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Dancer delivers

By Mary Jane MacLennan

Peggy Baker is one of the country's most charismatic modern dance talents and she delivered the full force of her interpretive skill and muscular power during the fourth evening of the Canadian Modern Dance Festival at the Gas Station Theatre last night.

The capacity crowd of just over 200 rewarded Baker with numerous curtain calls and sustained applause for what will likely be remembered as this festival's most impressive solo performances.

The one work she danced with guest artist Janie Brendel, however, was one of the evening's very best.

The Volpe Sisters, created last year by choreographer Doug Varone, explores the relationship between two women. Baker, in round spectacles and a loose school-girl's dress, seemed to be the younger sister who yearned to rest her head in the lap of her older sibling.

Baker's feet are more expressive than most people's hands and she communicated her anguish and fears through what often seemed to be a melding of American Sign Language and Martha Graham technique. The two dancers told this poignant tale beautifully.

Non Coupable, choreographed by another Festival dancer, Quebec's Paul-Andre Fortier, was also a work that grabbed hold of your guts and pulled. The fact that it was Baker's first attempt at the piece speaks volumes of the woman's keen sense of the dramatic and her masterful control of a swimmer's physique.

In Non Coupable, Baker enters clutching two heavy rocks wrapped in rope and bound to her wrists. Even her costume suggests the bindings of a prisoner as material wraps around her legs and down the length of her muscular arms.

When she drops the rocks and unwinds herself, she is still emotionally bound. She attempts to breast-feed one stone and finds sexual satisfaction from another. The piece ends with Baker balancing precariously on top of the two stones and thunderous applause followed.

In contrast to the solemn tone of the other works, Le Charme De L'Impossible was an explosion of joy. Contemporary Dancer's accompanist, Mark Kolt composed the exuberant music and fellow pianist Crystal Kolt played it with him.

Baker, wearing a white tight and ruffled white pants, moved with the vivacity of Rio de Janeiro at carnival time.