

M O N T R E A L

The Gazette

SINCE 1778

FEBRUARY 18, 1996 52¢

Pianist, dancer share partnership

Stage marriage takes us on emotional adventure

CAMILLA MALASHENKO
SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE

Peggy Baker and Andrew Burashko's recital, *Music for Piano and Solo Dancer*, which had its last performance at the Agora de la Danse last night, is an untranslatable experience. To explain it in terms easily understood would be to reduce it. It's best encountered personally.

Baker/Burashko is truly an equal partnership. Contrary to the usual practice, piano here is not an accompaniment for the dance. The stage is equally shared by two wonderful artists totally engulfed in their own art. Through Burashko, we hear music. Through Baker, we see music.

Burashko, 28, is an ardent pianist who unintentionally captures the attention and causes one to forget the dancer. And, then the eye shifts and is captivated by Baker.

Baker is a tall, statuesque dancer with long muscles, and long arms and legs. Her dance vocabulary accentuates her long arms and punctuates them with open hands and spread fingers. Her arms are beautiful instruments with which she creates infinite imagery. At first glance, Baker appears androgynous, but as she begins to move, her natural grace and softness of movement reveal her to be a lovely and fascinating woman who is a great artist.

All pieces on the program are choreographed by Baker with a modern style that is rich in its variety of expression. The first piece, *Brute*, is set to Prokofiev's *Sonata No. 6 in A major, Opus 82*. The *Sonata* was composed in 1942 and embodies the brutality of World War II. Baker's unitard, designed after Picasso's mural *Guernica*, recalls the Spanish Civil War. Thus, Baker's dance evokes the terror and agony of all wars.

In the second piece, *In a Landscape*, set to John Milton Cage's music of the same title, Baker's body epitomizes elegance and beauty of form. It is the most lyrical piece on the program and one not easily forgotten.

Why the *Brook Wept*, set to Cage's music for a dance by

REVIEW

Jean Erdman, was performed in a costume that echoes the old and the new, combines images of mannered ladies with fluid and strong energy symbolic of all life. At the end, Baker rolls back and forth until she touches the piano bench and completes the union between music and dance.

Baker and Burashko have performed together since 1991. It is a stage marriage where differences and harmony take us on a journey of kaleidoscopic emotional adventure.