

Baker's dancing beautiful, expressive, spectacular

By Elissa Barnard
ARTS REPORTER

Peggy Baker is spectacular to watch.

One of Canada's top modern dancers, she is tall, has a huge wingspan in long, sculptural arms and beautiful feet. She demonstrates the capacity for human expression through art in a show, brought by Live Art Productions' New Dance Series to the Sir James Dunn Theatre. The show, of a quality of dancer who rarely comes to Halifax, is on again tonight, 8 p.m.

There is no electronic music or political message. Instead, Baker performs her own works with the musician on stage. Her territory is the soul and her movements are as simply beautiful or as complexly expressive as the viewer wants them to be.

In Sanctum, one audience member perceived an Eastern spiritual journey, another a tale of the fates and chance in a chaotic universe, and a third a differentiation between two kinds of imprisoning spaces.

Baker's performances with her husband, composer and percussionist Ahmed Hassan, are unusual and rivetting. In Sanctum, Hassan sits on a carpet and plays exotic, primitive, percussive instruments, while Baker is in a square of light moving in ceremonial ritual and explosions of shaking.

Geometry of the Circle, a study of contrasted movement or a moving story of human relationships, is an odd "romantic" duet with Hassan, miked, in a wheelchair, creating oral sounds of breathes, whines and crackles. Baker moves rounded, flowing, circular, intricately chasing the wheelchair and stopped by it.



Cylla Von Tiedemann

Peggy Baker, a dancer of rare quality, seen here in her work *Geometry of the Circle*, performed at the Sir James Dunn Theatre, Dalhousie Arts Centre, last night and is on stage again tonight.

■ Dance review

Pianist Andrew Burasko plays Brahms for two works, the sweet, stunningly beautiful Brahms Waltzes a la Isadora Duncan and Three Intermezzi, a rhapsodic memory dance addressing themes of the aging woman.

In contrast to Baker's pas-

sionate, luminous, sailing style is New York choreographer Doug Varone's *The Volpe Sisters*, with Baker, suddenly geeky, neurotic and slouched, and New York dancer Janie Brendel as two sisters in a desperately necessary and painful relationship. They move on and from steps, seeming to live in a hot, poor, shabby place; the movement is gangly, pinched and entrancing.