

News Release

Celebrated choreographer and dancer Peggy Baker awarded the Eldred Family Dance Award

Toronto, November 13, 2023 – **Peggy Baker** is the recipient of the \$20,000 **Eldred Family Dance Award**. This biennial award recognizes exceptional achievement and creative ability in dance by an established Ontario choreographer. Peggy was presented with the award last Friday evening at Canada's National Ballet School's Betty Oliphant Theatre followed by a film screening of *Dancing Darkness* by filmmakers V. Tony Hauser and Ellen Tolmie. The film follows Peggy as she creates her most ambitious work "*who we are in the dark*".

About Peggy Baker

Born in Edmonton in 1952, Peggy Baker is one of Canada's most celebrated and influential dance artists, respected as a performer in the work of esteemed Canadian and American creators; as an educator in conservatory dance programs throughout North America; as a champion of live music for dance; and as a choreographer of poetic and visually striking works for her Toronto based company, Peggy Baker Dance Projects (1990 – 2023). Her work has been presented in theatres, galleries, public spaces and on media screens across Canada and the U.S., as well as Mexico, Argentina, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark, Korea, and Japan. Among her many honours: the Order of Canada, the Governor General's Award, the Premier's Award, the Carsen Prize, Honorary Doctorates from York University and the University of Calgary, and six Dora Mavor Moore awards. A 2023 inductee into the Dance Collection Danse Hall of Fame, Ms. Baker is the long-serving Artist-in-Residence at Canada's National Ballet School.



Photo by Aleksandar Antonijevic

Artist Statement

"I am deeply touched by the honour of the Eldred Family Dance Award, which feels so charged with meaning for me as I close my company of 30+ years and embark once again – a full 50 years after I first entered the professional milieu – as an independent artist. Every aspect of my dance life continues in a constant state of evolution: the form and content of the classes I lead / the exchange with my students; my creative practice / the growth through research and collaboration; the personal physical practice that sustains me / the guidance of my teachers. I take the encouragement of this generous award absolutely to heart, and extend my sincere gratitude to the Eldred family, to the selection panel, to the Ontario Arts Foundation, and to the inspiring dance community in which I make my home." **Peggy Baker**

Jury Comments

The jury was unanimous in their choice of Peggy Baker as laureate for the Eldred Family Dance Award. They said, "The invitation to come into Peggy's world is always powerful because of her emotional cogency, musical sophistication, and the unbridled joy in her artistic vision. She transcends categories. Peggy has had an impact on ballet, modern, and contemporary dance. Her choreographic inquiry, over time, has grown more open, allowing room for improvisation and the unique voices of her collaborators. That generosity is extended through her teaching and mentorship, and her decision to make room for the next generation of dance organizations. After a lifetime of impactful works Peggy continues to expand her voice in exciting directions. Her choreography animates a conversation that flows seamlessly between dancers and audience."

Peggy Baker was selected by the following assessment panel: **Peter Chin** (Toronto, ON), choreographer, dancer, Artistic Director, and 2021 Eldred Award laureate; **Merrilee Hodgins** (Ottawa, ON), choreographer, dancer, Artistic Director, and educator; and **Michael Trent** (Toronto) choreographer, dancer, Artistic Director, arts administrator, and funder.



Photo Credit: Jeremy Mimmagh

[DANCING DARKNESS](http://www.dancingdarkness.ca) by filmmaker V. Tony Hauser, explores artistic creativity through the making of Peggy Baker's most ambitious work, 'who we are in the dark'. Visit www.dancingdarkness.ca to learn more.

About the Award

The Eldred Family Dance Award was established at the Ontario Arts Foundation by the late Gerald (Gerry) Eldred, distinguished Canadian arts executive, and the late Marjorie Eldred, former National Ballet School academic teacher. The award recognizes exceptional achievement and creative ability in dance by an established Ontario choreographer. The winner is chosen through a nominating and adjudication process managed by the Ontario Arts Council.

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Established in 1991, the [Ontario Arts Foundation \(OAF\)](#) is passionately committed to building long-term support for the arts in Ontario. In 2022-2023, the OAF paid \$4 million in endowment income and 450,000 in awards and grants.

For 60 years, the [Ontario Arts Council \(OAC\)](#) has played a vital role in promoting and assisting the development of the arts for the enjoyment and benefit of Ontarians. In 2022-2023, OAC invested \$55.9 million in 220 communities across Ontario through 2,269 grants to individual artists and 1,023 grants to organizations.

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