

Toronto dance artist Claudia Moore celebrates 60th with solo show



Claudia Moore, a respected veteran of the Canadian dance scene, is marking her 60th birthday with an evening of solos. “The more I dance the more I enjoy it. I’m hooked for life. You’ll have to haul me offstage.” (TAMARA ROMANCHUK)

By **MICHAEL CRABB** Dance

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For a lot of folk, turning 60 is a moment to savour the prospect of retirement, doing those dreamed-of things that were impossible during a hard working life. Not so for dancer Claudia Moore. She’s decided it’s the moment to take on a new challenge, a solo program of works by four different choreographers.

“For me,” says Moore, “It’s my climb up the mountain.”

Moore, born in Buffalo but effectively a Toronto resident ever since entering the National Ballet School in Grade 8, has been a prominent fixture on the Canadian dance scene for more than 35 years.

Two seasons in the National Ballet of Canada was enough to convince Moore her true vocation was contemporary dance. She studied with physical theatre gurus in Europe and with then boyfriend—her first husband—Robert Desrosiers joined Toronto Dance Theatre in 1976 before leaving to become a charter member of his own troupe in 1980.

Despite their later personal break-up, Moore remained with Desrosiers Dance Theatre until 1987, the year she married a man she'd met there, Laurie-Shawn Borzovoy. The couple has a daughter and son ages 24 and 19 respectively.

In her post-Desrosiers years, apart from raising a family, Moore became known for a distinctively gestural, character-based choreographic approach she calls “body poetry.” Moore developed an interest in cross-disciplinary works embracing movement, text, music, performance art and visual design.

In 1996, she founded her own company, with typical inventiveness choosing a name that combines “moon” for poetry and “horse” for physical and which happens, when eccentrically capitalized, to spell out her own name—thus, [MOonhORsE Dance Theatre](#).

A few years later, as Moore entered early middle age, she decided to curate a series called *Older & Reckless*.

Says Moore: “At an older age there’s so much material in your body and you’ve still got lots to say in a body that can still say it.” And, as she points out, with contemporary dance you can make it up to play to your strengths.

This year, Moore also collaborated with dancer/choreographers Sylvie Bouchard and Karen Kaeja on a new project called *Cloud 9/7e Ciel* that she hopes will provide an ongoing framework for mature artists like them to continue to perform.

“I think older audiences appreciate older performers because they can identify,” says Moore, “And younger dancers can see there’s a future, that it doesn’t just have to stop.”

Which, as it happens was what almost happened to Moore when her arthritic hips—a family inheritance rather than dance-induced—got so bad she could hardly tie a shoelace.

Moore had the left hip replaced in 2007 and the other the following year. The operations were so successful and her recovery so remarkably complete that Moore felt, as she vividly puts it, “impassioned to get back to dance,” to the extent that she decided to stop choreographing so she could focus on the thing she loves most.

Planning a solo show was a natural evolution, requiring Moore to place herself at the disposal of someone else's choreographic imagination; but she chose carefully, three well-established dancemakers: Montreal-based Paul-André Fortier and Susanna Hood and Toronto Dance Theatre artistic director Christopher House. To complete the program she invited Apolonia Velasquez and Ofilio Portillo, who choreograph under their company name, **GADFLY**, to make a short, affirmative closing solo in their acclaimed urban/contemporary dance style.

"I didn't give anyone a theme," says Moore. "I just wanted to see how they'd use me. The show is very physical and a big challenge. I don't leave the stage because I don't want to break the thread."

Moore is emphatic that she's not intending to recreate herself as a solo dancer—she says she enjoys dancing with other people too much for that—but she certainly does not see age 60 as a reason to quit.

"The more I dance the more I enjoy it. I'm hooked for life. You'll have to haul me offstage."

Escape Artist is at Dancemakers, 9 Trinity Street, Studio 313 Oct. 25-27 and Nov. 1-2; Go to www.moonhorsedance.com or call 416-504-6429 ext 66.
