

Hot stepping through the city

ARTS 2001 DANCE

Dance critic **PAULA CITRON** offers her roundup of the best 10 shows in 2001

One of the joys of being a Toronto dance watcher is being exposed to outstanding companies from abroad, as well as excellent troupes from the home turf.

This year hosted a variety of interesting dance performances from here and away, and a number of factors have played a role in choosing the 10 best. In some cases, I've opted for veteran danceSmiths; in others, for promising newcomers. But regardless of the level of experience, or whether they played in high-profile venues or small out-of-the-way theatres, all the choreographers produced pieces of worth that cover a vast array of dance styles and genres.

Here, in alphabetical order, are my top 10 dance events of 2001:

Andrea Nann and Gordon Downie: *Reveries*

The hit of the annual Spring Rites concert was *Reveries*, a collaboration between choreographer/dancer Andrea Nann, a member of Danny Grossman Dance Company, and poet/songwriter Gordon Downie of the superstar rock band The Tragically Hip.

Their disturbing work spoke of street culture and alienated youth, as dancers Nann and Gerald Michaud moved with frenetic pace against Downie's poetry of defiant anger, ending in a poignant "us against the world" love duet.

Downie, himself, was part of the bleak dance, ensconced at a wooden table beneath a bare light bulb, reciting his incendiary verse. Nann's ability to mirror his tough text with gritty movement was the work's strength.

Company Salia ni Seydou

Appearing in the Harbourfront ses-

Small's bold, visceral movement in a series of haunting images, from piles of dead bodies to young girls whose dreams will never be realized.

Jackson Dance Network

Producer Patti Ross Milne, through her annual *Just Jazz* show, wants to win respect for jazz dance.

On its most common level, the genre is sexy moves and superficial show dancing; in its more serious form, a talented choreographer takes the "driven by rhythm" body isolations and says something meaningful with the movement, such as Jackson Dance Network, the most innovative jazz dance company in the city.

JDN's collective of choreographers — Siona Jackson, Michelle Walker and Linda Garneau — created *Woman for Just Jazz 2*, a clever, episodic piece about aspects of being female, from seductive to corporate, without a gratuitous "it's 'n' ass" move in the piece.

Jean Sasportes and Peter Kowald: *Short Pieces*

Germany's greatest contemporary choreographer, Pina Bausch, artistic director of Wuppertal Tanztheater, was honoured during Harbourfront's World Leaders: A Festival of Creative Genius, and in advance of her homage, Harbourfront and the Goethe-Institut brought revered Bausch dancer/choreographer Jean Sasportes and bassist Peter Kowald to Toronto for a joint concert.

Short Pieces was three winsome, sad-sack character studies in dance — a socially inept nebbish, a patetically mousy young girl and a diva whose life is falling apart — roused by Sasportes, accompanied

The Goldberg Variations

Parallel Ports is an annual DanceWorks/Harbourfront co-production that features contemporary solo dance artists, and New York choreographer Mark Haim was an inspired choice. His excerpts from *The Goldberg Variations* was a model of elegant simplicity. Working closely with pianist Andre Grigoriou, Haim isolated one choreographic feature for each of Bach's variation which was also the focus of the pianist.

In some cases, Haim matched the mood, such as rendering an allegro variation with intricate footwork. Sometimes he set himself tasks, like running all over the theatre, arriving back on stage in time to touch the piano on the very last note.

Peggy Baker and Paul-André Fortier: *loin, tres loin*

DanceWorks presented dancer Peggy Baker in her full-evening solo *loin, tres loin*, choreographed by Montreal veteran Paul-André Fortier to a wonderful score by Gaëtan Leboeuf. Taken as a whole, the piece was a woman's story, a universal journey from youth to old age, from triumph to defeat, that began in a burst of riotous energy, and ended in a gasp for breath, both using the same basic movement.

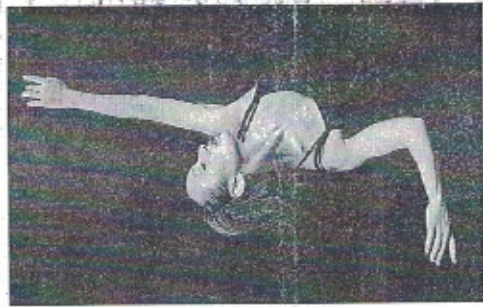
As with all Fortier pieces, repeated patterns tell the tale, because with each repetition, the movements and gestures take on new meaning. The dance was both exhilarating and haunting.

Toronto Dance Theatre: *Persophone's Lunch*

Persophone's Lunch, the latest full-length work by choreographer Christopher House, artistic director of Toronto Dance Theatre, was inspired by Homer's *The Odyssey*, and featured his hallmark strong intellectual base, wickedly droll sense of humour and his fine eye for movement patterns.

The gorgeous-looking piece featured James Robertson's striking set, Phil Strong's wonderfully seductive score, Anna Michener's lovely costumes and Roelof Peter

THREE TO WATCH



LYNDSY DESHIMA

At the moment, contemporary dancer Lyndsy Deshima is waiting tables at Toronto's Tortilla Flats, but her dream is to join a company. Since graduating from Ryerson's dance program two years ago, the fledgling professional, who was born in Kamloops, B.C., has performed with several of the most funky indie companies around town, including The Chimera Project, Jackson Dance Network, and Edgedanceworks. When the charismatic Deshima, 26, steps on stage, she owns it. She is blessed with a compact body that is a kinetic charameleon, looking brutally physical one minute, or lyrically graceful the next. She's a dancer who makes choreographers look good.

STEPHANIE HUTCHISON

When Kitchener, Ont.-born Stephanie Hutchison graduated from the National Ballet School, the National Ballet of Canada rejected her. The determined ballerina then per-