

## 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>