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### A Perfect Circle

Dance review: Jeanne Ruddy's *Decade of Dance*

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*City Paper*

Published: Apr 13, 2010

Ten years ago, Jeanne Ruddy performed her solo *Significant Soil* at the Wilma. She was a newcomer, former Martha Graham principal dancer and cancer survivor. Ruddy appeared by herself on the stage, surrounded by nothing but looping translucent tubing. She moved in and out of the mortal coil, reaching a place of renewal.

A decade later, *Soil* has expanded into a full company production. At opening night of the choreographer's *Decade of Dance* retrospective—appropriately, back at the Wilma—Janet Pilla took on Ruddy's famous solo. Red-clad dancers weaved in and out of red fabric stretched across the stage as a Philip Glass violin concerto soared above, conjuring notions of fading fear and emerging opportunity.

Ruddy's work retains some of Graham's high drama, although she looks not to Greek legends but to newspapers for inspiration. Following *Soil*, 2008's superb *Breathless* uses dance to explore actual domestic violence cases. Black-and-white video provided the backdrop as, one by one, female dancers were dispatched to watery graves. Images of women floating amid seaweed, distorted by rippling water, were projected behind them.

Ruddy closed with her cheerful 2009 *Lark*. Bathed in golden light, five dancers connected and frolicked to Ellen Fishman-Johnson's jaunty score while their shadow images flickered in step. In one lovely sequence, each stood balanced on one leg, the other lifting upward at the knee, recalling a small flock of beautiful flamingos.

With her sure dance eye, Ruddy has formed a troupe of the city's best independent dancers: Pilla has been with Ruddy from the start, bringing her own José Limón modern dance training; Christine Taylor learned Graham technique from Ruddy as a college undergraduate; Rick Callender, who also performs with Miro and BalletX, has outstanding stage presence; and Ian Dodge, impish and well-balanced, is terrific. All 10 dancers deserve individual acknowledgment — but none more than the woman at the helm.