

VOIR

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## **A Woman with Heart**

Linda Boutin

L'Agora de la danse presents an exceptional meeting of two cultures in dance, of two artists at the peak of their professional maturity. In *Far, Very Far*, choreographer Paul-André Fortier and dancer Peggy Baker present a work that defies classification, and whose principal force comes from its diversity of tone and style.

In conjunction with Ginette Laurin, Édouard Lock, Marie Chouinard, and Jean-Pierre Perreault, Paul-André Fortier has made a contribution to the effervescence of dance in Québec. Trained in the Limon and Graham techniques, Peggy Baker has danced for the New Yorker Lar Lubovitch. Considered to be one of the Canada's great dancers, she has followed a career as a solo dancer for the last ten years.

At the dancer's request, Paul-André Fortier created a one-hour solo for her. *loin, très loin* consists of several powerful images that often have a touching beauty. The introduction alone is worth the trip. To the sound of an electric guitar, the artist runs in large circles in a bluish half-light. Then, total silence. Peggy Baker then begins to play with her hands and feet. The guitar rhythm discreetly returns as an echo to surprise her movements.

These sequences effectively summarize the duality of Fortier's work: lightness rubs shoulders with heaviness, with a background of meticulous aestheticism. Lighting director Marc Parent creates columns of light that range from a steel blue to a dark red and golden yellow.

Like the choreography, the music of composer Gaétan Leboeuf frequently changes color, but always remains appropriate. It seems to play opposite the dancer. Sometimes it's soft rock, at others a light jazz tune. Without it, Fortier's dance would sometimes seem austere. This daring musical plot is a switch from some of the highly contemporary tunes that frequently accompany modern dance.

The dancer plays her hand admirably. Peggy Baker changes from one register to another with remarkable dexterity and great generosity. In succession she looks like a child, a warrior - vulnerable, and especially, profoundly human. At 46, her athletic body is the envy of younger people. Dressed in a long, diaphanous dress, she executes complex movements with an alarming ease.

In spite of all that, you may be surprised to find yourself glancing at your watch from time to time. This reflex never lasts long, and it's understandable. Hour-long presentations that manage to keep spectators spellbound are rare indeed.

This is a demanding formula both for the dancer, who carries a large measure of success on her shoulders, and for the audience. Having said that, it's not every day that you can attend a meeting of two masters of modern dance. With *loin, très loin*, Paul-André Fortier and Peggy Baker show us their great ability to surprise us, to bowl us over. It would be silly to shun that type of pleasure.

Through May 27

L'Agora de la danse

See Dance Calendar

[photo caption: *loin, très loin* by choreographer Paul-André Fortier and dancer Peggy Baker: a work that defies classification.]