

stage



BEST DANCER PEGGY BAKER

There are so many good dancers in the city that it's hard to single out just one. The **National Ballet** has the versatile **Guillaume Côté**, the athletic **Jennifer Fournier** and the instinctively dramatic **Xiao Nan Yu**. The whole company at **Toronto Dance Theatre** is exciting, and we're the first at any show featuring **Kate Alton**, **Yvonne Ng**, **Daryl Tracy** and **Sasha Ivanochko**. But **Peggy Baker** communicates so much with every inch of her legendarily long arms, it's hard to take your eyes off her. Never mind that she's over 50 in a profession that loves youth. She gets more interesting with each performance.

BEST CHOREOGRAPHER

CHRISTOPHER HOUSE

A new work by **Peggy Baker** or **Julia Sasso** is a reason to get up and dance, and **Sasha Ivanochko** and the much-in-demand **Matjash Mrozewski** are big draws. Maybe now that **James Kudelka** has let go of the administrative reins over at the National he can focus on what he does best: create good non-narrative dance works. But the king of contemporary has to be **Christopher House**, who keeps pushing the envelope in terms of what works dramatically onstage. His new piece next month is a collaboration with hot local troupe the **Hidden Cameras**. It won't be hidden for very long.

BEST COMEDY HOST

GRAHAM WAGNER

A good comedy host has to whet your appetite for the acts to come yet also hold his own (unfortunately, most of the best hosts are guys) without making you wish he'd just get on with it.

Some of the best include regular **Laugh**

Resort hosts **Simon Rakoff** and **Ted Bissallion** and **Yuk Yuk's** staples like **Steve Patterson** and **Kenny Robinson**. **Marcel St. Pierre** over at **Bad Dog Theatre** is a pretty decent MC, too –

self-effacing but sharp. This year, however, I caught **Graham Wagner** – of the improv troupe **Iron Cobra** – hosting a show, and he knocked everyone else out of the ring. The young improv ace (whose mug is on those Virgin cell-phone "Catch" ads) makes it look easy, and seems to be having as much fun as – if not more than – everyone else.

BEST COMIC HISTORY LESSON IN A HALLWAY

SECOND CITY

No need to worry that the move from **Blue Jays Way** to the back end of **Wayne Gretzky's (51 Mercer)** would mean taking down the terrific blown-up portraits of **Second City** members past and present. There's plenty of room in the new venue for the pics of **Dan Aykroyd**, **John Candy**, **Catherine O'Hara**, **Mike Myers** and others to tell us this is still the city's best training ground for comic actors. A close sec-