

Renowned dancer Peggy Baker delights Market Hall crowd

Renowned and respected Toronto choreographer and dancer Peggy Baker performed last night at the Market Hall in a program entitled *Unfold* which was presented by Peterborough New Dance. The two-thirds capacity house were treated to a masterful outing, and fittingly, showed their appreciation with



By **JONOTHON FIDDLER**
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furios applause and exuberant hoots. Accompanied on three of the works by pianist Andrew Burashko, this night should prove to be a highlight for Peterborough New Dance this season.

The program opened with the title piece, *Unfold*. On a stage set with only a clothes rack, chair and grand piano, Baker emerges from the light and begins

to tentatively explore. With a fluidly elongated body, Baker begins to cast a thrall over the audience. Just watching her move and the mastery she displays over her body is fascinating. She seems barely a wisp of a thing and yet possesses a great gravity, a feathery elegance. Moving to different areas of the stage, she repeats patterns as Burashko poignantly fingers Scriabin's Opus 11 preludes. Baker continues to move, even in the brief silences, in modest leaps, spiralling across the space, startling in her graceful physicality.

Baker next appears in the stark and rivetting short work *A Way to Master Silence*. As single over head spotlights come up, their beams fractured by the patterned screens called gobos, Baker appears in the light striking attitudes which have a remarkable effect on her appearance. At times appearing starkly alien, and at others decadently sensuous, Baker harvests great fruit from se

simple a premise.

Choreographer Doug Varone's *Heaven* follows. This time the piano and Burashko are more fully integrated into the piece, as Baker dances around the piano, which appears to function, itself, as a metaphor for Heaven. As Baker attempts to solve the mystery of this thing, she comes to understand that Burashko has an organic relationship with it and so seeks to influence him. It is a neat little meditation on the idea of paradise and the outsider, who essentially understands only that she is outside. Set to the music of Franck's *Prelude, Fugue and Variation*, this is a work rife with thought provoking images.

Closing the program is an epic piece about Baker's family history which was choreographed and directed by Sarah Chase, employing music from Joni Mitchell and Beethoven. On a brightly lit stage, Baker stands before a large screen consisting of twelve panels, which features a prairie scene. She begins to recount her family story, with the arrival of her forbears five generations ago. Recounting tragedies, wars and little secrets, turning panels to reveal photographs, Baker works up to her life and education in dance from Martha Graham, her impetuous, youthful marriage and near fatality from a gas heater leak. As she speaks, her arms and hands echo the tale, further drawing in the rapt audience. This is the work of a fearless artist who's life events have lead her to the conclusion that miracles surround us.

Peggy Baker and Andrew Burashko will perform again this evening at Market Hall beginning at 8 p.m. Don't miss this superb evening's artistry. One admission will gain audience members entry to another show, as after Baker, there will be a performance at the Gordon Best Theatre featuring Montreal's Laurance Lemieux and local fave Bill Coleman.