

Margie Gillis: Replenishment for the soul.

There are no words to adequately describe the performance of Margie Gillis. Having said that, I will attempt to convey the experience. Watching Gillis dance provides you with an opportunity to leave your body behind and become apart of the spirit of movement. The enthusiastic standing ovation Gillis received at the end of the performance is certainly proof that she never lost her audience. The 1 1/2 hour programme flew by with what seemed to be the speed of light. There is no one piece that stands above the others. All are crafted with precision and grace, and are fed by an emotional energy that filled the room. For anyone who enjoys dance Margie Gillis provides an opportunity for you to soar.

Of particular note are the numbers "The Little Animal" (1986), "Bloom" (1989), and "Torn Roots, Broken Branches" (1993). The first was startling in its visceral, birth - like quality. The sense of emergence and discovery was fully presented. "Bloom" was danced to an excerpted narration of James Joyce's Ulysses, rather than to music. The touches of humour and tightly scripted movements brought the text visually, and delightfully, to life. Perhaps one of the most poignant pieces, "Torn Roots, Broken Branches" is Gillis' response to her brother's death from AIDS in 1993. For this work she visited her anger and made it a tool with which to explore grief and frustration. The power of this dance is undeniable.

The programme included seven works, two of which Gillis danced with Brazilian dancer/gymnast Joao Mauricio. Whether alone or in concert, Gillis delivered a powerful evening. Her work is evocative and provocative. I am still exploring my own understanding of " Comme Une Pierre Sur Le Ciel" (1996) which left me feeling disturbed and curious, although unable to articulate exactly why. The beauty of the performance is that you are engaged with what is being presented at all times. Such precision combined with a seemingly innate understanding of body and spirit made this performance more than just something to watch. The audience became an active part of the presentation, which Gillis joyfully acknowledged during her standing ovation. At a time of year when it is all too easy to become overwhelmed by workloads, watching Margie Gillis dance is replenishing for the soul.