

Dance, baby, dance

Eryn Dace Trudell keeps mothers and their newborns in motion with Mama Dances

by **MARITES CARINO**

When Eryn Dace Trudell was growing up in Toronto, both of her parents worked, so they enrolled her in activities to keep her occupied. "Dance classes were my babysitter," she says with a laugh. Well, what goes around comes around. Last summer, the dancer-choreographer created an environment where mothers can babysit, breast-feed and dance in one place.

After her daughter's birth, Trudell wanted to get back to the studio. But instead of hiring a babysitter for her four-month-old, she decided to bring Yoko along. "I would just lay her on the floor while I danced around," she explains. "For so long, she was part of my body, and then, during breast-feeding, she was like a limb. I thought it would be interesting to dance through that period where the baby was still part of your body, but outside it."

As she returned to dancing, Trudell gradually became reacquainted with her body. "Every dancer goes through this period. They ask



FAMILY ACT: Trudell (right)

themselves how are they going to go back to dancing after having given birth?" she says. "I couldn't possibly be alone."

So she assembled a group of professional dancers-turned-mothers interested in creating community and art with their babies while addressing issues of motherhood. The result was Mama Dances/1000 mains Trudell's site-specific choreography for moms and offspring, housed in the elegant Musée du Château Dufresne. "There's so much improvisation involved because the babies are so unpredictable," says Trudell. "Nothing ever happens as expected. And that's what it's like having a child."



After the success of their first show in September, word spread and they had to turn away 100 spectators closing night. They also reran the piece last month. Not bad for a project that was pooh-poohed at its development stage. "I was told by funders that it was an insignificant subject matter," says Trudell. "Today, the dance stage is filled with sex. It seems things are very dark and violent. There always has to be a sexy element." Then she adds, "Actually, this is very sexy. Seeing a mother and child is very sensual."

You'll be hearing more from Mama Dances this year. They're working on what Trudell describes as a "Stomp for babies" that's due in the spring and they're giving workshops. To get in on the action, drop them a line at mama.dances@hotmail.com.

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