

## Margie Gillis shows mellow maturity

Margie Gillis, miracle dancer, is back in her home town after three years, with a slow, sinuous program that makes big emotional demands on her audience. Judging by the screams of approval and the standing ovation that followed her opening concert, most were more than ready to meet her half way.

Margie is 44 and her dances reflect her life of commitment, grief, searching, giving, loving. Gone are the days when she covered spaces with the fierce energy and girlish enthusiasm that often resulted in tears during curtain calls when the magic ended.

### More Introspective

The Margie Gillis seen these last few years grows more introspective, questing through her interior landscape, pondering life's most ancient and basic questions. As always, her choreographies made alone or with guest, shine with honesty and compassion.

On this program, she performs two duets with New York friends Paola Styron and Joao Mauricio. The rest is purely Margie, three incomparable solos to suit all tastes.

There's a similarity among the new pieces - Voyage, which was given its world premiere, and the Montreal debuts of Comme une Pierre sue le Ciel and Nothing Clings to You. Each involve masterful manipulation of draperies and props and a sculptural use of nudity that may represent Gillis's increasing need to expose her vulnerability.

In Voyage, she covered her nude torso with a man's tail coat and, shabby suitcases in hand, donned a cap and whipped her long skirts to become a turn-of-the-century immigrant, a forlorn traveller, a soul in search of identity, a woman drowning in the flotsam of her problems.

Gilles Vigneault's Si les Bateaux, inspired this dramatic piece and Vigneault and Gaétan Lebeouf composed a new arrangement for Voyage in which the singer's whispered images contrasted with the promise of love that rang so clearly at the start. Using suitcases as metaphors for burdens like personal and artistic grief that has dogged her life, Gillis exhausted herself sliding, climbing on and hoisting her woes.

Then, in one tiny, beautiful simple movement, she removed a shoe, added a sail, and let her symbolic little boat float to freedom as if giving herself permission to discard the past.

Gillis's choreographies have always invited spectators to play psychologist. Comme une Pierre and Nothing Clings, danced with Mauricio and Styron respectively, explored relationships involving polarities. To spare music by Akikazu Nakamura, Mauricio played son, lover and tyrant to Gillis's mother, partner and slave. Their nude bodies sharing grey velvet draped, they were archetypal heroes giving birth, ruling, destroying and fusing with slow, minimalist gestures.

In Nothing Clings, Styron and Gillis portrayed the positive/negative sides of a character in identically cut, buttocks-baring, white/black satin gowns. As with Comme une Pierre, the dance was built around the fabrics which were pulled coyly close to the body or let fall to reveal Rubenesque fantasies.

### Surpassed Herself

Two older solos, Variations, to Bach's Goldberg Variations, and Bloom, to the Molly Bloom soliloquy from James Joyce's Ulysses, completed the program.

In Bloom, one of the most touching dances in the Canadian dance repertoire, Gillis surpassed herself, making visual music of the stream-of-consciousness text with flickering, expressive gestures.

Full of humour and pathos, this was Gillis at her quicksilver story-telling best. Bloom alone is worth the price of admission.