

St. John's, Newfoundland

Closing nights highlight of dance festival

By LINDA RIMSAY
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The New Dance Festival came to a close Saturday and Sunday nights with some of the best dance ever performed at the LSPU Hall. The choreography was creative and tight and the dancers absolutely superb.

The evening began with two works choreographed and performed by Peggy Baker. This was my first exposure to Ms. Baker and it did not take long to understand why she is considered Canada's best modern dancer/choreographer. Few dancers can hold the stage by themselves for any length of time — she is one of them.

The tight structure of her works became obvious early on. In Brahms Waltz, she immediately becomes one with the music, uniting the rhythmic sounds and movement and at the same time creating some fascinating visual lines.

This total unity of sound, movement and space becomes even more obvious in Three Intermezzi. To add to the visual effect is an incredible eye for costuming (also by Ms. Baker). She integrated the fabric texture and color with the flow of the movement and the mood of the piece.

Not to be overlooked is Andrew Burashko, pianist for these two works, who helped create the magic.

The mood changed considerably with Four or Five Things choreographed by Marq Frerichs and performed by Jennifer Dick and Robert Glumbek from Desrosiers Dance Theatre. It is at times fast, sensuous, violent, humorous, and always well executed. Several commented that it should have been longer. I certainly would like to have seen at least one more work performed by Jennifer and Robert.

The evening ended with three more works performed by Peggy Baker: Geometry of the Circle, The Volpe Sisters and Sanctum. In The Volpe Sisters, choreographed by Doug Varone, she is joined by Janie Brendel who helps her create a highly dramatic relationship between two women. While I liked the work and it was well executed, I found it too long. The statement was clearly made well before it ended.

In Geometry of the Circle and Sanctum, Ms. Baker is joined by Ahmed Hassan, musician, composer and dancer. Each is a *pas de deux*; the first a light but touching interaction between two people and the second two people obviously influencing each other but remaining apart.

What sets Peggy Baker apart from so many dancers today is her attention to detail. Every single work exhibited an acute awareness of the importance of each as-

pect to the other from lighting to movement to vocabulary to costuming.

Wandering on stage, "doing your thing" and wandering off with a shrug at the end has become the "in thing," particularly in the new dance movement. This did not occur Saturday night. The performers exhibited a dignity for the art and a respect for the audience which was a delight to see again if for no other reason than to suggest that what we had just seen was not the result of a passing thought but rather a well thought out expression of an idea or an event.

The difference is not unlike that between reading a story in a true confession magazine and Macbeth. The plots may be the same but...

The New Dance Festival has ended for this year and I hope, as plans get under way for next year, that Jennifer Dick and Peggy Baker will be considered for return performances.