

# The Gazette

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## Baker takes simple steps to higher plain

REVIEW

**KATHRYN GREENAWAY**  
GAZETTE DANCE CRITIC

It's not so much what Peggy Baker does, it's how Peggy Baker does it.

The post-modern soloist from Toronto opened the third annual Saidye Bronfman Centre dance series' last night, and her presence transcended choreographic content to take the simplest of steps to a higher plain.

Baker's Sanctum portrayed the power of primitive myth — ritualistic phrasings supplied by composer and husband Ahmed Hassan.

Dressed in rust-colored velvet and satin, Baker melted through a series of parallel poses reminiscent of primitive paintings on a cave wall, then broke into a frenzied sequence of body rolls and arm lashes all the while awash in the golden elegance of a Renaissance painting.

This Isn't the End by James Kudelka challenged Baker's acting ability and comedic timing. Playing a bookful of characters from what seemed to be a sordid mystery novel (narrated by a mystery man and woman), Baker transformed her body and face from a blustering colonel to a bodacious beauty to a bumbling detective as the snippets droned on.

Dressed in a nurse's uniform (the murder took place in a hospital) Baker's physical shenanigans gave away just enough of the story to keep you bubbling with adult chuckles and intrigue. So what happens in Chapter 2?

Baker's latest choreography, Brahms Waltzes, latched on to the drama and fragility of the most famous of rock-a-bye waltzes. An intensely personal movement essay primed with graceful runs and gentle poses, it showed vulnerability and a radiant love of dance. Isadora Duncan would have been charmed.

Romeo and Juliet Before Parting, choreographed for Baker and Les Grands Ballets Canadiens' principal dancer Sylvain Lafortune by James Kudelka, zapped the doomed lovers smack dab into the third week of February 1992.

All curves and spirals, the duet was about equality of movement and mutual purity of love, and left the child bride and awkward young man of Shakespearean lore in the dust. It was the coupling of maturity and superb passion.

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