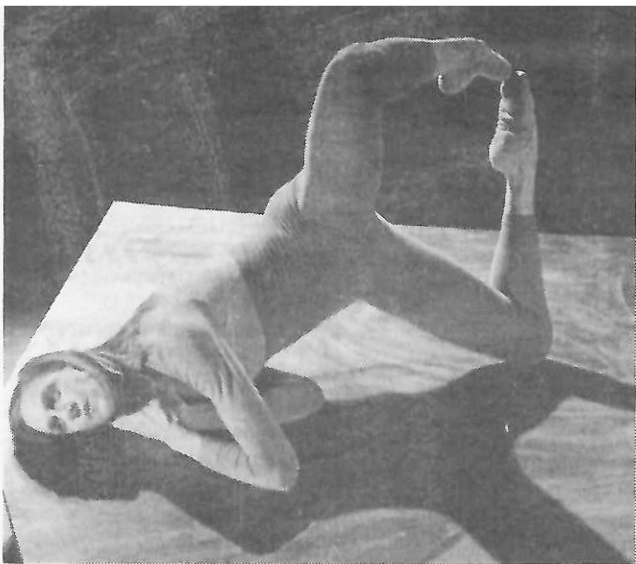


DANCE» REVIEW



Peggy Baker, in her new solo work *earthling*: CHRIS RANDLE

Call it defiance. These dancers actually dance

CONFLUENCE

Peggy Baker Dance Projects
At Enwave Theatre
in Toronto on Wednesday

By Paula Citron

Contemporary dance has taken so many twists and turns into text, multimedia and postmodern movement that it's almost a shock to sit through Peggy Baker's show. The dancers actually dance.

The show *Confluence* includes two new works by Baker (the solo *earthling* and the trio *coalesce*) and a duet by New York's Doug Varone (*armour*). The connecting threads are American author Lewis Thomas's meditations on biology in his 1974 classic *The Lives of a Cell* and Montreal sculptor/videographer Sylvia Safdie's insect imagery.

Baker and Varone are not avant-garde creators. What the works possess, however, is a meticulous sense of shape and pattern. One takes a kind of Zen-like tranquillity away from the program induced by the nuanced delicacy of each minutely detailed movement.

Baker's body, for example, all tortured angles and distortions, evokes a creature who

struggles against death throes in *earthling*. Kate Holden, Sean Ling and Sahara Morimoto enact an impulse/reaction pattern in *coalesce*, where a single shift in movement inexorably leads to new pathways. And Baker and Larry Hahn are entangled together on the floor in *armour* – always connected, but with each conjoined slow twist and turn fraught with tension.

As for the staging, Debashis Sinha, Marc Parent and Caroline O'Brien have created a brooding electronic soundscape, atmospheric lighting and evocative costumes for all three works, which adds to the unified feel of the program. The works are performed as one act, uninterrupted by bows.

Ultimately, *Confluence* is defiantly modern dance. The dancer's body is idealized as an instrument of beauty: One arm sweep becomes eloquent poetry; the surrounding space caresses physical presences – and no matter how melancholy, how relentless, how troubled the themes, dance itself is the radiant medium of expression.

» *Confluence* continues at the Enwave Theatre until Sunday