

La Presse, December 13, 2003 Dance

Margie Gillis Times Seven

By Aline Apostolska, special assignment for La Presse

To celebrate the 30-year-long career of Margie Gillis is to celebrate a solo virtuoso whose calling cards continue to be intensity, emotion and inventiveness, a constant throughout the years, in performances from one end of the earth to the other. This production, a tribute to her oeuvre, proves her strengths yet again, in beauty as well as scope.

Margie has chosen seven solos, four of which are unabridged, seven steps along her path between 1978 and 2003. You can thus appreciate the consistency of her favorite themes: a beings' aspirations versus its worldly limitations, the desire to lighten and refine the soul, all of the physical and contradictory energies that a body experiences -- as an instrument of joy, but also of woe, as a prisoner shackled by possibility. The incontrovertible limits of the human condition are known to all of us. If Margie Gillis' dances, through the identification that a solo allows, bring us back to the most intimate yearnings within ourselves, it is because she knows how to restore them to us. With a new serenity and a radiant smile that are a constant presence throughout the new works, she embodies reassurance, almost tranquil maturity, for us.

As much as the same spirit unites them, these seven works differ choreographically, scenically and musically. From *Blue*, the 1998 black and white solo with a chair that begins the evening, to the sweeping and sylphlike *Viridian*, created in 2003 by Irene Dowd, set to a harpsichord piece by Bach, to the refined, mystical universe of *Elimination*, evoking the healing that emanates from the resonance's between the flesh and the cosmos-- so common a theme in Eastern traditions-- set to the sound of metallic percussion, you remain astonished, as you are transported each time to a specific universe.

Two other unabridged works follow: *A Complex Simplicity of Love*, a fast, uplifting, genuine moment of inspired and sacred femininity, magnified by Handel's music, followed by *Breathing in Bird Bone*, a funny depiction of the need to leave the ground, to fly away. And then, with applause that begins the moment Margie appears, haphazardly dressed up in a flowered dress, the sublime, heartbreaking *Waltzing Matilda*, to a Tom Waits' song, a signature piece created in 1978 in which Gillis is still as intense, lively and expressive as ever, embodying the distress of the girl with two left feet who wants to waltz.

And finally, *What the Wind Whispers*, a dazzling finish of warm sensuality, with the voice of Jessye Norman vibrating along with a cello to the music of Brahms. In a low-cut, blood red dress, sculptured, majestic and mesmerizing, Gillis sends her long auburn tresses floating, like a standard for eternity.

Margie Gillis still has, to use her own expression, a "thinking body", perhaps even more so now than ever before. In this program that showcases the diversity of her range, she demonstrates her masterly capacity to embody and share the states of the human soul -- numerous and vibrant, poignant and sensitive. Just like her.