



## MODERN TIMES

Dancemakers explores the one-minute wonder of dance. TEXT: KAMAL AL-SOLAYLEE

**L**ong before the world started swinging to the tune of “Yes, we can,” Kate Holden and Kate Hilliard were feeling it, living it and doing it. The two dancers and close friends overcame serious physical setbacks before finding their place on Canada’s dance map as members of the Toronto troupe Dancemakers. As a teenager, Holden suffered from chronic fatigue syndrome, which kept her from performing. “That time in my life when I couldn’t dance was when I realized I had to be doing it,” she says.

A set of injuries that culminated in a severely damaged knee sidelined Hilliard’s career as a ballerina. It took a year of travelling and exposure to Europe’s dynamic contemporary-dance scene to entice Hilliard back to the stage. “I came back to Canada and immediately enrolled in a modern dance training program,” explains Hilliard. “I may have left ballet because of an injury, but contemporary dance was my choice; it wasn’t a second-best option. It’s equally as physical as ballet.”

Even if their shared history of triumphing over adversity hadn’t

created an instant bond between the two, the tight-knit working environment of Dancemakers would have forced it on them. As the two women in a company of just five dancers, Holden and Hilliard learned the importance of trust, respect—and swift conflict resolution. “If anybody is having a bad day, we try not to bring it to the studio,” says Hilliard. “But if there’s a problem,” adds Holden, “we talk about it.”

It helps that from day one, choreographer and artistic director Michael Trent’s collaborative approach to dance has instilled a democratic atmosphere in the studio and onstage. “It’s a very modern way of looking at company structure,” says Holden. “There are a lot of forward-thinking business companies working on that model.” Perhaps, but not many of them trade in the esoteric. For *60 Dances in 60 Minutes*—the Dancemakers show premiering this month—Trent has encouraged his team to bring reflections, movements and sounds on the concept of time. “We’re researching what 60 seconds means in a dance—how short or how long it can be,” says Hilliard. □