

PEGGY BAKER

SOLO DANCE

25 January, 1992 Premiere Dance Theatre

REVIEWS

Choreographer Peggy Baker demonstrated in this program that, as a solo artist, she has a unique personal approach to dance.

SANCTUM, the opening work on her recent Harbourfront program, is a ritualistic invitation to the private, artistically creative retreats of Baker and her composer/musician husband Ahmed Hassan. In two islands of light each explores his/her art oblivious to the other. Baker's agile and lissome body reacts to the pure sounds of Hassan's naturally constructed wind and percussion instruments. Seed pod currents crackle through her; sticks whip her about in a thrashing seizure. Yet she has tranquil moments settling serenely and gently into the space that she has defined with wooden dowlings. SANCTUM is a sacred place for Baker; it activates the creative surges behind the work to follow.

Baker builds her program so that it ends with another form of imposed solitude, but here creative development is suppressed and channelled into an unhealthy oppression. In Paul-Andre Fortier's NON COUPABLE Baker ironically portrays the blindfolded archetypal symbol of Justice with rocks hanging from her wrists as balances. She lugs them behind her, caresses them, nurses them and receives sexual gratification from them. Release only brings about imbalance so hopelessly is she emotionally tied to these scales of oppression. Shrouded as she is in cloth suggestive of classical antiquity and an Egyptian mummy, Baker powerfully evokes a person dried up and self-imprisoned in a love/hate relationship that offers security while preventing her individual development.

Framed by these pieces were three other eclectic works. In Molissa Fenley's INNER ENCHANTMENTS Baker drifts and swims driven by a monotonous Philip Glass dreamscape. Her hands dive and rise up like fish; her muscles ripple and undulate with the currents of sounds.

For something completely different, Baker moves through James Kudelka's THIS ISN'T THE END like everyone's idea of a demented nurse armed with a giant phallic syringe. Sexual innuendos abound as she reacts to an askew John Oswald collage of inventively edited dialogue from the British MYSTERY TV series.

Unfortunately, this burst of hyper-crazed energy seriously affects the transition to BRAHM'S WALTZES.



Peggy Baker, photo: Lois Greenfield

Wearing a long twenties-style dress Baker flows into mournful romantic attitudes that take on the texture and fragility of a night moth.

Also on the program is Kudelka's ROMEO AND JULIET BEFORE PARTING, a piece originally commissioned for Rhombus Media's Romeos and Juliets.

Baker's pas de deux with Peter Ottmann transforms Shakespearian wooing into an agile display of sensual athletics.

Peggy Baker's body language is poetic, imagistic and mystical. By reaching into herself she heightens the senses and imagination of her audience.

BY TED FOX

step **TEXT**

dance + words + people