1999 and 2002); *Rachel Browne: Dancing Toward the Light* (1999); and an anthology of original Canadian dance writing, *This Passion: for the love of dance* (1998), for which she was contributing editor. Her book *Unfold: A Portrait of Peggy Baker* was published by Dance Collection Danse Press/Presse in 2008. Since retiring as a dancer, Anderson has pursued her interest in writing, been active as a choreographer, educator and consultant. She is Professor Emerita of dance at York University.

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Carol's Dance Notes



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No Woman's Land

A Choreographic Work by Roshanak Jaberri

No Woman's Land interprets experiences of refugee women, focusing an artistic lens toward their resilience and courage. In 2016, Roshanak Jaberri began working with her research collaborators Doris Rajan, of the Institute for Research and Development on Inclusion and Society (IRIS), and Dr. Shahrzad Mojab, of the University of Toronto. Interviews were conducted by community facilitators with women who have come to Canada as refugees. Interpreting their transcribed stories of displacement, trauma and migration as choreographic entry points, the choreographer shaped a testimony of survival.

While it is raw and graphic, *No Woman's Land* does not re-victimize its subjects, or forward solutions. Working closely with the performers and her creative collaborators, the choreographer developed dance/theatre scenarios that evoke inner dimensions of refugee women's narratives. The work unfolds in imagistic, episodic

No Woman's Land

form, in scenes that are by turns harrowing and astonishingly celebratory. Vocal expression is a strong filament through the work, and the performers sing, shout, laugh, giving voice to joy, resistance, desperate circumstances. The ensemble's attunement and dynamic commitment weight the performance with conviction.

The refugee journey of *No Woman's Land* is a storm-torn passage. The cast, five women and one man, are hurled into raging waters, their path forward uncertain. Throughout the piece, strongly evocative design elements combine with the forceful soundscape to enhance the ambiance as action shifts through multiple areas of the stage space. Performers regard one another, witnessing, suggesting an uneasy flux where order does not prevail. Images conjure women in extremity, their stories punctuating the soundscape. In one, a woman recounts being taken to a notorious fourth-floor room where she was burned, then raped. And sometimes, surprisingly, women are revealed creating small domestic oases, fiercely creating refuge and solace with others.

Gravity is disturbed, a sense of centre destabilized. Displaced, the cast are literally thrown about; they partner, at times supportively, at others lifting and tossing one another, dancing with big, sometimes violent energy, scooping space, spinning, moving down into the ground, tumbling, turning upside down. Powerful women's bodies push, punch and slash, lashing out, summoning all their strength.

Suitcases, glinting thermal blankets, silver buckets, life jackets, swaths of fabric that conceal and suspend, garments cast off, or torn off, all wash through *No Woman's Land*. This drift of materiality seems to suggest that precious mementoes, treasures and belongings shift in meaning, like debris cast up on shore – and nothing matters but what is absolutely essential.



Nickeshia Garrick and Irma Villafuerte in Roshanak Jaber's *No Woman's Land*
Photo: Zahra Saleki

Roshanak Jaber commented that making *No Woman's Land* has entailed a constant “negotiation between the art and the politics.” Keeping the refugee women's voices and experiences always at the core was her artistic balance point – calibrated to recognize their indomitable strength, and to shine light on how even their smallest acts can signify brave resistance. *No Woman's Land* is a banner raised in their honour.