

Just being open

Canadian modern dancer Margie Gillis took time out from a busy schedule yesterday to talk with the *Gateway*. She was very easy to interview: open, spontaneous and radiating an energy not normally seen around the *Gateway* office.

As she says in the interview, she loves consonants and vowels. The printed word cannot convey that extra dimension one perceives when listening to her musical speech. Somehow, it didn't matter that she, like most artists, had difficulty describing the creative process. It sounded okay, anyway.

This is the second stop on a three month national tour that will take Gillis to cities as diverse as Burnaby and Montreal. Tonight, she gives her second performance at SUB Theatre before moving on to Red Deer.

Gateway: Why do you dance, and why modern dance?
Gillis: Modern dance is really a cover-all, an umbrella word. It takes in a lot of different styles of movement.

The way I dance is that I try to make my dance as natural as possible. Whatever you think or feel goes down into your nervous system and into your muscles, and your muscles begin altering and changing so that even just sitting here thinking, we're dancing. Dance is just...letting out yourself.

As far as performing goes, the process I just described makes it possible for an audience to watch me, and if the movement is honest and truthful then it's going down into their bodies and their muscles. They're getting the inputs so that their body is actually dancing the dance as well. I hopefully can say that the dance is touching the collective unconscious. This is what I'm trying to do.

I try to be as personal with my work as it is possible because I'm trying to get my audience to open up and just feel how special their own lives and their own feelings are. It does feel great to be alive and to hurt and cry and laugh and all of that.

Gateway: Some people have said that they find it almost painful to watch you dance. Do you go beyond a point where your audience becomes embarrassed at the way you dance or at the feelings you elicit?

Gillis: I've had a few people walk out because they just didn't want to confront themselves. They have the choice to look or not to look. The feelings come up inside of them and some people are not ready to confront them.

We're living in an instant food society; we're living in valium land and TV land and if anything hurts we shut it off. We're geared to shutting off pain and trying to get away from pain...It does hurt and it isn't all that pleasant and the only reason it happens is because we care about something. And if you really care about something, it's going to hurt.

Gateway: How do you choreograph? How do you take an idea to its finished form?

Gillis: Every choreographer is different. Most of my inspiration comes from people I know and myself, rather than from dance movement itself. Everytime I feel the way the piece is going ... I'll try to get into a space where I can work and see what kind of movements come out and I'll keep studying myself and other people. And then suddenly I find the music in it and it all just falls together. Most choreographers get the music and then choreograph the piece. I kind of do it a bit backwards or something.

Gateway: Your choice of music seems much different from that of other composers. I mean, you use the music of Tom Waits as well as classical music.

Gillis: I do use a lot of music with lyrics. I like the sound of lyrics. I like vowels and consonants. I like words. I



grew up listening to the radio and all that kind of stuff so this kind of music moves me and I feel very strong about using it with my work. A lot of choreographers do not use music with lyrics.

To me, Tom Waits is a genius, he's a complete genius with his words. And there's such a pull between this grating voice and these lovely, lovely delicate songs and melodies he's playing on the piano.

Gateway: How much of your dance is choreographed and how much is spontaneous?

Gillis: About 20 per cent of each piece is left unchoreographed.

Gateway: How aware of the audience are you?

Gillis: Very. Very. When I'm dancing my best, I'm no longer dancing ... it's just coming through me and I can get out of the way, which is wonderful.

Each audience is different and an audience is made up of individuals, and so there's a collective audience and an individual audience. I'm very aware of the audience and I know when something is happening and when something has to be tempered a little bit more gently, but I try not to think about it. It's something that I read through my body and that changes how my body reacts. If I think about it too much it slows the process down.

Gateway: Is this something that happens with experience or maturity?

Gillis: Well when I was younger I had a nervous breakdown. I don't know what they call it these days. What do they call edge city these days? I was on edge city for about five years and being there really gave me a lot of information.

It's just about being open. When you're out there, the things that have the strongest impact are not things like chairs and tables and walls, but energy flying around. I think it is a thing that can be developed but I think it also is just learning to get open and respond. Because I am responding. It's a give and take with the audience, otherwise there's no communication.

Gateway: Will there ever be a time when you will go back to dancing the works of other choreographers?

Gillis: Well I am, in this program, dancing two works by other choreographers whom I really admire and feel happy and comfortable working with. But, for the most part, I just do my own work. I feel very strongly about what I want to say. I feel comfortable.

Gateway: And you feel comfortable dancing solo as opposed to dancing with a group?

Gillis: Yeah. As far as choreography goes, I feel pretty responsible about what I'm putting out. I'm obviously a focal point for why people are in an auditorium or theater, and I feel very responsible for that. It's like creating a magic circle. It's a very important thing for me and I like to treat it with the respect that it's due. I like to work in a company situation, it's just that right now I'm doing this.

Comedy from the land of haggis

by David Marples

Next Tuesday, November 27, SUB Theatre plays host to Billy Connolly, Scotland's "Big Yin" and arguably one of the most talented comedians ever produced by that country. Connolly's forte is his ability to combine music and humor, banjo playing and story-telling in a benevolent send-up of Scotland, and in particular, his home town of Glasgow.

Connolly is a man of irrepressible energy with a concert routine of outrageous, even bawdy humor. He has been compared to Bill Cosby and England's Mike Harding. Yet, essentially Connolly has always remained immersed in his Scottish roots.

Born in the Anderston area of Glasgow in 1942, Connolly was initially trained as a welder at Linthouse shipyard. His musical career began in the mid-sixties when he and fellow-Scot, Tom Harvey, formed the "Humblebums", an apt name for two penniless hippies playing folk music. In 1968, Connolly teamed up with Gerry Rafferty and toured Europe. His career however took off in 1971 when he went "solo" and gave vent to his natural humor. His debut double album in 1974 was sensationally successful, earning him a sell-out tour of the U.S. and a new recording contract with Polydor

I first heard Connolly on the BBC's prestigious Michael Parkinson Show (Britain's answer to Johnny Carson) in 1975, when the normally cool Parkinson lay back in his chair, helpless with laughter at Connolly's lightning repartee. Some have found his humour cutting; his first single, for example, was a merciless satire of Tammy Wynette's D.I.V.O.R.C.E. Another victim was the Anglican Church which was hardly enamoured of Connolly's deliciously wicked version of the Crucifixion. The shockwaves however do not prevent Connolly from filling the concert-halls wherever he goes. In 1977, he completed a 51-date tour of Britain, the largest British tour ever carried out by an entertainer.

Connolly is a master of his profession, an excellent guitar and banjo player and a born comic. His act personifies working-class humor at its best. His songs can be starkly realistic beneath the comedy. Those who know Glasgow may recall the harsh and violent urban environment of the fifties and sixties, the gang warfare and the slums of the Gorbals. Connolly portrays this vividly, especially in the songs about his school-days. Glasgow is both the background and raison d'etre of Billy Connolly, the native son from the dockyards who always knew "I was a wee bit special".

Thursday Thursday

THEATER
Theatre 3, 426-3394

Nov. 14 - Dec. 1, 8 p.m. Keith Digby directs *Hedda Gabler*, a play by Henrik Ibsen. The play deals with the anguish of someone born a generation ahead of her time. Tickets are available at the Theatre 3 box office and at all BASS outlets. There is a Sunday matinee at 2 p.m.

Workshop West Playwrights' Theatre, 436-7378

Nov. 15 - Dec. 2, *Of The Fields Lately* by David French. This play, the story of a son returning home two years after he has broken loose from his family, was winner of the Best Canadian Play Award in 1973. *Of the Fields Lately* is showing at Victoria Composite's Theatre Beside (10210) 108 Ave.). Entrance is via Kingsway. Showtimes are Wednesday - Friday at 8 p.m., Saturdays at 7 and 10 p.m., and Sundays at 2:30 and 8 p.m. Tickets, at BASS and the door, are \$4.50 and \$5.00 (Wednesdays and Sunday matinees), \$5.00 and \$6.00 (Weekend evenings).

Walterdale Theatre, 426-0721

Nov. 13-24, 8 p.m. *Davin: the Politician* is the new play by Saskatchewan writer Ken Mitchell. Davin is a charismatic Western Canadian of Irish descent whose influence in Regina is unassailable while he retains control of the local newspaper. Once elected to parliament, however, he finds himself torn between the interests of his party, those of his constituents and the dictates of his conscience. Across his path comes a beautiful poet with whom he falls in love, Sir John A. Macdonald and Louis Riel. Tickets are \$3.50 and \$4.00 and are available at the ticket sales outlet in the Bay's downtown store.

Theatre Francais d'Edmonton, Auditorium of Faculty St. Jean, 8406 - 91 St., 469-0829

Nov. 23 - 25, 30 - Dec. 2, 8 p.m. Edmonton's only French speaking theatrical company present their second production of the season: *Le Petite Prince* by A. de St. Exupery.

MUSIC
Convocation Hall

Nov. 25, 8 p.m. The Second Edmonton Youth Orchestra will perform its first concert of the season. The program includes works by Gordon Jacobs, Malcolm Arnold and Joseph Haydn. Admission is free.

SUB Theatre

Nov. 27, 7 and 9:30 p.m. The Southside Folk Club presents Billy Connolly. For more information call 475-1042 or 475-2260.

SEMINARS
Humanities Centre, 5-20

Nov. 27, 4 p.m. "Saul Bellow: Sexuality, Work and Wilhelm Reich" by C. Bullock

READINGS

Nov. 26, 12 noon. Susan Musgrave is reading her poetry in AV-L3 of the Humanities Centre.

CINEMA

Edmonton Public Library, 7 Sir Winston Churchill Square, 423-2331

Nov. 24 - 25, 2 p.m. *It Came From Outer Space*. Slip on your 3D glasses and watch this Ray Bradbury adaptation about a spaceship and its inhabitants who crash in the Arizona desert. This 1953 film continues the Library's science fiction series. Admission is free.

Provincial Museum, 12845 - 102 Ave.

Nov. 25, 4 and 7 p.m., *Murder by Death* starring Peter Falk, Peter Sellers and Alec Guinness.
Nov. 28, 7 p.m., *Papillon* starring Steve McQueen and Dustin Hoffman. This film and *Murder by Death* are both free and are sponsored by Alberta Culture.

Edmonton Film Society in SUB Theatre
Nov. 26, 8 p.m., *The Wonderful Crook*. This 1976 comedy from Switzerland is the fourth in the EFS's International Series. It is directed by Gerard Depardieu who made *The Lace Maker*. The story is about a young manager who fakes orders, burns shipments and begins to pull armed robberies to meet the payroll of a bankrupt business that he inherited. Series tickets are \$14.00. Inquiries: 488-4335.

Arts Building, Arts 17 in the basement

Nov. 28, 7:30 p.m., *Nordsee ist Mordsee*. Der Film erzählt die Gerichte von zwei heranwachsenden Jungen, die auf der Elbinsel Hamburg-Wilhelmsburg leben, und eines Tages versuchen, mit einem Flob "abzuhauen".

Varscona Theatre, 10907 - 82 Ave., 433-3222

Nov. 23, *When Joseph Returns*
Nov. 24, *Angi Vera*
Nov. 25, 7 p.m., *Holiday in Britain*
Nov. 25, 2:00, 4:30 and 9:30 p.m., *The Hungarians*
Nov. 26, *Journey With Jacob*
Nov. 27, *Deliver Us From Evil*
Nov. 28, *Happy New Year*
Nov. 29, *A Quite Ordinary Life*

These films make up the Varscona's Hungarian Film Retrospective. All the films are at 7:30 and 9:15 except those on Sunday.