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Dramatic Publishing

DANCING SOLO

by

MARY HALL SURFACE



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(DANCING SOLO)

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For my uncle

DANCING SOLO was first presented by the MUNY/Student Theatre Project (now MUNY 1st Stage) in St. Louis, Missouri on January 11, 1991. The production was directed by Mary Hall Surface, choreography by Jan Feager, set by Darren Thompson, costume design by Gail Kincaid, property design by Amy Allen, sound design by David Medly and Mary Hall Surface. The company manager was Kenny Jacobs. The producer was Larry Pressgrove. The project was initiated by Bill Freimuth.

CAST

Kara Pamela Nowak
David Robert A. Mitchell
Carlie Michelle Muriel
Jake Paul Tomak
Melody Tonya Dixon

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DANCING SOLO

A Play in One Act
For 3 Women and 2 Men

CHARACTERS

KARA ROBERTShigh school junior, an accomplished
modern dancer, 16
DAVID BROTHERSher dance coach, late 20s
JAKE REYNOLDS high school senior, her boyfriend, 17
MELODY LAMPLEY . . .high school junior, her best friend, 16
CARLIE ROBERTS Kara's mother, 38

TIME: The present, the past and the future.

PLACE: A dance studio.

Running time: 60 minutes _____

DANCING SOLO

AT RISE: *David's dance studio. Music up. DAVID enters. He is impatient, pacing. KARA rushes into the studio, tossing her backpack into a corner. She is dressed in a dance leotard, tights and leg warmers. She looks at DAVID, then backs away from him. DAVID turns away. [He remains frozen throughout the following sequence.]*

KARA begins a modern dance which reveals her present emotional turmoil. Her first steps are a series of balance moves. But as she shifts her weight from one side to the other, she loses her equilibrium. Frustrated, she begins again, but her moves become quicker, sharper, as if her body is being pulled in directions she does not want to go. The dance becomes more and more frenetic.

JAKE appears in one of the upstage mirror-frames. He is a voice, a memory, inside of KARA's mind.

JAKE. Just do it for me, Kara. (*KARA dances toward the voice.*) Please. Just make the call. Just this once. I need you!

(KARA breaks away from the memory of JAKE, but dances into another memory. CARLIE appears in one of the upstage mirror-frames.)

CARLIE. Just this once, honey. It won't happen again. I promise.

(KARA spins away from CARLIE as fast as she can, but is confronted by yet another voice. MELODY appears in one of the upstage mirror-frames.)

MELODY. You promised! I can't believe you! *(KARA reaches out for MELODY, but "MELODY" turns away. KARA is then bombarded by all of the memories—a rush of words. She spins from one to the other. Her dance is completely out of control.)*

JAKE. Trust me, Kara.

CARLIE *(overlapping)*. Don't you trust me?

MELODY *(overlapping)*. I trusted you.

JAKE *(overlapping)*. I promise.

CARLIE *(overlapping)*. It's our secret.

MELODY *(overlapping)*. You promised!

CARLIE *(topping all the other voices)*. Don't ever tell anyone!

(KARA's dance halts. MUSIC stops. The memories vanish. KARA is warming up at the bar for her dance class.)

DAVID. You're late.

KARA. I'm sorry.

DAVID. We don't have to be here, Kara.

KARA. Yes, we do.

DAVID. Are you committed to finishing this?

KARA. Of course I am. I'm sorry.

DAVID. Stop apologizing.

KARA *(apologizing for apologizing)*. Sorry.

DAVID. Kara!

KARA. Can we just get started? (*She begins to do a series of vigorous dance warm-ups.*) Here I am. Your prize pupil. Ready to dance. (*She loses her balance.*)

DAVID. Kara, what's wrong?

KARA (*resuming*). Nothing.

DAVID. I don't think you can work like this.

KARA. Like what? I'm fine. (*She stops her warm-ups.*) A phone. There's a phone here, isn't there?

DAVID. You need it?

KARA. I...might. (*KARA resumes her warm-ups, but she is not focused.*)

DAVID. You are *really* distracted. Let's forget today's lesson, OK?

KARA. No.

DAVID. The audition's a month away. (*DAVID starts to leave.*) But don't forget, the application is due tomorrow.

KARA. Tomorrow...God...David, stop! (*He does.*) I...(*Re-gaining control.*) I've got to work on this audition. You want me to get into the summer dance program, right?

DAVID. Then why were you late? (*KARA is still and silent.*)
Kara—

KARA. My dance!

DAVID. You want to finish it?

KARA. Yes.

DAVID. Then finish it!

KARA. I don't know how!

DAVID. Ask me to help you.

KARA (*looks at DAVID, differently, for an instant, then looks away*). I just want all the parts to fit.

DAVID. It's up to you. You're the one setting the moves. (*KARA tries to review several sequences of her dance.*)

You've already set the beginning, and the middle—

KARA. But not the end!

DAVID. What do you want the dance to say? Work from the inside, find what you feel—

KARA (*repeating DAVID's words with him, a remembered mantra*). Find what you feel—

DAVID. —and dance it!

KARA (*stopping*). I don't know what I feel. I don't know the steps, the moves—

DAVID. Let me help! I know you can do this. You're pretty amazing when you wanna be. (*KARA smiles at DAVID.*) Let's work on the end.

KARA. Can't I just repeat a pattern I know?

DAVID. Is that the story you want to tell?

KARA. It was easier at the beginning. Can we start there?

DAVID. Let's review. (*KARA stands still. She begins to focus. MUSIC up softly.*) Make sure you're centered. Breathe. (*A kind of shiver runs through KARA.*) You're sure you're OK?

KARA. Let me dance it. (*KARA begins a very lovely dance sequence, that flows lyrically from one move to the next. It is filled with graceful extensions and soft lines. All is in balance. [Throughout the dance sequences KARA is speaking to herself.]*) The beginning. It was perfect.

DAVID (*coaching*). That's it. Reach. Reach!

KARA (*dancing*). I want to. I did.

DAVID. Beyond yourself. (*DAVID shifts the dance bars into a new configuration.*)

KARA (*dancing*). For Melody.

(*MELODY enters.*)

KARA. My best friend. It was all so great, so right. (*KARA remembers when MELODY came to KARA's job at the*

pizza parlor. As MELODY speaks, KARA crosses into the scene. Music out.)

MELODY. One medium, thick-crust, deep-dish—

KARA. Melody!

MELODY. Pepperoni and mushroom to go.

KARA. Melody! I'm not on break yet. You want me to get in trouble with the manager?

MELODY. Thought you got a break at 6:30?

KARA. 6:35!

MELODY. Five minutes don't matter to a bunch of pepperonis. Come on!

KARA. The manager is not a pepperoni. He's big and he yells, OK?

MELODY. How do you stand bein' around dead pizza crusts all night?

KARA. Don't start—

MELODY. And wiping up all the nasty cheese and olives slopped all over the salad bar!

KARA. You know how much the summer dance program costs?

MELODY. You're the dancer, girlfriend. I'm a photographer. Shootin' stills of life—

KARA. Two hundred dollars! If you needed that kind of money, bet you'd sling spaghetti, too.

MELODY. Haven't you earned that yet, Super-waitress, just in tips?

KARA. I wish!

MELODY. It's 6:31!

KARA. That means you've only got four more minutes to hang out.

MELODY (*teasing her*). Guess you'll just have to wait to hear the good news.

KARA. What?

MELODY. Oh, nothing. It's just about Jake.

KARA. Jake?!

MELODY. Um-hum.

KARA. What about him? Melody!

MELODY (*lips sealed*). Gotta wait. It's only 6:32. (*Counting out seconds calmly.*) And twenty-seven, twenty-eight—

KARA (*calling to her boss*). Clocking out for fifteen! (*The girls race away from the work area, and perch upon two stools to talk.*) What happened? Did it work? Can he come?

MELODY. Well. Dorien called me after school—

KARA. Like he does *everyday!*

MELODY. I got this boyfriend trained! Anyway, he said that Jake told his father that he *had* to go to the party tonight. It's an "official track team function." Wouldn't want to disappoint the coach.

KARA. Well, that is sort of true. The party is at Jeff's house—

MELODY. And Jeff is the captain of the track team.

KARA. *Who cares!* He's coming! I'm gonna die, Melody.

MELODY. Don't you let Jake smoke anything, Kara, or he'll end up grounded again.

KARA. Jake just got stupid last weekend. He was acting out a dare by some guy—I don't know. He promised it was a one-time thing. God, I look awful. I gotta get home and change!

MELODY. There's gonna be dancin'—

KARA. What am I gonna wear?

MELODY. And there's a huge back yard, with big beautiful trees—

KARA. Oh, God—

MELODY. Where you can sit under the stars and “talk”! (*The girls explode with delighted laughter, anticipating what is to come.*)

KARA. I still can't believe it's true. Jake Reynolds actually wants to be with *me*.

MELODY. Well, I don't know if he's comin' to be with you or not—

KARA. What? What did he say?!

MELODY. I'm kidding. I'm kidding. (*The girls laugh.*) Girl, you are *nuts* about this guy.

KARA. It's just all so new.

MELODY. I'n't great? That's when every word, every look is so...important.

KARA. You say it so right, Melody.

MELODY. You can almost touch what's happening between you.

KARA. I wanna hold onto it forever. I don't want it to ever go away.

MELODY. And we are talkin' a full moon tonight, girlfriend.

KARA. It'll be perfect. You and Dorien.

MELODY. And you and Jake.

(*Music in. MELODY exits as KARA resumes her beautiful dance.*)

DAVID. Good!

KARA (*dancing*). It was good. The party. It was perfect.

DAVID. Lift.

KARA (*dancing*). He came to be with me. Just me. (*KARA completes the final dance move of this sequence and holds it.*)

DAVID. Release. (*KARA releases from the final move. She is very up. “Remembering” the beginning has energized her.*) Now, that's my prize pupil.

KARA. Let's go to the next beat. It feels so good to remember.

DAVID. OK. Next beat.

KARA. The next week.

DAVID. Tell the story. *(Concert music in.)*

KARA. The concert. I soared so high!

(KARA remembers the concert at school where she performed. MELODY and JAKE enter, as if in the audience along with DAVID. The three applaud KARA, who completes an impressive series of moves.)

MELODY. That's my best friend up there!

DAVID. Bravo, Kara!

JAKE. Awesome! *(Concert music out. All cheer and applaud as KARA bows. Then KARA becomes still, remembering that moment.)*

KARA. Everyone applauding. All looking at me. Everyone... Mom? *(Looking for her mother.)* Mom! *(MELODY exits. KARA remembers being backstage, immediately after the concert.)*

JAKE. Kara?

KARA. Jake! Hi!

JAKE. You were terrific.

KARA. No I wasn't.

JAKE. What do you mean? The whole school was applauding like crazy. I didn't know you could dance like that.

KARA. Like what?

JAKE. Like...so...good. *(He swings her around playfully.)*
Hey, I mean, we tore up the rug at Jeff's party, but today, you looked like a dancer on TV. In a ballet or something.

KARA. It's not really ballet. I do modern dance.

JAKE. Oh. Hey, you're gonna have to teach me about dance.
I wanna know everything.