

**SOLITUDES SOLO**  
by Daniel Léveillé



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**DURÉE** 60 minutes  
**PREMIÈRE** September 26, 2012 | Agora de la Danse (Montréal, Canada)  
**VIDEOS** Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/54872084>

**CALQ Award 2013 – for the best choreographic work presented in Quebec in 2012-2013 season.**

## ARTISTIC INTENTION

In Daniel Léveillé's work, Solitudes Solo can be viewed as a new starting point, but also as a breaking point: on the horizon of purity where this pared-down choreography unfolds, an impossible expectation questions "the beyond."

Because of its resistance to rational harmony, the body tends to fall toward the ground and the project of many of today's choreographers is to pursue a movement realizing a sort of elated dionysism, positioned as a revolt against the symmetry associated with the classical quest for perfection in form. Daniel Léveillé explores a different avenue, that of form.

Léveillé has for a long time committed himself to an effort of going beyond time and, in these solos, the forms he proposes attain immateriality. Purity or starkness are here less important than the research – taken to its very limits – on how "the simple" can give access to the immaterial. The dancers are certainly alone, in the movement of their existence, but they are mostly pointed toward an expression made possible by this solitude.

Each part offers a sequence that is in essence questioning the power of discontinuity: Daniel Léveillé invests each of these segments for what it is – the condition that makes it possible to go beyond time to reveal form. He demands from each of his dancers (four men and one woman) a paradoxical effort: while moving between sweeping and precise gestures, and receptions accomplished at the limits of disequilibrium, they must each show how their dance favours immobility over time.

One could imagine a slow-motion breakdown of the work in which the signification would not be lost. Each sequence is therefore not mainly a moment in time developing into a phrase, as if the dancer should attain the rhythm of a saying, only for an instant suspended from the eternal form that shines its light upon him or her. And this could apply to each of the moments in our lives that never reveal their signification more than in their relation to the immobility sought by existence, in pleasure or in death. Therefore, everything here is a demonstration of dance's moral power against the illusions of agitation and revolt.

Each dancer in his or her performance exposes a particular figure of ourselves, a temporal moment in a life tending toward unity and beauty, while knowing it can only reach such heights at the risk of breaking and falling. Austerity is the condition of this exercise, which against the weight of dispersion and nonsense, posits a quasi-spiritual ideal. Daniel Léveillé here reaches the heart of his art. (Source: Georges Leroux | Translation: Michel Moussette)

*The first instalment of a new creation cycle, Solitudes Solo presents us with Daniel Léveillé at the height of his powers and a choreography that is as finely chiselled as a diamond necklace. (Fabienne Cabado for Festival TransAmériques)*

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The company is eligible to the touring grant programs from Québec and Canada arts councils, providing support for international transport of persons and cargo.

## CRÉDITS

<b>Dancers at creation</b>	Mathieu Campeau, Esther Gaudette, Justin Gionet, Emmanuel Proulx, Gaëtan Viau
<b>Dancers at premiere</b>	Justin Gionet, Emmanuel Proulx, Manuel Roque, Gaëtan Viau, Lucie Vigneault
<b>Apprentice</b>	Marie-Ève Lafontaine
<b>Light design</b>	Marc Parent
<b>Music</b>	Jean-Sébastien Bach
<b>Costumes</b>	Geneviève Lizotte
<b>Rehearsal director</b>	Sophie Corriveau
<b>Stage manager</b>	Armando Gomez Rubio
<b>Production</b>	Daniel Léveillé danse
<b>Coproduction</b>	Festival TransAmériques (Montreal)   Centre chorégraphique national de Rillieux-la-Pape, direction Yuval Pick (France)   Theater im Pumpenhaus (Münster, Germany)   Agora de la Danse (Montreal)   Fabrik Potsdam (Germany)   Atelier de Paris-Carolyn Carlson (France)   Département de danse de l'Université du Québec à Montréal
<b>Development</b>	George Skalkogiannis
<b>With the support of</b>	Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec and Canada Council for the Arts.

© Denis Farley | with Justin Gionet



*Léveillé nous prend par la main et nous emmène - et ce si facilement - vers des états émotionnels difficiles qui sont caractéristiques de notre condition humaine. Voilà le fil conducteur qui passe à travers l'ensemble de son œuvre et qui définit sa contribution.*

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### QUOTES

" In a suite of eight solos for five unflagging dancers, to Bach's sonatas and partitas for solo violin, Mr. Léveillé exploits gravity for the full force of its downward pull. "

– **Siobhan Burke, *The New York Times***

" The dancers' virtuosity is captivating, especially in the moment of "suspension", frozen frames that allow the spectator to contemplate the muscle in action. A privilege. "

– **Philippe Couture, *Voir***

" Solitudes solo (...) evolves from an austere and acrobatic dance towards an expansive and vibrant movement. This clever path is really worth the candle. "

– **Stéphanie Brody, *La Presse***

" Delivered with a cool detachment and stripped down to its essence, Solitudes solo provides a profound reflection on our quest for images of the body, how they dominate our lives and how they mould and define us. "

– **Philip Szporer, *The Dance Current***

" In these solos, the forms he proposes attain immateriality. "

– **Georges Leroux, *Spirale magazine***

"A body that rips through space, a vitality that's held back, an thrilling urgency..."

– **Rosita Boisseau, *Télérama***

### BIOGRAPHY OF DANIEL LÉVEILLÉ

A well known Montréal choreographer and dance teacher, Daniel Léveillé exclusively holds an original position on the Canadian contemporary dance scene. Over the past 40 years, he has created more than thirty works performed by talented dancers, thus contributing to the evolution of this living art form. In 2001, *Amour, acide et noix* confirms his reputation on the international scene in a spectacular way. He then presented *The Modesty of the Icebergs* (2004) and *Twilight of the Oceans* (2007), the two others works of his trilogy *Anatomy of the imperfection*. With these works, he develops a style made of repetitions and short movements, he creates choreographies that reach the borders of the impossible, that help to reveal the beauty of the human being in all his imperfections and he chooses nudity as the only possible costume in order to avoid any possible dissimulation. *Solitudes Solo* (2012) marks the beginning of a new cycle of creation, made of more fluid gestures and the return of a costume other than nudity, that eloquently reaffirms that we can do and say a lot with just a few things. This new cycle continues with *Solitudes Duo* (2015).

# **SOLITUDES SOLO**

## **Daniel Léveillé**

### **PRESS REVIEW**

### **| Selection |**

*The Conseil de Arts et des Lettres du Québec Prize*  
for best choreographic work for the 2012/13 artistic season.

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February 2, 2015 6:23 pm

## Daniel Léveillé Danse, Abrons Arts, New York — review

**Apollinaire Scherr**

Arduous movement explores weighty possibilities in a break from the trend for lightness



©Denis Farley Emmanuel Proulx of Daniel Léveillé Danse in 'Solitudes Solo'

Modern dance has enjoyed a lot of nakedness in the past 50 years, but what the bared flesh means has fluctuated wildly from decade to decade and piece to piece. It has signified the body beautiful, the vulnerability of an Adam and Eve desperate for their fig leaves, humanity's dumpiness, or merely the convenience of forgoing costumes. But whatever the connotation, the impact of nakedness diminishes with use: Eve only fell once.

So this time the veteran Québécois choreographer Daniel Léveillé put his dancers in underwear. And yet they still seemed elementally stripped. Like a Rodin figure — with its heft, its turbulent flesh, its enormous hands and feet — the 70-minute *Solitudes Solo* testified to the rough, weighty fact of being. It explored the expressive possibilities of feet of clay.

The movement in these eight consecutive solos to Bach's lonely, strenuous violin sonatas was arduous: an Olympic-style long jump without the running start or a leg suspended in the air for many counts. But the dancers expended more force than even these difficult moves required. The riveting Justin Gionet seemed to want to bore a hole in the floor with his thunderous landings from sudden jumps and leaps. The enigmatic Matthieu Campeau twisted his trunk like an ancient wind-blasted tree in a dramatic wind-up for a rather modest turn.

Léveillé resists dance's conventional aspirations of lightness and smoothness. He cuts the threads between steps, so the dancerly tools of momentum and dynamic shading cannot be used. His gamble is that, stripped of the codes of dancerness and reduced to only a few cherished moves, the soloist will resemble no one else and be more interesting for it.

*Solitudes Solo* occasionally lapsed from this strict faith to resort to recognisable signs: flared bharata natyam hands, undulating swan arms and fisticuffs. The work could lose a solo or two to underscore each performer's stark individuality but most of the time it seemed to reinvent dance and dancer as we watched. It reminded me of young children eating: they are so slow. They treat chewing with the same respect as tasting and allow both to inspire bouts of dreaminess, as if they do not realise there will be a million more meals to come.



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# The New York Times

DANCE | DANCE REVIEW

## With Dramatic Drops, Exploiting Gravity's Force

Daniel Léveillé's 'Solitudes Solo' at Abrons Arts Center

By SIOBHAN BURKE FEB. 1, 2015



Esther Gaudette dances in the American debut of Daniel Léveillé's "Solitudes Solo" as part of the Travelogues series at Abrons Arts Center.

When we watch a dance performance, we rarely think about where it has been and where it's going. The dancers you see in New York today could have been halfway around the world last week. With a new series at Abrons Arts Center, [Travelogues](#), the independent producer Laurie Uprichard (formerly a curator at [Danspace Project](#) and [Dublin Dance Festival](#)) frames performance as something that exists before and after we see it. The series began over the weekend with the American premiere of "[Solitudes Solo](#)" by Daniel Léveillé, whose company is based in Montreal. (Ms. Uprichard had seen the work in Montreal and Paris before bringing it to the Lower East Side.) This is a dance that, wherever it goes, plants itself firmly in that place — or at least it did on Friday in the intimate Experimental Theater at Abrons.

In a suite of eight solos for five unflagging dancers, to Bach's sonatas and partitas for solo violin, Mr. Léveillé exploits gravity for the full force of its downward pull. His stark, devilishly difficult vocabulary tethers the dancers to the floor, releasing them only to yank them down again. When they jump — straight up, spinning 360 degrees or more in a completely vertical alignment — they land where they started with a startling thud. Other falls — knees, forearms, knuckles crashing to the ground — are just as brusque, foils to the music's lyricism. (The audience member in front of me, an esteemed dancer and choreographer, jumped in his seat more than once.)

Arriving and departing through a propped-open side door, the dancers — four men and one woman, the riveting Esther Gaudette — take turns rising to the challenges of the movement. In their stern gazes, they don't mask the effort required, say, to leap through space with no preparation, or to bend the standing leg in a forward-tilting balance very, very slowly. (Neither does their clothing; for the most part, they wear only briefs.) Mr. Léveillé plays intriguingly with transitions, sometimes elongating but more often compressing the time between one action and the next. Amid taut, linear poses, he inserts the rare head roll or pelvis ripple, moments of softening and, for the watcher, relief.

Like someone left alone to ruminate, "Solitudes" can feel too inward-looking, too in its head, turning the same thought over and over. Yet that's also a source of its unexpected pathos. The dancers appear together only once, standing still and facing us. When it comes to the toughest work, they're on their own.

Travelogues continues May 21-24 with Kimberly Bartosik and Dylan Crossman at Abrons Arts Center, 466 Grand Street, at Pitt Street, Lower East Side; 866-811-4111, [abronsartscenter.org](http://abronsartscenter.org)

A version of this review appears in print on February 2, 2015, on page C2 of the New York edition with the headline: With Dramatic Drops, Exploiting Gravity's Force. [Order Reprints](#) | [Today's Paper](#) | [Subscribe](#)

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/02/arts/dance/daniel-leveilles-solitudes-solo-at-abrons-arts-center.html?ref=dance&r=0>

## FTA / Solitudes Solo - The Demanding Dance of Daniel Léveillé

Philippe Couture / May 26, 2014 / VOIR

Although the dancers are now dressed in underwear, Daniel Léveillé's most recent show, *Solitudes Solo*, follows the same exciting paths as in the past. The choreography embraces individuality in a stunning display of physical demands.

Since *Amour, Acide et noix*, the dance audience has followed the work of this demanding choreographer who casts a precise light on the human body to distinctively reveal the movements of the flesh and the tension of the working muscles. As in *The Modesty of Icebergs* and *Twilight of the Oceans*, Léveillé offers a very formal dance that should be savored as such, without looking for too many underlying discourses, without burdening oneself with too many layers of signification or narrativity. The show is about bodies colliding with space through jumps and acts of withdrawal, in the context of a great tension between the aerial domain and the pull of the ground. This could certainly be read as the desire to elevate the human soul that is constantly endangered by the surrounding reality. But such an interpretation is overly simplifying: the movements oscillate between sky and earth but follow each other in a manner that is way more complex than Manichaeian mechanics. From curled-up positions, the dancers evolve to a total opening of the bodies, as if they were suddenly caught by the vastness of space and the infinite possibilities of human articulation.

Leaps, rolls, backs that are braced, and then sudden collapses or yet projections into the void, into a certain immediacy – such are the elements of this demanding choreography that quickly brings the bodies into a state of sweat. The dancers' virtuosity is captivating, especially in the moment of "suspension", freeze frames that allow the spectator to contemplate the muscle in action. A privilege.

Quietly passing each other between their solo parts, the dancers Esther Gaudette, Gaëtan Viau, Emmanuel Proulx, Justin Gionet and Mathieu Campeau mostly occupy the stage on their own. Alone in the world or only masters of their own fate: the show offers an exploration of human individuality that refrains from the weight of judgment. It mostly communicates the greatness of humanity and a vision of the body at its best, even in the delicate scenes.

True to his signature, Léveillé offers a mix of soft and fluid figures on the one hand, and of brutal movements and striking landings on the other. The generalized slowness coexists with a few brief instants of precipitation, but everything is done with an admirable rigor. There are a few borrowings from ballet, marvelously synchronized to the music of Johann Sebastian Bach.

At the time of writing, we are however still unsure why the songs "Over the Rainbow" / "What a Wonderful World" were chosen to accompany Gaëtan Viau's final solo.

*(Translation: Michel Moussette)*

## FTA – *Solitudes Solo*: Achieving the Right Balance

Christian Saint-Pierre / May 25, 2014 / Revue Jeu

Formal in the best sense of the word, Daniel Léveillé's work should be seen with an open mind. There is no easily followed thread. No text. Nothing resembling even in the slightest bit what could be called a character. No water, no paint, no feathers or any bizarre props. Nothing but the pure and undiluted beauty of the human body.

It is often said that choreographers are painters who use bodies to draw lines, create compositions and establish perspectives. While this may sound like a cliché, it is nonetheless particularly true in the case of Daniel Léveillé. Using bodies, he creates magnificent architectures: the vigor of the anchorings to the ground being as impressive as the amplitude of the vertical extensions.

In 2001, *Amour, acide et noix* (the first part of the trilogy that was going to contribute to the international renown of Daniel Léveillé's work) had already deeply moved me. The dancers – among whom a certain Dave St-Pierre (already dazzling, fascinating) – offered complete nudity to better transcend it. Far from being content with arms and legs, the choreographer masterfully incorporated the movements of muscles, the tensions of the flesh and the outline of bones under the skin.

This research was further pursued in *The Modesty of Icebergs* and *Twilight of the Oceans* (such great titles!) but has become less central, even though still present, in *Solitudes Solo*, a show created in 2012 and now presented at Festival TransAmériques. For sixty minutes, Gaëtan Viau, Mathieu Campeau, Esther Gaudette, Justin Gionet and Emmanuel Proulx dance with stupendous conviction, talent and technique.

Although they never truly share the same stage – the show being constituted as you may have guessed of a series of solos – the quests of the different protagonists are similar to each other. Set to the music of Bach violins (which already creates a nice contrast!) the dancers leap – sometimes very high in the air – brace themselves, spin with power, switch from the Spartan discipline of martial arts to the primitive drive of ancient ceremonies.

There are careful borrowings from ballet, the judicious use of masses that is reminiscent of José Limon's work, but there is mostly an art of the counterpoint, a succession of smooth and broken movements that hit the mark. In the end, it is impossible to not empathize with the dancers' attempts to evade gravity, to not recognize in them – as in us – the both vain and vital hope of someday achieving the right balance.

Solitudes solo

Choreography: Daniel Léveillé. A Daniel Léveillé Danse production. At Théâtre Prospero, as part of Festival TransAmériques, until May 26, 2014.

(translation: Michel Moussette)

## EXCERPTS FROM:

### “Form in Time”: The Art of Daniel Lèveillé

by Georges Leroux

*Spirale* 243, Winter 2013

#### Solitudes Solo, by Daniel Lèveillé Danse

In Daniel Lèveillé’s work, *Solitudes Solo* can be viewed as a new starting point, but also as a breaking point: on the horizon of purity where this pared-down choreography unfolds, an impossible expectation questions “the beyond.”

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Each part offers a sequence that is in essence questioning the power of discontinuity: Daniel Lèveillé invests each of these segments for what it is – the condition that makes it possible to go beyond time to reveal form. He demands from each of his dancers (four men and one woman) a paradoxical effort: while moving between sweeping and precise gestures, and receptions accomplished at the limits of disequilibrium, they must each show how their dance favours immobility over time.

One could imagine a slow-motion breakdown of the work in which the signification would not be lost. Each sequence is therefore not mainly a moment in time developing into a phrase, as if the dancer should attain the rhythm of a saying, only for an instant suspended from the eternal form that shines its light upon him or her. And this could apply to each of the moments in our lives that never reveal their signification more than in their relation to the immobility sought by existence, in pleasure or in death. Therefore, everything here is a demonstration of dance’s moral power against the illusions of agitation and revolt.

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(Source : Georges Leroux | Translation : Michel Moussette)

## “Solitudes Solo : a Silent Progression”

*La Presse*, 28 September 2012

Stéphanie Brody

*Solitudes Solo*, the most recent creation of Montreal choreographer Daniel Léveillé, goes from a spartan gymnastic-like dance to an expansive and vibrant dance. This clever progression is well worth the effort.

*Solitudes Solo* comprises eight solos and starts in familiar territory for anyone who has seen Léveillé’s previous work (*The Modesty of Icebergs; Twilight of the Oceans*). Delimited sequences, explosions of energy followed by returns to immobile neutral positions. Careful movements through space. “*Tours en l’air*”, powerful throws and leaps, with loud and heavy landings, immense lunges and “*grands pliés*”. The first solo, danced by Justin Gionet, sets the tone and resembles a floor gymnastics routine!

But already during the second solo, Manuel Roque, enriches the language with spirals and transitions that more strongly link the different parts. In the third scene, Gaëtan Viau lands softly after his jumps and he even surprises us with some Swan Lake wing flapping.

Emmanuel Proulx appears on stage with a longer and more complex routine. We now tend toward the “*adage*” and Bach’s music for violins - that occasionally accompanies the solos - begins to carry direct meaning. The lines become longer and maintain themselves just at the point of equilibrium; trajectories integrating maximal amplitude follow each other. And then, Proulx’s apparent tiredness adds a new tenderness to the solo, supported every now and then by strange hip rolls.

Next is Roque who, for the first time in *Solitudes Solo*, puts forth heavy breathing and curved arms. He also adds an attack that breaks the neutrality having so far characterized the show. And then suddenly, in the midst of this masculine universe, Lucie Vigneault’s solo marks the apotheosis - feminine and triumphant - of this silent progression toward expressivity and freedom so meticulously orchestrated by Léveillé. And the choreographer successfully achieves this while never resorting to effusive dramatics - using only a light touch, and repetitions and accumulations. The only truly theatrical note: the final solo danced by Viau on a surprising song, that closes *Solitudes Solo* with perhaps a hint of irony.

(Translation: Michel Moussette)