

# Emergency #3: Peterborough Can Dance!!!



by Stephanie MacMillan

Hundreds of people crammed into Peterborough's Market Hall and Union Theatre to see *Emergency 3* last week.

Peterborough organized and performed, the festival was exciting to see in terms of the developments that have happened for its participants over the past few years.

There are several people whose talents have been present from the beginning, and whose works have evolved before our eyes. There have been re-arrangements, changes in dance partnerships, directions and companies, and all seems well for the festival.

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*Emergency* itself is beginning to evolve, as there is now a group of people who have benefited from being with the festival, and whose art has blossomed into premiere works that could be comfortable in many professional dance shows in Canada.

At the same time, the next "crop" of dancers and choreographers are doing the hard work of testing the waters, trying their hand at what they believe dance is and can be.

The organization of the festival this year reflects this process of exploration and presentation, in that, premiere and workshop pieces received different venues and expectations.

In my opinion, this is a very wise choice on the part of the organizers. It gives artists space for doing what they are capable and interested in doing in a particular year.

The evenings of *Emergency* this past week felt very much like community gatherings—several people pointed out to me how much of Peterborough came to see the shows.

We are proud, I think, of being connected to the performance that is going on, and are connected in real ways, beyond being ticket buyers. We have been, perhaps, past participants in the shows or simply knowledgeable of most of the dancer's work that we see on stage.

For me, most of *Emergency* was about people's reactions to the work shown, and conversations were fast and furious at the opening night reception at Market Hall.

These conversations were less reactions to single performances than they were continuations of discussions of artist's journeys in Peterborough. A lot of what I heard were the stories of how these pieces came to be.

Kris Keating and Ann Ryan, formerly of Footfall Dance, have moved into their own, fairly definite styles, and for Ann, into a strong stage presence, one that is not overwhelming, but steady and vivid.

Her work, as an individual and a choreographer received especially good reactions from the people I talked to. Kris' piece on James Bond was a comic book romp of which Tank Girl could be proud.

I especially liked the fact that this year choreographers and directors worked with people who have various experiences in dancing and theatre, and this was very much the case in *Double-O-Bondage*, with fairly good result.

Stacey Harper and Stephanie Corrin's piece on the trapeze absolutely thrilled the audience, and mighty applause came at the end of their performance on Thursday night.

Some of this reaction seemed to relate again to people's pleasure at being able to see how these skills have evolved, from Stacey's beginnings in trapeze in *The Great Farini*, to her dedication at development and teaching, and the collaboration with Stephanie.

The end result of the pairing of these skills with a vision of beauty and the sublime was my personal favourite, and could definitely be a submission to other dance shows in Canada.

Scooter received accolades for his work on *Kitten on a String with Fish Hooks*, for his precise vocalization and exploration.

All three of the dancers involved were incredibly focused and grounded. This piece was intense and, at times, brutal, but this brutality existed within a smooth, seamless choreography, led by a quiet voice. It disturbed, and impressed, a fair number of people I spoke to.

One of issues that the *Emergency* organizers may have to deal with in the coming years is the overflow of audience who try to attend the festival.

The Union Theatre was sold out the night I tried to attend, and, while happy to know there was a full house for the show, it made me wonder how in the future the question of space will be dealt with, if indeed the festival audience keeps growing at the rate it seems to be. The Market Hall was also jam-packed for both of the evening shows.

At best, I can relate some reactions to the Union workshop pieces. The conversations I had about the performances at the Union, related a lot of the audiences experience to seeing pieces in transit.

When one sees a work-shopped dance piece, often what impresses is the concept and potential of each piece, and the vision that impelled people to begin the process. This seemed to be the case for the *Emergency* pieces at the Union, though Ann Ryan's *Epi-thet* did come out with a few questions about its workshop rather than premiere status.

Again, I expect the evolution of the work done by the artist's involved in the "workshops" will be the future of the festival.