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GILLIS SHOWS US WHY SHE COULD LAST FOREVER

For 27 years, there has been no place like home for soloist Margie Gillis. Born and raised in Montreal, her real home is the stage. Returning after 2_ years, Gillis shows that her magic has deepened during her absence.

Her characters might use less physical space but their emotional range is vast. In *Voyage*, a reprise of her 1998 piece to music by singer Gilles Vigneault, Gillis is a survivor whose creativity guarantees success.

In *Margie Gillis, Solo*, she so clearly comprehends her capabilities that her dance prime could last for years. The solo program's five demanding self-choreographed works show an artist with natural-looking spontaneity.

The first part starts with her wearing a man's oversized suit, a band of black across her breast. To George Gershwin's 1919 *Lullaby*, George conjures up memories of the man in her life with sweetness, joy and humour.

Gillis uses her eloquent arms and hands to sketch angels in the air, letting them dissipate into languid swooshes. Her cockiness, her loving miming and play attitudes of her men have a Chaplinesque air.

No Cure, *Loon* and *Speak* are new dances that show an even more interesting range of characterizations. To music by Leonard Cohen, *No Cure* is a three-part sometimes comic piece about losing out in love. In unbuttoned pants and a singlet, Gillis slouches in a chair reacting to the hurtin' songs with eloquent shifts of a shoulder here, the twist of a torso there. She carves every movement with clarity and purpose.

Her humour shows up in a vamp scene in which she wiggles in an oh-so tight white skirt, and another in which she uses panties as a prop (falsies handkerchief, hat, floor cloth), while making appropriately funny faces.

Loon, to bird sounds, and *Speak* to tabla singing by Sheila Chandra, are likely to become Gillis classics. *Loon* epitomizes the mystery and magic of the bird call. Head down, face hidden by a spray of red hair, she twists intently in a tube dress.

Enthralled by the haunting loon calls, she writhes on the floor, pumping her hips in sexual ecstasy and thrusting her bare legs skyward to wrap around each other in a mating ritual.

Speak transcends even this. Against a background of saris, Gillis Whirls and leaps sensually, a purple skirt fanning out beneath a magenta gown. As the singer rapidly pronounces the clipped percussive Indian vowels, Gillis makes the sound visible by defining its angles with huge arm gestures. Cramming so much movement into so little time with such precision is heroic. It's pure Gillis.