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Dance review: David Rousseve's 'Stardust' a revelation at REDCAT

By Victoria Looseleaf

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The most startling – and stunning – moment in David Roussève's latest dance-theater hybrid, "Stardust," came an hour into the 80-minute intermissionless piece, which premiered Tuesday at REDCAT.

The 53-year-old choreographer appeared, seemingly out of nowhere, to perform a heartwrenching solo set to Johnny Mathis crooning the Bach/Gounod "Ave Maria."

With his jerking, swooping arms and quasi-angelic face, Roussève, bathed in Christopher Kuhl's amber light, and bending and dipping as if the world's weight were on his shoulders, was spellbinding.

Rooted to the floor, he made every gesture

a plea, a struggle and a fervent quest for love and acceptance, as video projections – a series of unanswered text messages written by an unseen African American gay teen ("I try b gangsta," "Plz help me") – described a terrifying molestation.

Crouching, then crumpling to the floor, Roussève slid off the stage, painstakingly pushing himself backwards, not to be seen again – in the flesh, that is. His Skype video appearances as "Granpa," appearing throughout the work, also proved him a skilled thespian.

A storyteller for the 21st century, Roussève gave his 10-member company, Reality, much to say through his distinct movement vocabulary, a jazz/hip-hop/neo-pedestrian fusion and the stream of tweets – poignant, witty, earnest – a revelation of the soul. The performance was part of Radar L.A., the citywide theater festival featuring 18 productions.

Fierce performers all, this troupe of self-described "ghetto angels" often navigated the stage in unison, their defiant marching/stomping a recurring motif. Roussève's canny use of music – from an array of Nat King Cole numbers, including "Mona Lisa" and Hoagy Carmichael's iconic, "Stardust," to d. Sabela grimes' original electronic score and sound design – enhanced each dancer's moves.

Kevin Williamson, a study in fluid lyricism, was also commanding, with crisp turns and effortless jumps, his partnering infused with a melting longing. Taisha Paggett, when not giving attitude, was a master of expansive emotions, her outstretched arms and one-legged balancing the embodiment of grace. Nehara Kalev and Nguyen Nguyễn, also vessels of authenticity, found depth in a cocked head, breezy smile or high kick. Kevin Le's hip-hop solo, both smooth and jagged, featured a kind of faux locking that added punch to Roussève's singular vision.

Giving hope to the invisible teen was his grandfather's video-dispensed wisdom, his love of "Vincen van gos," and being a "romantix," as filtered through those '50s and '60s ballads. Cari Ann Shim Sham's video art, including lush imagery of a night sky, a bird taking flight and a disco ball's starburst patterns, never overpowered, but added dreaminess to the dancers' full-throttle engagement.

From the work's opening text messages – "Sup," "I want a BFF" – to the final verb/noun, "Cry" (dramaturgy by Lucy Burns), "Stardust" delivers a transcendent coming-of-age tale of universality, aspiration and identity. #Plz go.