

Dance Listings

APHRODITE UNVEILED/MY WIFE, MY BROTHER, MY SISTERS, MY MOTHER OMO Dance Co presents new choreography by Debbie Wilson, Nov 21-24, Wed-Sat 8 pm. \$25, stu \$20, srs \$18, opening-night funder for Women for Women Afghanistan \$30. Du Maurier Theatre, 231 Queen's Quay W. 416-973-4000.

CHRISTMAS GALA 2001 Arabesque Academy presents belly dancing, Nov 17 at 7 pm. \$15-\$18. Metro Central YMCA, 20 Grosvenor. 416-920-5593.

DANCES 2001 Ryerson Theatre presents choreography by Lawrence Gradus, Carol Anderson, Vicki St Denys, Sasha Ivanochko and CORPUS, Nov 20-24, Tues-Sat 8 pm, mats Fri 1 pm, Sat 2 pm. \$15, stu/srs \$10. 43 Gerrard E. 416-979-5118.

GUANGDONG MODERN DANCE COMPANY Harbourfront Centre presents the local debut of China's first and only professional contemporary dance troupe, w/ choreography by Sang Jijia, Liang Xing and Yunna Long, Nov 15-17 at 8 pm. \$21-\$37.50. Premiere Dance Theatre, 207 Queen's Quay W. 416-973-4000.

LOIN, TRÈS LOIN DanceWorks presents choreography by Paul-André Fortier (see story, this page), Nov 15-17 at 8 pm. \$22, stu/srs \$15. Betty Oliphant Theatre, 404 Jarvis. 416-973-4000.

SMALL POTATOES 6 presents works-in-progress by Heidi Strauss, Malgorzata Nowacka, Vivine Scarlett, Lucy Rupert, Lisa Sandlos, Dawne Carleton, Serena Camacho, Virginia Ceni and Elaine Jaques, Nov 16 at 8 pm. \$5. St Barnabas Studio, 361 Danforth. 416-323-1715.

E-mail listings to glenns@nowtoronto.com or fax to Dance Listings at 416-364-1166 by 5 pm Thursday.

dance preview

Solo surrender

Peggy Baker primes herself for Paul-André Fortier's ambitious full-evening work By GLENN SUMI

LOIN, TRÈS LOIN choreographed by **PAUL-ANDRÉ FORTIER**, performed by **PEGGY BAKER** and presented by DanceWorks, at the Betty Oliphant Theatre (404 Jarvis), November 15-17 at 8 pm. \$22, stu/srs \$15. 416-973-4000.

I'M SITTING AT YET ANOTHER SO-SO modern dance performance, and around me I hear the same conversation.

Everyone's asking, "Are you going to Peggy's show next week?"

It's a fact of life. A Peggy Baker performance is an event. A must-do.

Especially this time around. Loin, Très Loin, which plays until Saturday (November 17) at the Betty Oliphant Theatre, is the first evening-length solo work in the veteran dance artist's career.

She commissioned it from Quebec's Paul-André Fortier, and in scope and ambition it's unlike anything she's taken on before.

"When I first performed the work a year and a half ago, one of the big challenges was remembering what came

next," laughs Baker on the phone from Iowa City, where she's busy working on a Lar Lubovitch piece.

"It felt long, and on some level arbitrary. Now it's taken shape, and everything has a tremendous feeling of inevitability."

Baker describes the piece, receiving its Toronto premiere, as one of extremes, both in the choreography and the production.

"Some things are hard to see, with very little light, and others are over-exposed. Some movements are rapid, way too fast, and then there are periods where it feels like you're stuck in the doldrums."

Most contemporary solo dance works last, say, 30 to 40 minutes max. Loin clocks in at just over an hour. Obviously, a different rhythm is required here, dramatic peaks and valleys, a rationing of energy. It's tough on the dancer, but it can be equally challenging for those watching.

"Paul-André asks a lot of the audience," says Baker. "There are these extended periods of silence when the audience becomes very aware of their own physical life. Any little movement they make becomes part of the experience for them and everyone around them."

She describes the work as a false biography, something that seems extremely personal, referring to inti-



Peggy Baker journeys through centuries in Loin, Très Loin.

mate details of someone's life and experience.

"Paul-André's extremely interested in space, in how we interact in space," she explains. "There's a huge vocabulary for the hands and arms. The torso for this dance is like a canvas, a blank, neutral space. Where I put my hands on my torso has a huge amount of empathetic meaning for the audience."

The title, she speculates, refers to a journey, either the journey of a lifetime or one through many centuries.

"Have you read Timothy Findley's novel *Pilgrim*?" asks Baker. "It's about a man who believes he's been all these historical characters. It spans centuries. Something similar happens here. The shapes, the poses I take on are very

archetypal."

It's not a stretch to say that Baker herself has lived through lifetimes in her career, which saw her co-found Dancemakers in the 1970s, dance with New York's Lubovitch and Mikhail Baryshnikov's and Mark Morris's White Oak Dance Project.

"As you get older, the level of history builds up in your body to an incredible threshold," she says.

"You accept the choices you've made that have brought you where you are. My friendships and partnerships with colleagues are deep and rooted. And there's enough room in me to hold and appreciate the meaning of it all."

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