

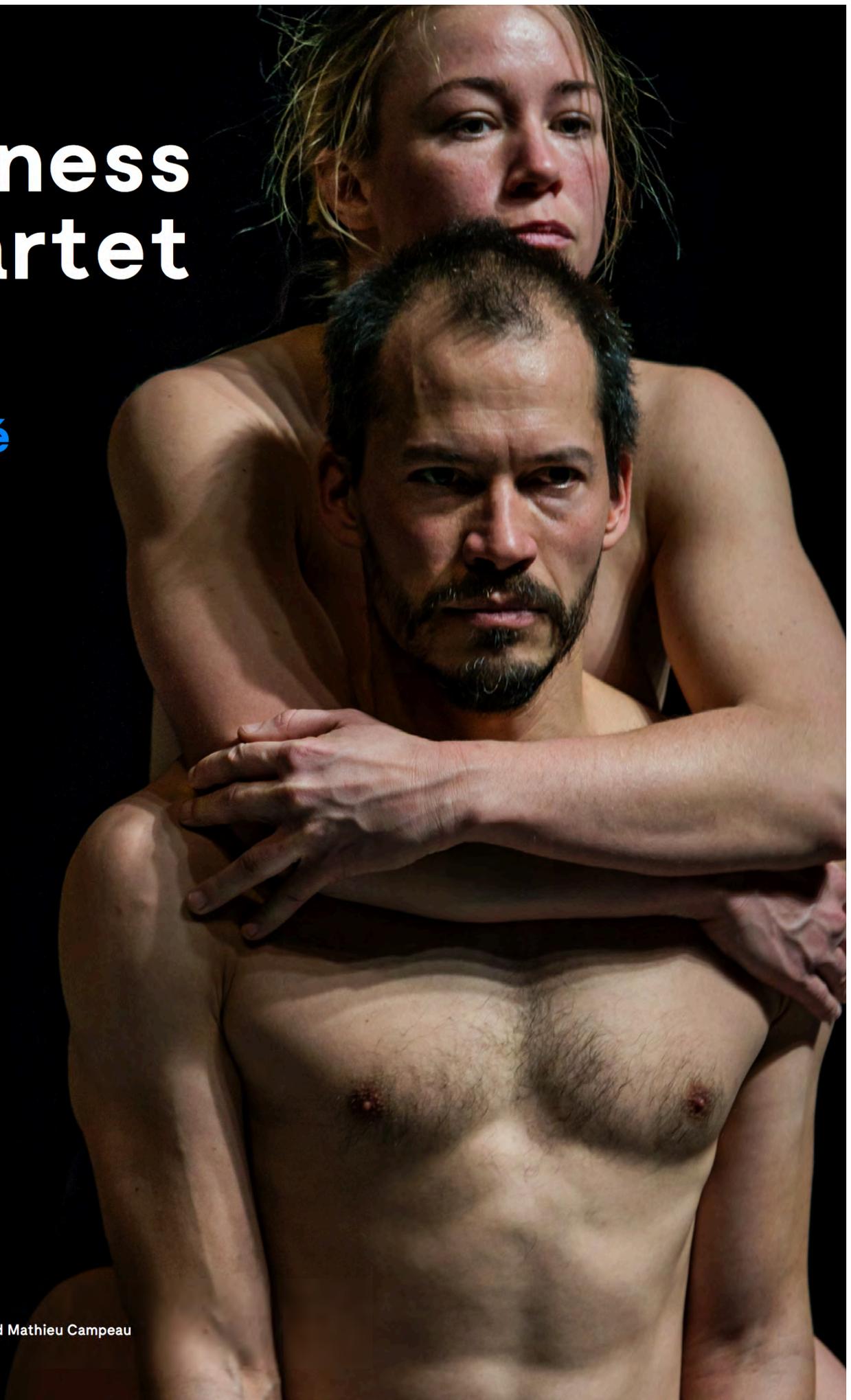
# Sadness Quartet

Daniel  
Léveillé

PRESS KIT

**DLD**

Photo: Denis Farley  
Featuring Ellen Furey and Mathieu Campeau



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**I compose my dances the way Marguerite Duras composed her writing of *The Lover*. At first glance it is a short novel, very simple, consisting of very few words, short phrases and many repetitions, but everything she needs is all in there. The writing is imbued not only with a strong musicality but also with simplicity.**

– Daniel Léveillé

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**DURATION** 60 minutes  
**PREMIERE** May 30, 2018 | Festival TransAmériques (Montréal)  
**VIDEO** <https://vimeo.com/262403210>

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**NOTE:** This piece contains nudity. Promotion photos were taken in rehearsal.

The company is eligible to touring grants programs from Québec and Canada Arts Councils, providing support for international transport of persons and cargo.

## MANDATORY CREDITS

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<b>CHOREOGRAPHY</b>	Daniel Léveillé
<b>DANCERS AT CREATION</b>	Mathieu Campeau, Dany Desjardins, Ellen Furey, Esther Gaudette, Justin Gionet, Simon Renaud
<b>MUSIC</b>	John Dowland, Marin Marais, Luca Marenzio, Claudio Monteverdi, Josquin des Prés, Giovanni Salvatore, Giovanni Maria Trabaci
<b>LIGHT DESIGN</b>	Marc Parent
<b>CHOREOGRAPHY ASSISTANCE</b>	Sophie Corriveau
<b>REHEARSAL DIRECTION</b>	Sophie Corriveau, Frédéric Boivin
<b>PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPMENT OF CHOREOGRAPHIC LANGUAGE</b>	Emmanuel Proulx
<b>PRODUCTION</b>	Daniel Léveillé Danse
<b>COPRODUCTION</b>	Festival TransAmériques (Montréal)
<b>WITH THE SUPPORT OF</b>	Theater im Pumpenhaus (Münster), Atelier de Paris / CDCN (Paris)
<b>CREATIVE RESIDENCY</b>	Maison de la culture Notre-Dame-de-Grâce (Montréal)
<b>IN MEMORY OF</b>	Martine Époque

## ARTISTIC INTENTION

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On a bare stage dancers rise up, proud, fragile and as luminous as marble. One after another, nude bodies merge together, rushing toward each other. Their solitude persists beyond their embraces, their dreams tinged with sadness.

In counterpoint to the invisible lines delineated in the space, Daniel Lèveillé evokes those hollow moments where time seems to be suspended, where melancholy threatens. He draws from that ambience a gentleness previously absent from his rigorous, minimalist and demanding aesthetics. A variable-geometry quartet, this new piece is a perfect echo of his previous works, clearly reflecting a choreographer in full mastery of his technique and dancers at the very peak of their artistry. Guiding this spirit of melancholy, the muted sound of music from another century accompanies the dancers in a performance where sadness loses its solemnity.



Photo: Denis Farley | Featuring: Esther Gaudette, Justin Gionet, Mathieu Campeau and Simon Renaud

## MEDIA EXCERPTS

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*Frankly put, Sadness Quartet is a pure delight. A leading figure of the Quebec contemporary dance scene, Daniel Léveillé, an inspiring master for new generations of choreographers, continues to set the bar high as his art confines to perfection. – Les Inrockuptibles*

*Pirouettes in the air, spiralled falls to the ground, somersaults – a permanent blazing fire for a strong, vibrant geometrical exercise. – Le Monde*

*This masterful work, whose highly precise choreographic language takes the shape of peaks and valleys, is brilliant and extremely intelligent.*

**– Danser canal historique**

*[The effort deployed by the performers] to sequence those extremely challenging figures is absolutely mind-boggling. – DF Danse*

*It feels like watching the angels of the Sixtine Chapel in movement.*

**– Toutelaculture.com**

*Search for balance, auscultation of emptiness, Sadness Quartet takes the form of a piece anchored on the ground, but drawn to soaring heights. – Paris art*

*We can only hold our breaths and admire the virtuosity of the dancers [...]*

**– HuffPost**

*A universal piece for a dive into the deepest parts of who we are. – Télérama sortir*

*A poignant, austerely beautiful piece. A breathtaking manifestation of humanity.*

**– Un Fauteuil pour l'Orchestre**

## CREATIVE PROCESS

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Winner of the *Grand Prix de la danse de Montréal* (Montreal's dance Grand Prix), Daniel Léveillé has been stimulating the Canadian choreographic scene for over forty years, with his work characterized by nudity, minimalism, repetition and radicalism. In his early days, his vocabulary is forged into a physical dance, theatrical and raw, tracing with a scalpel in the empty space. Today more interiorized, the language is no less expressive; it is from the dancers' strong personalities and the freedom he allows them in the creative process that the choreographer is able to express emotions.

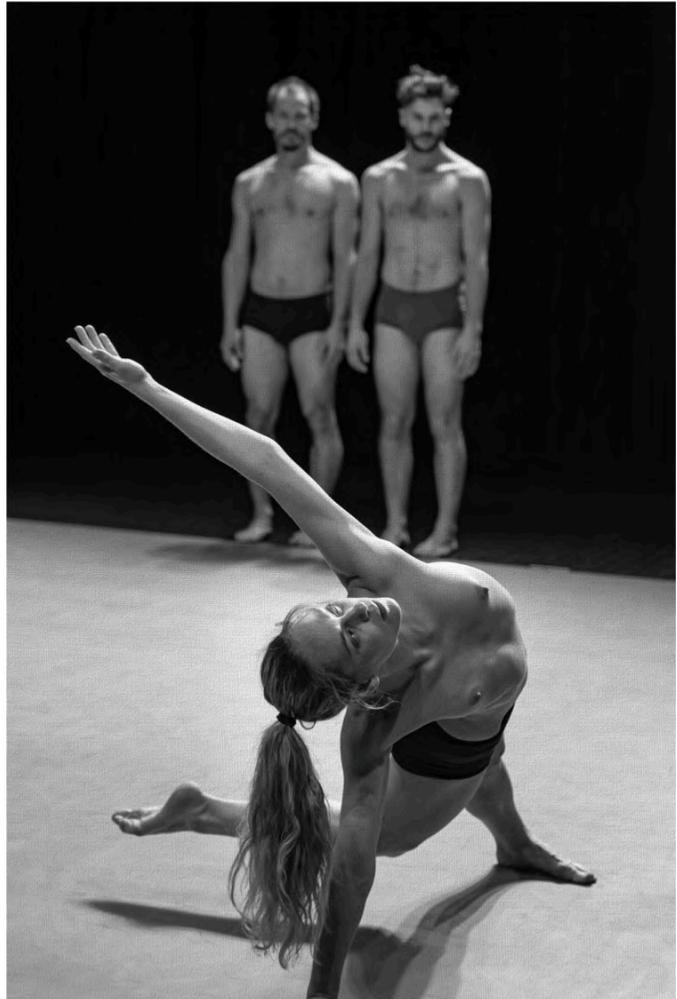
*Sadness Quartet* (2018) is the latest opus in a creation cycle initiated in 2013 with *Solitudes solo*, crowned best choreographic work 2012-2013 by Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec. Putting to rest the use of nudity, Daniel Léveillé offered then purified solos to his dancers, free from affectations, but stamped with an unexpected softness. In *Solitudes duo* (2015), he questioned the nature of relationships possible in a world where the omnipresence of technology isolates. *Sadness Quartet*, which marks the return of nudity, presents itself as a logical progression of the two previous works. Day-to-day sadness becomes the fabric of a choreography tinged with a new kind of gentleness.

## TOURING DATES

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May 30–31, June 1, 2018	Festival TransAmériques	Montreal, Canada
June 8–9, 2018	Theater im Pumpenhaus	Münster, Germany
June 12, 2018	Festival June Events	Paris, France
November 12, 2018	Maison de la culture Frontenac	Montreal, Canada
June 29, 2019	Biennale di Venezia	Venice, Italy

Photo: Denis Farley | Featuring: Esther Gaudette, Mathieu Campeau and Simon Renaud



## INTERVIEW WITH DANIEL LÉVEILLÉ

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**Your work often consists of short phrases punctuated by moments of stillness, and is marked by striking rhythmic precision. Is there a pre-existing music, specific to your style of choreography, that influences the choice of soundtrack?**

If such a thing were possible, all my dance pieces would be presented without music, but of course that is unthinkable in the theatre. After fifteen minutes of silence in a black box, spectators are haunted by anxiety. I do my musical research outside the dance studio in order to create a sort of background music. Once I have selected the music I start rehearsing with it, and it's fascinating to see how perfectly it suits the dancers' movements.

It almost feels like the movements were choreographed to the music, but that is not the case. If it works well, I think it is due to the fact that my dance is composed with the same rigour as the music selected to accompany the movement. My works are meticulously composed, down to the second, with moments of stillness precisely calculated. When a phrase ends, I insert a brief silence so that we can embark on a new sequence together, dancers and spectators.

That's why there is always just one section at a time on display; so that we remain attentive, all of us seeing the same things at the same time. I like to say that I compose my dances the way Marguerite Duras composed her writing of *The Lover*. At first glance it is a short novel, very simple, consisting of very few words, short phrases and many repetitions, but everything she needs is all there. The writing is imbued not only with a strong musicality but also with simplicity.

**Your dance features naked bodies, the dancers vulnerable and exposed, yet they appear before us without shame, strong and confident. In light of your experience with *Solitudes solo* and *Solitudes duo* where the dancers were partially clothed, how do you think the spectators will respond to the tension that nudity entails?**

I'm convinced that the spectators are aware of that tension. Nudity of course conveys a feeling of fragility, a vulnerability that is even more accentuated when a naked body appears onstage. Even unclothed, however, the dancers are dressed with our inherent covering – all those muscles around our bones, our organs, skin,

hair. Looking at a body means contemplating all of that. To my mind, nudity onstage is really a costume.

I set that aspect aside in *Solitudes solo* and *Solitudes duo* because I had a feeling that it was time to look at the body differently, especially since I've been working with the body for years. In those two works the spectator could concentrate on something else, given the more traditional rapport.

Even if they are beautiful people, however, when two dancers are naked they cannot be narcissistic. I find them to be not even sexual, since such a costume, in choreography like mine, desexualizes everything. It's a paradox.

**The title *Quatuor tristesse* is surprising. We tend to associate sadness with solitude or with an unhappy couple about to separate, but rarely do we associate it with a quartet. Why did you choose sadness for this quartet?**

I thought that sadness was a logical progression of the solitude found in the titles of the two previous works. In both cases, they are states of mind that I put forth as a choreographer. Contrary to the dominant narrative, I don't think they can be ignored. As for sadness, I do not approach it lightly as though it were a passing sorrow, for that has no dramatic appeal.

It is not quite melancholy in the medical sense. I did not want to venture into depression with this piece, but instead to deal with an everyday feeling, the idea of accepting the fact that in any given day there are slack periods when we might be down, a moment that feels like a heavy weight, a phase of sadness. Working along those lines, there is a softening of resistance and the choreography is imbued with a new sort of gentleness. This piece has a gentle sweetness that was non-existent in the others, even *Solitudes duo*.

## ARTISTIC STATEMENT BY DANIEL LÉVEILLÉ

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For me, the act of creating and life instinct are intimately linked to each other—creative activity being essentially desire to be brought into play. Creating is trying to express what is essential, what is at the heart of passion, while knowing very well that every work results from an act of faith and that because I am never able to truly “say”, I will always have to start all over again.

In my personal life as in my professional life, I am constantly asserting my freedom to act, to say and to do—that freedom that will let me follow my instincts and immediately respond to the demands of the pursued choreographic object. There is no need for me to try to integrate materials other than dance itself within my works. I consider dance as a never-ending source of fascination and it is therefore truly at the heart of my creations.

The creative energy that underlies my choreographic work is a product of the emotions created by singular—sometimes romantic—encounters with others, and what innervates my writing and creation process is the sometimes painful, sometimes jubilatory, outcome of these encounters.

Creating dance is hoping to gain access to the unnameable, to grasp its state, its thrill and its emotion through bodies given to dance in the immediacy of the work in progress. My greatest challenge is to give back the memory of what arose during the creation in such a manner that there is a transmission, a public work.

The main goal of my creative work is to put forward a form of dance that experiments with the body in all its aspects: its way of feeling space, its appearance at rest or during effort, its breathing, its thrust, its fall, its abandon on the floor. There is also on my part a quest for a primary or primal expressivity that attempts to go beyond the overabundance of signs, and for a theatre-like expression that does not emerge from the narrative, nor from the relations between bodies, nor from the intensity of bodies abandoned to themselves. The ultimate expression of desire and the absolute need for the other are themes that are present throughout my work. Finally, the quest for the object of desire and its correlated madness bring me to brush against the fascinating beauty of bodies, to tightly crop what is seen, to multiply the viewing angles, to eliminate all noise and artifice, to transform the space of dance into a place conducive to generating a language that can dare try to access purity.

My choreographic writing develops itself through structural work on syntax and punctuation that is at once simple and complex. Nothing is left to chance. This essential and always mysterious part of creation consists in finding, for each

performer, the hard core out of which expression will flow, the intention of the movement or the movement of the intention. Freedom is born out of constraints and constraints call for the surpassing of oneself. This dictum is the basis of my creative process. I try to apprehend the body in its entire “physicality” to render its raw eloquence. For only stage decor, there are multiple subtle declinations of light and the presence of baroque, classical or romantic music and pop songs which attempt to connect an indefinite past with our present to situate the contemporary work beyond time while still reaching out to the spectator.

Beyond the obvious content of my dance pieces, I always ask myself the same questions: What is dance? What is its territory and what are its limits? What is the latent content of choreography? What is the scope of theatricality in dance? How does the performer act during the creation process and on stage? What underlies the performer’s duality of emotions and movements?

My work with the performers is the cornerstone of my research process. With them, I am trying to identify the essence of a certain vitality and the state of their being, to materialize the affect specific to the performer’s physical and mental body, in the immobility as in the initiation of a movement, but also in its abandon. Ideally, there would be no discrepancy between the temperaments of the performers and their performances in the piece.

## BIOGRAPHY OF DANIEL LÉVEILLÉ

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Photo: Émilie Tournvache

Born on November 24, 1952, in Sainte-Rosalie, Quebec, Daniel Léveillé is a choreographer, dancer, teacher, visual artist and founder of Daniel Léveillé Danse. In 1977, Daniel Léveillé abandoned his architecture studies to begin dance training with Lawrence Gradus at the Entre-Six Dance Company, and with Martine Époque at Groupe Nouvelle Aire. He danced briefly for the GNA (1979-1980), but his interest was in creation and he choreographed his first pieces for the Choréchanges: LE BAS ROUGE DE BÉATRICE, with Louise Lecavalier, and OCRE (1978). From 1978 to 1981, he was one of the dancers chosen by Françoise Sullivan on the occasion of her return to dance. His working experience with this woman, whose artistic vision fell outside traditional formalism and fashions, would play a determining role in his future as a creator.

### **Daniel Léveillé, independent choreographer**

In 1981, he founded his own company, Daniel Léveillé Chorégraphe Indépendant. The name was changed briefly to La compagnie Léveillé-Laurin in 1984, and then later that year to O Vertigo when Ginette Laurin became Artistic Director. Before founding Daniel Léveillé Danse in 1991, Daniel Léveillé worked as an independent choreographer, creating personal projects as well as works commissioned by other companies and artists across Canada, including Montréal-Danse, Le Groupe de la Place Royale, Fortier Danse Création, and Winnipeg's Contemporary Dancers.

He also worked on plays directed by Denis Marleau and Claude Poissant. In 1988 he joined the faculty of the Université du Québec à Montréal Dance department, teaching composition and creating choreographies for his students, including L'EXIL OU LA MORT (1991) and UTOPIE (1997). These pieces were later produced professionally, most notably at the Festival International de Nouvelle Danse (FIND). His first works were short, intense and raw, reflecting the powerful theatrical trend of the early 80s: VOYEURISME deals with emotional and sexual solitude; L'INCESTE is a duet for Ginette Laurin and Gilles Simard; FLEUR DE PEAU features four male dancers veering between tenderness and violence; L'ÉTREINTE was inspired by an Yves Navarre novel; BUT I LOVE YOU and ÉCRIS-MOI N'IMPORTE QUOI tackle eroticism, marginalized sexuality and explosive passion, subjects seldom portrayed on stage at the time. LE SACRE DU PRINTEMPS (1982) will be an exception to those themes.

### **How does an emotion move?**

This period of dense, grueling subject matter and narrative drama was followed by a time of reflection, during which the choreographer asked himself: “How does an emotion move?” He began to elicit spasms, jolts, shivers and screams from his dancers, using repetition of movement as a method of composition. TRACES I, II, III, IV, V, VI (1989) represents his major work in this vein of research. Resulting from improvisations based on his drawings, it is both minimalist and excessive, as are most of Daniel Léveillé's works. Indeed, almost all of his choreographies are marked by this give and take, this tension between excess and restraint, seldom yielding to lyricism except in choice of music – perhaps the sole refuge for emotion in his works.

### **A cycle marked by uncompromising aesthetic choices**

Since 2001, the naked body has become the choreographer's material of choice, perhaps even the major theme of his work. In AMOUR, ACIDE ET NOIX (2001) and THE MODESTY OF ICEBERGS (2004), the body is exposed as an almost clinical object, grimly conspicuous and white, virile and vertical yet softly trembling with inner organic turmoil. Forever following the same paths, ever repeating the same leaps, the same subdued moves in clean straight lines, its orifices and palpitations exposed, the body reveals its strange unsettling beauty and fragility. This radical display is contained within a strictly defined spatial composition which serves to accentuate its asceticism while questioning any voyeuristic temptation. With his demanding and uncompromising aesthetic choices, Daniel Léveillé stands as a singular figure in Quebec dance. Not the most prolific of choreographers, he has chosen to stay away from the company-driven art market which requires artists

to produce works regularly and rapidly. But success has caught up with him as AMOUR, ACIDE ET NOIX has garnered increasing international recognition.

Since 2002, his company has considerably grown. With the support of new partners like Danspace Project of New York, the CanDanse Creation Fund, ImpulsTanz, Salzburg scenen, the Festival TransAmériques, Agora de la Danse, and the Council for the Arts from Canada, Quebec and Montreal, he signs THE MODESTY OF ICEBERGS (2004) and TWILIGHT OF THE OCEANS (2007), which form, with AMOUR, ACIDE ET NOIX, a trilogy titled “Anatomy of the imperfection” presented at the Dance Venice Biennale in 2010.

### **A new cycle**

SOLITUDES SOLO (2012), crowned best choreographic work 2012–2013 by Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec, 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 creation cycle is continued with SOLITUDES DUO (2015), in which he questions the nature of relationships possible in a world where the omnipresence of technology isolates. The couples expose the heartfelt state of love and the complexity of different relationships. Finally tackling the quartet format in his latest creation, SADNESS QUARTET (2018), Daniel Léveillé exposes and as such advocates for sadness, as one of the natural components of the emotional states that make us whole. A welcome sensation, sadness is a counterpoint to forced happiness and obligated laughter, which are overwhelmingly present, these days.

### **Supporting the production and diffusion of works**

With this new momentum, the choreographer’s recognition on the Canadian dance scene is clearly signified once more, and Daniel Léveillé goes further. He sets off on a new adventure: supporting the production and diffusion of works by innovative artists in performing arts. Interested in the evolution of the artistic community and its future, Daniel Léveillé recognizes that the main contribution capable of promoting the emergence of today’s and tomorrow’s innovative artists is the continuity of the support they are given. And this support is more significant if it is there when events call for it. In this regard, Daniel Léveillé Danse has pursued, since 2005, a unique experimental adventure, that of producing works signed by talented performing artists from the Quebec scene, at the national and international levels. The company presently supports Nicolas Cantin, Catherine Gaudet, Stéphane Gladyszewski, Frédérick Gravel, Étienne Lepage, and Manuel Roque.

In 2017, Daniel Léveillé's impact on the dance community is recognized: he receives the *Grand Prix de la danse de Montréal*. On top of acknowledging his unique signature and artistic integrity, the jury sought to recognize the remarkable support and transmission efforts enabled through Daniel Léveillé Danse. In 2018, at the age of 65 and after 27 years as artistic director, Daniel Léveillé steps down from his position and is replaced by choreographer and creator Frédérick Gravel. He remains active in the company as a choreographer.

## WORKS BY DANIEL LÉVEILLÉ

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<b>1982, 2007</b>	Le Sacre du printemps
<b>2001</b>	Amour, acide et noix
<b>2004</b>	The Modesty of Icebergs
<b>2007</b>	Twilight of the Oceans
<b>2012</b>	Solitudes solo
<b>2015</b>	Solitudes duo
<b>2018</b>	<a href="#">Sadness Quartet</a>



**PRESS REVIEW** | Selection

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# Sadness Quartet

**Daniel Léveillé**

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## “Sadness Quartet” by Daniel Léveillé

Sophie Lesort

France premiere of *Sadness Quartet* by Daniel Léveillé at the June Events festival. A work of aesthetical perfection, this dance reveals the bodies' splendour.

On a bare stage, solely covered with a square, white mat, three men and one woman enter, completely nude. They are young and beautiful, with perfectly chiselled bodies. This is the first scene of *Sadness Quartet* by Quebec choreographer Daniel Léveillé, presented at Théâtre de l'Aquarium as part of June Events.

A dancer does two strides and a figure resembling the posture of a sculpture. Another executes the same movements while, all this time, the three others watch the one in the middle. They stop for a moment, and resume on the same tempo, one by one or two by two, in pure and sophisticated movements.

In silence or on a collage of splendid music, balanced poses, lifts without momentum, postures and spins are always punctuated by a halt. These short sentences marked by periods allow for an absolute observation of dance—to savour and contemplate it.

One might fear that they all exit the stage and come back dressed. Fortunately, that is not the case, because the feminine and masculine beauty of these nude bodies develop a profound emotion.

The rigour of Daniel Léveillé's choreography is implacable, radical, sharp, precise and the multiple repetitions generate an intense musicality. Nothing evokes a certain kind of sensuality, nor an impression of voyeurism. On the contrary, it's essentially the vulnerability and the transparency of the genuine movements that predominate.

Thanks to Marc Parent's light design, certain images are aesthetically splendid. One could mistake the scene for the Rodin museum (Paris) or the Camille Claudel museum (opened in 2017 at Nogent-sur-Seine).

Unlike its title, nothing is truly dramatic in *Sadness Quartet*. It makes us ponder about solitude, tenderness and moments of emptiness—a meaningful emptiness. Above all, a moment of surprise arises when the dancers take their final bow—this excellent cast is comprised of not four, but six dancers. Two women and two men who are never together on stage but, sure enough, are always in a quartet.

This masterful work, whose highly precise choreographic language takes the shape of peaks and valleys, is brilliant and extremely intelligent.

[Translated from French]

# les Inrockuptibles



## At Festival June Events, Daniel Léveillé shares his joyful sadness

05/06/18 11h16 by Hervé Pons

**Canadian choreographer Daniel Léveillé presents “Sadness Quartet” at the June Events festival, a piece gently tinged with the perfume of sadness, created at Montreal’s FTA.**

Put frankly, *Sadness Quartet* is a pure delight. A leading figure of the Quebec dance scene, Daniel Léveillé, an inspiring master for new generations of choreographers, continues to set the bar high as his art confines to perfection.

And it is precisely this perfection that Léveillé avoids when he destabilises his dancers, creating wobbling and suspensions: creases in a well-ordered composition, because he knows that beauty lies in the creases. He says: “*I compose my dances the way Marguerite Duras writes. With very few words. But everything she needs is all in there.*” Like the writer stating her obsession for her practice – “*Writing is me, thus I am the book*” –, Daniel Léveillé could very well and without pretention claim to be the dance, the choreography. Because he is where his obsession is. Because his movement is something of a palimpsest, a rush of years of dancing, speaking the world, his world, by the search for choreographic beauty.

[Excerpt / Translated from French]

## DANIEL LÉVEILLÉ'S NUDE ANGELS ARE WATCHING OVER 'JUNE EVENTS'

June 13, 2018 By [Amelie Blaustein Niddam](#)



The dance festival organized by Atelier de Paris/CDCN offered yesterday two shows where nudity went from ice-cold to carnal.

[...]

This continues with *Sadness Quartet* by Quebec choreographer Daniel Léveillé, creator of achingly sexy “Solitudes duo”, which we loved. It’s a faux quartet that actually hides six dancers: Mathieu Campeau, Dany Desjardins, Ellen Furey, Justin Gionet, Esther Gaudette and Simon

Renaud. But on a shrunken, square stage, white all over, there will never be more than four at a time. For the last 40 years, Léveillé has been sculpting lines like the architect he never was. And so, face to face, back to back, on an angle, he places bodies like strokes—heavy, coarse, bent, twisted, falling strokes. The fall is endless but fragile and gentle.

It feels like watching the angels of the Sixtine Chapel in movement. Lifts are in slow motion, and like the tip of an exceedingly sharp pencil, they risk breaking every time. Bodies are nude like Greek statues, the light emphasizing each muscle. There is a sculptural element to Léveillé’s impeccable dance. There is especially transcendence, supported by the music, delectably baroque. A medley comprised of pieces by John Dowland, Marin Marais, Luca Marenzio, Claudio Monteverdi, Josquin des Prés, Giovanni Salvatore and Giovanni Maria Trabaci sets the mood. We should hate this reinforced emotion, but it gets to us and penetrates us without consent. Combining sexuality and divinity, you can’t get more baroque.

*Sadness Quartet* is so beautiful it could make grown men cry. There is no hope but to try and soar high. And trying is already a lot. Bodies fly into one another, gazes look for a hope that never comes. The spleen lies there, in the invisible, yet highly present strokes. When the fall arrives—the real one—we just want it to start over, to try again one more time, to stay upright.

[Excerpt/Translated from French]