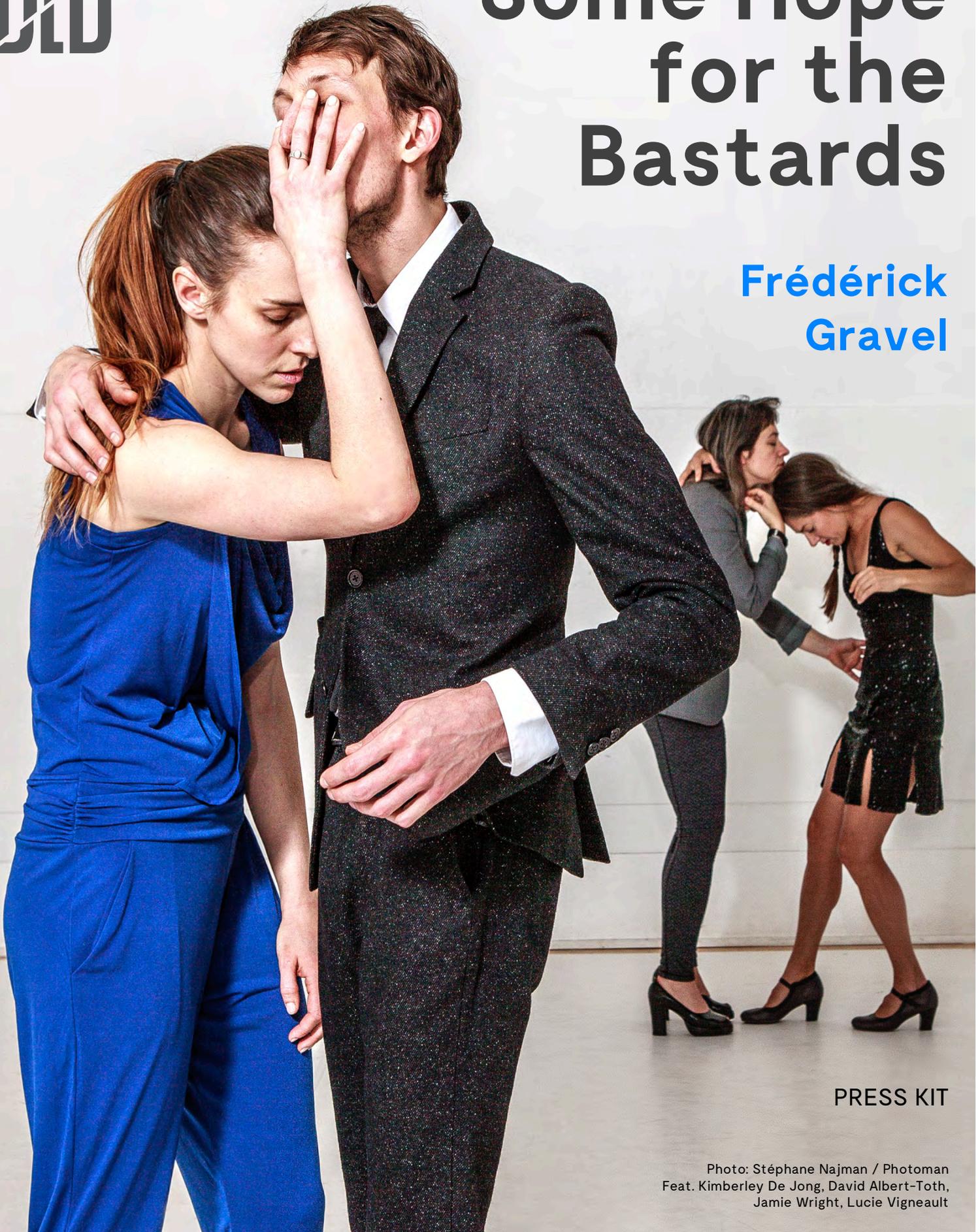


DLD

Some Hope for the Bastards

**Frédéric
Gravel**



PRESS KIT

Photo: Stéphane Najman / Photoman
Feat. Kimberley De Jong, David Albert-Toth,
Jamie Wright, Lucie Vigneault

“



Has such sensuality, such savagery, ever been witnessed on stage? For how long have we been waiting for this pure and raw moment of dance?

- Léa Coff, I/O Gazette

DURATION ±90 minutes (no intermission)
PREMIERE June 1, 2017 | Festival TransAmériques (Montreal)
VIDEOS **Teaser** <https://vimeo.com/243691241>
Full length <https://vimeo.com/220803986>
password: WatchGravel

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MANDATORY CREDITS



Photo : Laurent Philippe
Featuring Kimberley De Jong, Jamie Wright, Alexia Martel, Frédéric Tavernini, David Albert-Toth

A CREATION BY	Grouped'ArtGravelArtGroup
CREATOR AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR	Frédéric Gravel
CHOREOGRAPHY	Frédéric Gravel, in collaboration with the dancers
DANCERS AT CREATIONS	David Albert-Toth, Dany Desjardins, Kimberley De Jong, Francis Ducharme, Louise Michel Jackson, Alanna Kraaijeveld, Alexia Martel, Frédéric Tavernini, Jamie Wright
PARTICIPANTS TO THE CREATION PROCESS	Lucie Vigneault, Hanako Hoshimi-Caines
MUSICIANS	Philippe Brault, Frédéric Gravel, José Major
ORIGINAL MUSIC	Philippe Brault
COMPOSITION	Philippe Brault, in collaboration with

	Frédéric Gravel and José Major
REHEARSAL DIRECTOR	Lucie Vigneault
LIGHTING DESIGN	Alexandre Pilon-Guay
TECHNICAL DIRECTORS	David-Alexandre Chabot, Alexandre Pilon-Guay
SOUND DESIGN	Louis Carpentier
COSTUME DESIGN	Catherine Thérout
EXTERNAL EYE	Angélique Wilkie
APPRENTICE	Noémie Dufour-Campeau
PRODUCTION	Frédéric Gravel and DLD – Daniel Léveillé Danse
CO-PRODUCTION	CanDanse Creation Fund (Toronto), Festival TransAmériques (Montreal), Centre chorégraphique national de Caen en Normandie (Caen), Muffatwerk (Munich), National Arts Centre (Ottawa), Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity (Banff), PuSh International Performing Arts Festival (Vancouver), Usine C (Montreal)
CREATIVE RESIDENCIES	Usine C (Montreal), Centre chorégraphique national de Caen en Normandie dans le cadre de l'accueil-studio/Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication (France)
WITH THE SUPPORT OF	Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec, Canada Council for the Arts
Frédéric Gravel is a member of Circuit-Est centre chorégraphique.	

ARTISTIC INTENTION

A melancholic party, a dark celebration. A poetic hymn dedicated to the feeling of helplessness and apathy. When you don't know where to go, you just wait. We are all waiting for something, but this has a cost, the waiting is eating up our interiors. Conditioned as we are, no room as ever been left for any patience.

Once more accompanied by his frenzied “GAnG” of actors, dancers and musicians, Frédéric Gravel presents a choreographic concert filled with a frankly corrosive energy.

The party is most often a catharsis, a short-lived programmed anesthesia that helps you get through another week of unrelenting work. This disappoints me. Such a party doesn't really offer anything. We should be keeping a part of ourselves alive, skeptical, rebellious. The party should be able to embrace darkness in the same way mass embraces the finitude of existence. Let's give ourselves, the privileged people of this world, some semblance of hope. Some hope for us bastards since waking up is our own responsibility. – **Frédéric Gravel**



Photo : Laurent Philippe | Avec K.de Jong, D.Albert-Toth

SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF FRÉDÉRIK GRAVEL

Frédéric Gravel graduated in 2009 from UQAM's (Université du Québec à Montréal) dance faculty with a thesis on "The role of the dance artist in a democratic society". The choreographer, dancer, musician and lighting designer turns the structures of choreography upside down, merging into his work various elements from rock and performance art. He joined DLD as an associate creator in 2010 and was appointed artistic director of the company in 2018.

His productions Gravel Works (2009), All Hell is Breaking Loose, Honey (2010), Usually Beauty Fails (2012) and This Duet That We've Already Done (so many times) (2015) have received great national and international reviews. He co-created with the author Étienne LePage Ainsi parlait... (2013) and Logique du pire (2016). In February 2015, he revisited the cabaret style at Usine C, presenting Cabaret Gravel with 20 guest artists, including Dear Criminals and the Molinari Quartet. Always present where least expected, he collaborated with Pierre Lapointe on Mutantès and Amours, délices et orgues (2008).

The works of Frédéric Gravel are created in close collaboration with all members of Grouped'ArtGravelArtGroup/GAG, a shifting collective of dancers and musicians actively involved in the creation process. More and more active as a teacher, Frédéric Gravel regularly gives creative workshops as well as teaching at CÉGEP Saint-Hyacinthe's theater department, at Université du Québec à Montréal and at l'École de danse contemporaine de Montréal.

Frédéric Gravel is arguably the most significant dance artist to emerge in Québec in the past 10 years.

— Paula Citron, *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto)

MEDIA EXCERPTS

The bodies exult and abandon themselves, as if stranded with fatigue or lost illusions, in any case rinsed to the bone, leaving the spectator stunned but certainly conquered.

– **Danser Canal Historique (Paris, France)**

Fusing indie rock and contemporary dance scene atmospheres, this conceptually simple but choreographically complex show works perfectly.

– **Le Devoir (Montreal, Canada)**

This is surely the fiercest and most thrilling show offered at this festival.

– **I/O Gazette (Paris, France)**, about the Festival TransAmériques 2017

These are vulnerable beings grappling with desire, fumbling toward ecstasy, and surrendering their bodies to the sound and the fury. Fittingly, Gravel builds everything to a mad, thrilling crescendo—like the best rock concert.

– **The Georgia Straight (Vancouver, Canada)**

Whether it be through the music, the involvement of the dancer's bodies or the choreographic composition, Frédérick Gravel created a show that is captivating from start to finish, sprinkled with a touch of humour and hints of provocation.

– **Df Danse (Montreal, Canada)**

This blend of choreography and music, with its narcotic, pounding pop beats and grotesquely unhinged limbs, is something everyone should have seen.

– **Süddeutsche Zeitung (Munich, Germany)**

For anyone who loves pure rock music and edgy contemporary dance, Gravel has composed a masterpiece for the senses.

– **Centre Stage (Vancouver, Canada)**

Pure moments of beauty are offered to us [...] the cast is perfect [...]

– **Inferno magazine (Avignon, France)**

For an hour and a half, Gravel's tireless band and spectacular dancers had us eating out of their hands as they toyed vigorously with abstract interpretations of "being an asshole," hurting people you care about, and growth as a result of your mistakes. With more humour, bravery, and weirdness than you can imagine, Gravel's production won the audience over and received a full standing ovation.

– **The Vancouver Arts Review (Vancouver, Canada)**

FRÉDÉRIK GRAVEL'S NOTE OF INTENTION

From the start, I wanted to work with baroque music, with Bach, and more specifically on the pulse found in some of his works. I wanted to illustrate the pulse with the body, but in opposition to the colour of the music. The first stage of my research therefore brought me to work on a principle of repetitive movements that became more and more abrupt—exploring impact more than fullness. Observing how music and dance could help each other escape their respective contexts, I pursued this research by using other musical genres, but always searching for the pulse, the stubborn repetition. My initial intention was to create a series of scenes illustrating this idea to push further the stubbornness of rhythm, the punch, the beat, the pendulum. I also wanted to use rhythm to create imperfect moments in the movement that would nonetheless be legible and coherent through a shared musicality. I wanted to use this point of reference to build a complex choreographic partition that could switch between the tensions and resolutions created by the contrasts between precise writing and the accidents of improvisation.

And to make this work, live music was needed. We became fully engaged in the process and, this time, music does not play the ironic role I usually assign it in my shows. Instead, it fully unfolds, now combined with choreographic research, playing on the same kinds of tensions.



Photo : Stéphane Najman/Photoman

WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR?

*Precisely, I think we are waiting for a lot of people who won't deliver.
We are waiting for those who have created this world order to get us out of it.
We are waiting to stop believing in this way of seeing, to stop believing in empty
slogans, to stop believing it all makes sense.*

*It may be time to start believing in something else.
Since it is not possible for us not to have faith, let's change our faith.
It is now time to have faith in a new collective conscience.
It is now time for us to believe we are up to the task.*

*We are waiting for things to go wrong, too wrong; we are waiting for the breaking
point.
We have already waited for long enough, have already lost enough time and
meaning. We have already lost the capacity to express ourselves in terms that are
not related to products, return on investment, performance. Everything becomes
discussed as if we were creating reports analyzing fluctuating Wall Street indexes,
even health, art and childhood.*

*We are waiting for the saviour; we are waiting for the solution.
But it won't happen.
No saviour, no solution.*

*There are many of us. There are many possibilities.
If someone offers you salvation, run away.*

*Everything still remains to be done, redone, anew.
A long-awaited certainty.*

We should perhaps wait until this is well understood.

TOURING CALENDAR

PREVIEW		
May 20–21, 2017	Dance München	Munich, Germany
WORLD PREMIERE		
June 1–2, 2017	Festival TransAmériques	Montreal, Canada
November 29–30, 2017	Usine C	Montreal, Canada
January 16, 2018	PuSh International Performing Arts Festival	Vancouver, Canada
January 20, 2018	Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity	Banff, Canada
April 20–21, 2018	National Arts Centre	Ottawa, Canada
June 27, 2018	La Biennale di Venezia	Venice, Italy
November 15, 2018	Quai 5160 — Maison de la culture de Verdun	Montreal, Canada
March 22, 2019	Quick Centre for the Arts at Fairfield University	Fairfield, USA
April 2, 2019	Maison de la culture d'Amiens	Amiens, France
April 5, 2019	TAP — Théâtre auditorium de Poitiers	Poitiers, France
April 9, 2019	Carré-Colonnes	Saint-Médard-en-Jalles, France
April 12 to 14, 2019	Théâtre national de Chaillot	Paris, France
August 23 to 25, 2019	Dansens Hus	Oslo, Norway
October 10 to 12, 2019	National Theater & Concert Hall	Taipei, Taiwan
March 11–12–13, 2020	Bora Bora	Aarhus, Denmark
March 17, 2020	Théâtre Le Bateau Feu	Dunkerque, France

INTERVIEW WITH FRÉDÉRIK GRAVEL

You have said that you create dance like a musician composes a musical score. As in your previous shows, is music once again a strong presence in this new piece?

I started work on this project with a study of the beats and pulsations in the first section of Bach's *St. John Passion*, which includes a lovely ostinato. I did a lot of work on the musicality of the body, on musicality itself and the progression of musical accents in the body. I initially view a choreographic idea as a melody, and my work is similar to staging a concert. I make a sort of music with dance, or you could say that I compose lines that the dancers will perform with their own timbre, in their own key.

In working with the composer Philippe Brault for example, we evoked the group Joy Division to illustrate the idea of a feast, but one that is a sombre celebration. Not a party for fun and laughs and to forget life for a while, but an occasion to embrace our burdens, to accept tragedy. Rather than believing in a glorious future, the sweet hereafter or definitive solutions, we should perhaps assume our ugliness and our fears, and build and administer our shared lives by focusing on finding strategies for living together.

Since your piece *Gravel Works* you have been pursuing more or less the same initial idea, that of bringing together dancers, exchanging ideas and then building a dance piece together with the members of that group. What was the dominant element in your meetings and discussions? Was there a particular theme or concept?

I like to work with the different levels of a performer's consciousness, with what he or she is really expressing, what dancers think they are expressing, what they choose to make visible without trying to exercise control over it. The same applies to the characters that the dancers create. What are they aware of, how are they fooled? It is not a concept, but represents instead interest in the work. If we must absolutely determine a theme, it could be our paltry collective awareness. The ideology in place in our society convinces us that we are unique and self-created, lucid and responsible, all aspects that we so cruelly lack.

Who are the bastards mentioned in the title?

Our society at the moment is regressing, as the current context encourages fear and loathing. People who can change things, those with some education, who are capable of having a perspective on a situation, are also the spectators watching our shows. But no one knows what to do.

Recently in a moment of pessimism, I told myself that the only thing I can try to do is to create beautiful and maybe motivating work, for art can indeed be something grandiose. At the same time you could say that I don't believe in art, being that I have a cynical nature. Thus 'tis I, the bastard of the title! We have become servants, flunkeys, participants in a state of affairs that we detest. The title refers to that emotion, that moment when I feel that I am of no use, that the only thing I do is to offer a bit of hope to some assholes – myself included.

How then do you resist the temptation to create shows where such questioning is more “in your face”, to engage in probing that triggers discussions or a form of protest?

I have the feeling that I'm preaching to the converted. I would prefer that we be engaged with art, and if there is any hope it is to accept the challenge that we work together as a group, that I avoid creating works for the converted. I established a group called *Les Chorégraphes anonymes* and its purpose is to talk, to discuss unresolved problems in the world of dance.

The idea is not to seek agreement but to try to understand the different artistic positions of each member, to create together so that we can better respond to what is occurring, to understand and to give voice to how we experience situations in our society. The goal is not to write a manifesto, but to help us to think. To my mind, thinking in better ways is a form of engagement.

DETAILED BIOGRAPHY



Photo: Brianna Lombardo

Born in Montreal in 1978. Choreographer, light designer, researcher. Artistic director of DLD (Daniel Léveillé Danse), cofounder of the choreographic collective La 2e Porte à Gauche, administrator at Prix de la danse de Montréal and a member of Circuit-Est centre chorégraphique, Frédérick Gravel is also a dancer – a bad one, he claims, although he aspires to “become an interesting bad dancer”. And a researcher who, after completing an undergraduate degree in dance at Université du Québec à Montréal, presented in 2009 a master’s thesis on “the role of the dance artist in a democratic society”. Since 2005, he works at UQAM’s Laboratoire de recherche en technochorégraphie, on motion capture and 3D animation technologies in dance. Gravel is the leader of the Grouped’ArtGravelArtGroup (GAG), a variable collective of personalities actively involved in the creative process of his works. They have come together to create extensively, try prolifically, persist enormously and to have fun while doing so. In intelligent fashion.

Starting with his earliest pieces, notably *Du pittoresque en danse, et dans la mienne en particulier* in 2004 (with a nod to Kandinsky!), Frédérick Gravel, although still a student at the time, made his mark with his tone, stage intelligence

and direct complicity with the audience. This was (and is) a choreographer to keep an eye on. His mentor is Daniel Léveillé, and his brother-in-arm Dave St- Pierre, for whom he danced. He is also a great admirer of Édouard Lock, a distant source of inspiration. But dance historians might find in his work an affinity with postmodern American dance of the '60s, given his bent for questioning or distancing himself from the affectations of dance.

As he has noted, “I like to create a show with a non-show [...] and demystify the spectacular,” a position that evokes Yvonne Rainer and her *No Manifesto*. What does that say about this dancer, choreographer, guitarist, singer and lighting designer, who in his Master’s thesis (UQAM, 2009), reflected on “the role of the dance artist in democratic society”? His work is presented not only in underground performance spaces in Montreal and New York, but at scholarly symposia as well. He also did the choreography for two of singer/songwriter Pierre Lapointe’s music concert, *Mutantès* and *Amour, acide et orgue*, alongside author Étienne Lepage and actress Sophie Cadieux, both presented at Montreal’s Francos festival.

With a sense of paradox and a nonchalant manner, Gravel portrays the touchstones of contemporary dance – physical intensity, raw virtuosity and pedestrian movement, nudity, sexuality, coexistence of artistic genres (rock, performance art, scripted scenes, improv, etc.). They have been present in his work from the beginning, stripped of mannered effects and far removed from any unifying dramaturgy. Gravel talks about these component elements, explains how they function, their status in the art of choreography.

He turns the performance upside down, disrupting the passiveness of the audience and the expectations of fans of contemporary dance, very much like the members of 2e Porte à gauche – of which he is a founder. The choreographer use dance as a source of reflection, demonstrating the mechanics behind spectacle, revealing the framework, the structuring, the tricks and effects, portraying the “traceability” of the artistic process and the seduction of the spectator, and underlining the strategies of the art market. His intent is to let the audience cope with the unexpressed aspects of bodies and music, and their power over the senses and meaning.

Untangling the reflexive experience from the palpable experience can be pataphysical jubilation or Brechtian distancing – it all depends. We slide from one to the other, amused and pensive and charmed, witnessing the fact of bodies committed to an action and the detachment of critical thinking and self-mockery. What have we come to see? Gravel cultivates artistic ambiguity, cultural transversality, the mixing of disciplines and postmodern irony. After all, it is part of the current climate. He plays with the contemporary zeitgeist, flippant and sceptical. He is complicit with the audience, thumbing his nose at the avant-garde, at the exclusive preserves of the elite. In lucid, offhand fashion, he takes popular culture and establishment culture out of their assigned roles and brings them together.

Frédéric Gravel is one of the pioneers of the new wave of choreographers who are breaking down the image of elitism in contemporary dance to make it more accessible [...] Having everything to please, he is posed as a rising star of the international dance scene.

— Fabienne Cabado, *Voir* (Montréal)

WORKS BY FRÉDÉRIC GRAVEL

2008	Gravel Works
2010	All Hell is Breaking Loose, Honey
2012	Gravel Cabaret
2012	Usually Beauty Fails
2013	Thus Spoke...
2015	This Duet That We've Already Done (so many times)
2016	Logique du pire (Logic of the Worst)
2017	Some Hope for the Bastards
2019	Fear and Greed



PRESS REVIEW | Selection

Some Hope for the Bastards

Frédéric Gravel

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Frédéric Gravel builds a rock-concert frenzy at PuSh International Performing Arts Festival opener

by Janet Smith on January 17th, 2018 at 2:09 PM

Photo : STÉPHANE NAJMAN



A Grouped'ArtGravelArtGroup presentation, as part of the PuSh International Performing Arts Festival. At the Vancouver Playhouse on Tuesday, January 16. No remaining performances

The PuSh International Performing Arts Festival opened with an explosively exhilarating bang last night—sweat, beer, roaring guitars, depth-charge synths, blinding concert lights, and an extended standing ovation.

Montreal musician and choreographer Frédéric Gravel is known for mixing live rock with physically pummeling dance, finding the energy of a concert in his work. *Some Hope for the*

Bastards has the added appeal of feeling like a party, its dancers swigging Corona beer and mingling with the audience off the top of the show.

Much like Gravel's hit *Usually Beauty Fails* that appeared in the 2014 festival, the choreography digs at raw ideas about what it means to be human--except here, Gravel takes on a larger scope, with a wider palette of music. He loves pushing repeated movements to extremes: in the work's coolest extended sequence, bodies pelvic-thrust relentlessly--and incongruously--to the pretty rhythms of baroque music, those pulses moving up into their chests as the score melts into banging club beats. Yet when the figures on-stage try to partner to the thumping, they end up pushing each other away, barely able to connect.

Awkwardness, that oh-so-human condition, recurs as a theme, especially in the overture, as the dancers bend and split in increasingly uncomfortable ways while staring directly at the audience.

The self-effacing Gravel pulls all this off with the least amount of pretension possible. This time out, he doesn't join the dancers, rather playing and singing with the genre-mashing band that shares the stage.

He also interrupts the action near the start to deliver one of his rambling, funny introductions to the work, worrying about the pressures of having to open the PuSh fest, and explaining he gave it two beginnings because he couldn't decide between the two.

Gravel, as always, is interested in how art is perceived by an audience, and how he connects with it. He's also not afraid of challenging dance conventions, telling those in the crowd that he actually enjoys watching folks walking out mid-show.

None of this would connect the way it does if the band, with its heavily treated guitars, buzzing synths, thumping drums, and introspective vocals, wasn't so good.

As for the dancers, they show a commitment that reverberates off the stage. Not only can they meet the almost impossible endurance feats that Gravel demands of them--patterns repeat to the point of frenzied, near-trancelike exhaustion in the last quarter--but each brings an individuality and intimacy to the action that just heightens the feeling of undiluted human experience.

These are vulnerable beings grappling with desire, fumbling toward ecstasy, and surrendering their bodies to the sound and the fury.

Fittingly, Gravel builds everything to a mad, thrilling crescendo--like the best rock concert. It's enough to give you the sense that there just might be some hope for us poor bastards.

EXCERPT:

Impressions from Montréal's Festival TransAmériques - Part I

Three works from Frédéric Gravel, Manuel Roque and Eszter Salamon By [Philip Szporer](#)



Some Hope for the Bastards explodes onstage, ramped up with the sound and fury of a full-tilt rock show. For Frédéric Gravel, this work is a step forward with regard to size and scope: the performance took place the Monument-National theatre – one of the city's bigger venues. This would be a good time to discover or rediscover this independent, Montréal-based, multi-faceted artist. Throughout his expanding career, there has been a push to make him the next big Québécois success story, though the razzmatazz of that pursuit seems ill-matched for Gravel's own stated objectives. Yet, the irony of this anti-hero artist being propelled to greater heights, someone who is hardly seeking that kind of worship, can't be overlooked.

From his earliest pieces, Gravel has always specialized in an unmistakable mix-and-match blend of music and dance. He's always been the reliable front man for his band and his group of dancers. This time, he doesn't dance at all, though his warm, nimble intelligence and wry sense of humour pulls in audiences. With his company, Grouped' ArtGravelArtGroup (GAG), he's got a creative crucible, attracting engaged performers and artists for each project. The emphasis in any given work is on shifting the lens on how dance and performance are seen and appreciated by the public. Collaboration is the byword for his team of artists.

This new work begins as the public enters the enormous venue. Some of the nine dancers (David Albert-Toth, Dany Desjardins, Kimberley de Jong, Francis Ducharme, Louise Michel Jackson, Alanna Kraaijeveld, Alexia Martel, Frédéric Tavernini and Jamie Wright) are already onstage, standing or sitting, in held positions, with beer and wine bottles in hand, while others mill about and around the audience. A party seems to have already started. A single tonal sound resonates in the space, and slowly the performers begin shifting their stance, settling in for what appears to be a group portrait by gazing out onto the audience.

When the band (Philippe Brault, José Major and Gravel) arrives onstage, the pulsing electro-live music begins with a heavy drumbeat and whirring guitar licks. Then, in a brief interlude, Gravel begins his fun patter, first commenting on the somewhat empty feel in the big room. He tells us that he usually talks a lot, but not in this piece. He points out there are, in fact, two starts to the show. "We just did the first," he notes, and then he slyly says the second will soon start, "and it's your responsibility to choose the best one."

Gravel himself is the beating heart of the show. He talks about the expectations of a premiere (the avant-première took place the previous week in Munich). "I'm sure you have expectations. Expectations are interesting. I've got expectations of you." The audience chuckles and relaxes. He prefaces the rest of the evening, talking a bit about the title: "We're all bastards. I don't know how to change things," suggesting that there's little to do in the face of our current state of affairs. Gravel also expresses a certain guilt about this powerless position, adding that he'll do his best. He is never didactic, but rather he taps energies of truth and beauty amid conflict, however fleeting and fugitive.

The second "opening" begins with a recorded version of the introductory chorus of Bach's sacred oratorio St. John Passion. Slowly, surely, the dancers' actions shift; gentle pelvic

thrusting builds into a restless rhythmic accentuation of the progressions in the music. Eventually, the classical work segues with live drums, and the movement rises into the dancers' chests.

Gravel's ensemble of dancers, dressed alternately in formal wear or jeans and t-shirts, is completely invested in the intensity and physically demanding movement, and there is no attempt to hide the sweat and exhaustion that sets in. They bang out their unison – the more “dancey” movements – relentlessly. The non-narrative piece situates them in their solos as isolated beings, edging to connection and yet burdened by an untenable human condition. Gravel seems to propose structured tasks for his dancers to engage in, with disintegration as one notable example. Even in the duets, dancers appear to reach an edge to intimacy, and in this sensuous state they seem coolly removed from each other. A gorgeous solo after the midway point cools the temperature of the piece and features de Jong alone onstage, settling into a calm and subtle sculpting of space.

The band's hardcore stylings dwarf much of the proceedings in terms of decibels, but they also offer some of the best insights. Gravel's modish, introspective songs (performed in English) are winning, and last night he was in particularly good voice. The songs balance a lyrical precision with a smart, desperate sensibility. “Nobody loves me,” he cries. In this “busy, dizzy” world, he suggests, we're all passing through. Gravel displays a disciplined wit, and *Some Hope for the Bastards* should only increase his acclaim beyond his already devoted fan base.

~

LIEN :

<http://www.thedancecurrent.com/review/impressions-from-montr-als-festival-transam-riques-part-i>

LE DEVOIR

LIBRE DE PENSER

“Some Hope For the Bastards”: Perhaps there is a Chance

Mélanie Carpentier - June 2, 2017

“So perhaps you’re raising your expectations?” exclaims Frédéric Gravel through his microphone from the back of the stage, guitar in hand, interrupting his dancer’s prelude. Presented as a Canadian premiere at Festival TransAmériques, *Some Hope for the Bastards* falls in line with the previous choreographic concerts that have established the artist’s reputation. Fusing indie rock and contemporary dance atmospheres, the conceptually simple but choreographically complex show functions flawlessly.

In the context of contemporary dance, it is rare to see the choreographer creating the soundtrack in this way. Mixing different moods, through riffs and slowly developing—very post-rock—guitar solos, the show navigates through the cool melancholy of a sad party.

As spectators enter the theater, the dancers are already present, some of them in performing mode, scanning the audience, while others casually stroll through the aisles, sipping a beer. The stage is bare, with nothing concealing the panoply of light projectors that are usually out of view. Slick beauties in their evening wear, the performers pose on a row of chairs as if preparing for the photo shoot of a magazine cover. But through collapses, jolts and losses of balance, these perfect beings will soon be presenting us their failures, to our greatest enjoyment.

Second start: the pulse initiated by the hips travel to the chest, following an unrelenting and haunting beat. These bodies tussling, struggling against each other or embracing, as duos or trios, create a paradoxical sensuality, both energetic and brutal. Face to face, trying to support or drag each other, the bodies express this constant need for comforting—the need of the other to be able to stand up straight.

Until Breathlessness

While not being overly illustrative, Gravel’s works inserts moments of silence between rhythmic parts. And the audience’s concert reflex is to clap at the end of each “sequence”, which can be disconcerting in the context of a dance show. But between these ruptures, we are presented with some impressive unison, with intertwined phrasings and bodies synchronized to the music’s pulse. The choreography is organized with a clockwork precision, but refuses to conceal actions that usually occur in the wings: performers taking a sip of water, catching their breath, or taking a break (by sitting on the edge of the stage).

In a vein similar to *Holy Body Tatto*’s monumental (2005) (in which band *Godspeed You! Black Emperor* plays live), Gravel’s work pushes performers to exhaustion during its rhythmic and intense two-hour long duration.

“A show is a symptom of something”, said Gravel at the start through his microphone. The choreographer mentions culpability and powerlessness, thus giving us some clues. Indeed, we can read in the bodies of these performers the syndrome of a well-intentioned and idealistic generation, that doesn’t know how to transform the society in which it is stuck.

Some Hope for the Bastards might not be for everyone however, as a very small minority of spectators leave before the end, and a few others, completely saturated, remain seated with their arms crossed. But the vast majority stands to applaud the intense performance, brilliantly and uncompromisingly offered to us by the nine charismatic dancers and three musicians, including the excellent singer, Frédéric Gravel.

(Translation from French: Michel Moussette)

May 21, 2017, Dance

You can't dance to politics

The Munich Dance Festival offers boring moralizing — plus a breathtaking finale.

By Eva-Elisabeth Fischer

EXCERPT :

Men and women sip from beer bottles, linger around and finally rouse themselves to dance, their pelvises jerking to a distinct rhythm. One of them goes up to the mic and says “We are all bastards. Everyone included!” It’s the clever, talkative Canadian choreographer, singer-guitarist Frédéric Gravel, head of Montreal’s Gravel Art Group (GAG), commenting, in an unmistakably ironic tone, on his tender but high-volume piece *Some Hope for the Bastards*.

“Some Hope” is the last of the five premieres at the grueling 15th edition of the Munich Dance Biennial. This blend of choreography and music, with its narcotic, pounding pop beats and grotesquely unhinged limbs, is something everyone should have seen. Especially those who now hold up the banner of inclusion as a self-imposed dictate of political correctness. Gravel reframes this alleviating but only half-true sentence for the dance world: “All of this means nothing.”

(Translation : Jim Edwards)

ORIGINAL TEXT IN GERMAN :

Politik kann man nicht tanzen

Das Münchner "Dance" Festival bietet moraline Langeweile - und ein atemraubendes Finale.

Von Eva-Elisabeth Fischer

Männer und Frauen nuckeln an Bierflaschen, lungern herum und raffen sich schliesslich auf zum Tanz, wobei ihre Becken in eindeutigem Rhythmus ruckeln. Einer geht ans Mikro und sagt: "Die Bastarde sind wir alle. All inclusive". Es ist der kluge und redselige kanadische Choreograf, Gitarrist und Sänger Frédéric Gravel, Chef der Gravel Art Group (GAG) aus Montreal, der unüberhörbar ironisch sein so lautstarkes wie zärtliches Stück "Some Hope for the Bastards" kommentiert.

"Some Hope" ist die letzte von fünf Uraufführungen bei der strapazierten 15. Ausgabe der Münchner Tanzbiennale Dance. Diese choreografisch-musikalische Mischung aus narkotisch himmernder Popmusik und grotesk entgleisenden Gliedmassen sollte jeder gesehen haben. Vor allen aber jene, die derzeit das Schild "Inklusion" als selbstaufgelegtes Diktat politischer Korrektheit vor sich hertragen. Gravel nämlich formuliert den erleichternden, aber natürlich nur halbweisen Satz zum Tanz an sich: "Das alles bedeutet nichts."



PuSh 2018: Some Hope for the Bastards - Frédéric Gravel



Photo courtesy of Stephane Najman

[Some Hope for the Bastards | Frédéric Gravel | PuSh International Performing Arts Festival | Vancouver Playhouse | January 16, 2018](#)

Frédéric Gravel's dance works overflow with contemporary cool. The dancers pose nonchalantly onstage, drinking Coronas, as the audience takes their seats. They look like they haven't a care in the world and like they're too cool to do anything conventional or expected. This was confirmed right off the bat as one of the dancers gradually manoeuvred himself to be hanging off the stage, one foot balancing on an arm rest. Set to live rock music, also by Gravel, the nine dancers beautifully translated the music into movement.

Another trademark of Gravel's works is his dry sense of humour and monologue to the audience near the beginning of the show. He says things like "clap at your own risk," and "I don't know the rules." He explained that he originally wanted to name this piece *Some Hope for the Assholes*, but that was a bit too crass so he had to make a compromise. He also mentioned that the piece has two beginnings because he couldn't decide which one he liked better, so he kept both.

The first beginning, before his monologue, was in extreme slow motion with the dancers moving in and around a line of chairs across the stage. The second beginning was full of pulsing hip and operatic music with a heavy base line. Gradually this hip pulsing morphed into a scene at a night club. Dancers entered and exited the scenes with no break in the action, some sitting nonchalantly off to the side to watch a solo or duet. The most impressive moments, though, were when all nine dancers and all three musicians were so in synch that they created a powerful force of energy, releasing collective frustrations of our contemporary society.

From hard rock, to rock ballads, to an acoustic solo from Gravel, the music was just as impressive as the movement in this evening that was full of surprises. For anyone who loves pure rock music and edgy contemporary dance, Gravel has composed a masterpiece for the senses.

The Vancouver Arts Review

Frédéric Gravel's "Some Hope For the Bastards" Is Unpretentious and Primal Montreal Fare



Frédéric Gravel has produced "Some Hope For the Bastards" after a long string of successes. He has been felicitated the world over for concocting a fearless and modern strain of contemporary dance that embodies Montreal's quirky and witty spirit. As an opener for the 2018 PuSH festival, theatre and dance lovers couldn't have asked for any better. For an hour and a half, Gravel's tireless band and spectacular dancers had us eating out of their hands as they toyed vigorously with abstract interpretations of "being an asshole," hurting people you care about, and growth as a result of your mistakes. With more humour, bravery, and weirdness than you can imagine, Gravel's production won the audience over and received a full standing ovation.

I've been thinking about Vancouver's arts culture lately, particularly its music, art, literary, and theatre cultures. They exist in pockets and they are definitely not what we are known for anymore. Last weekend at Berlin photographer and doorman of the Berghain, Sven Marquardt's art opening at the Polygon Gallery, he recounted the humble beginnings of Berlin's club culture and that it was birthed by the fall of the Berlin Wall, and from the trauma associated with the end of old identities and the search for new ones. Is it then possible for all cities to strategically cultivate their own culture? When I moved to Vancouver from Alberta in 2009 to become a writer, I was drawn to the city's live music scene, poetry slams, and a calendar chock full of all kinds of events. Back then our roommates used to be in bands or dancers or writers and poets, surviving on part-time jobs, somewhat happily. There were concerts with \$10 covers on any night, meetups galore, weird little art shows, people handing out their chapbooks. Innovators and creatives flourished.

Today sky-high rents have successfully driven out the majority of artists and musicians in the city. The ones who had the means to remain have learned to sanitise their art so they can survive in this high cost of living marred, fast becoming, global metropolis. The weird and wacky have been knocked out of them and the coming generation doesn't even know they ever existed. Now our roommates are social media managers and ad sales ninjas. The poetry slams are a mere shadow of the raucous riots they used to be. Everyone has up and left. So where does this leave us? In a state of defeated resignation or renewed motivation to remedy the situation?

In such a situation we look to Montreal, a city that hasn't yet hit its real estate crisis. Young Vancouverites who can speak some French (or not) have made the move for better rent and a relatively stress-less existence. To Montreal, to Nelson, the Island, hell even Nova Scotia. Montreal is, of course, legendary for its reputation in contemporary dance, after Belgium, (incidentally, one of the best shows I've ever seen at PuSH was the [Belgian Dark Matter](#)). It seems that there is more happening in Montreal and that dance is more accessible there than it is here.

Frédéric Gravel emerges from this progressive and thriving performing arts culture. As a choreographer, dancer, musician, director and singer, his productions blur the lines between many disciplines. His latest work transported me to (what I imagine) his artistic community in Montreal to be, where expression is examined, experimented with, and overall valued. I saw in the plain-clothed dancers, people just like us- people who dress like us, talk like us. There was no "us" and "them", in fact, there was *literally* no curtain, no start of show, and no concrete end.

Gravel removed the "performance" out of this production. His intention to do away with stiffness resonated with me as a theatregoer in Vancouver, where stiffness encroaches daily as we get reined in by the unaffordability of the city and lose our artistic playfulness to corporate systems. Formality and stiffness increasingly permeate Vancouver art as it caters to high-end clientele as they become the only ones able to afford it. While in a chicken and egg scenario, the art is no longer made by reckless artists with nothing to lose but by cautious ones with everything to lose.

In Gravel's opening monologue-*ish*, he alluded to the bland act of being an adult: going to work at the same time every day, feeding the kids, doing it all for no reward, and doing it because it was the minimum expected. In this casual address, he pretty much gave the audience permission to leave whenever they wanted, warned that the show would be long, and took a charming shot at the establishment. Leave the show quite a number of confused people did, but the vast majority that

remained were rewarded many times over. One would guess that Gravel would have taken a few people leaving as a compliment.

This exact attitude is what I am talking about. This unaffected honesty, scoffing at pointless social mores, and just its overall friendliness were what made the show unforgettable.

Is this how they do in Montreal? Or is this just the Frédérick Gravel touch?

Gravel's choreography takes the contemporary style and plays with, contorts it, subverts it and extends it. Some bits test your patience but it wouldn't be PuSH if they didn't. In the beginning, the dancers moved around on the floor with stiff bodies for a good 10 minutes. Maybe this was them shaking off all the pretences expected of them, to enter a fluid, authentic space. Then followed a large sequence comprised entirely of pelvic thrusts that started off comedic but grew into seriousness. This graduated to chest pops and then we were finally into the familiar groove of stylised choreography with patterns and geometry. And when you made it to this point, you felt glad you stayed. Glad that you let yourself see something unusual before getting to the comfortable part. In this buildup, Gravel recreated the process behind choreography and the dance itself. He reminded us that his dancers and musicians are flesh and blood. They need time to warm up before reaching full throttle. They need to get into the mood and don't like a fine fur coat to give it their heartfelt all.

There are two hypnotic and climactic dances that land at the midway and end points of the show. These use the dancers' bodies in unusual ways- pirouette twirls, scooping arms, one finger pointed heavenward, hard falls to the ground that just miss the knees, slapping of the arms and shoulders against the ground. In between these are subtler sequences of aggravated couples dancing together, exhibiting trouble in relationships. These moments also suggest that the pelvic thrusts at the beginning were the carnal meet-cute of the couples. The friction gets bigger and bolder and then faster and grander. Here now is the guilt and anger at one's self for being the aforementioned asshole.

Once exhausted from the self admonishment, and into the second half of the dance, the dancers' shapes became more introspective- bent heads and necks got closer to the ground. Energy picked up once again as the dancers earned redemption and emerged exhausted and renewed, like phoenixes. Through all this, the live band, in which Gravel played guitar, switched up genres to keep up with the dancers' shifting energies. It was all original music that flowed from rock to R&B to techno to ballads.

The mastery and stamina of the dancers took the audience's breath away. The power and strength of the show lay largely in the physical endurance of the dancers and the band members. They were nothing short of powerhouses. Gravel also retained every dancer's individuality. He let them play to their strengths and their unique body types while still managing to make the piece cohesive.

Gravel's work reminded me of what art can look like when we approach it with complete honesty and with the simple tools available to us- the breath in our lungs, the muscles in our limbs and cores. You don't even really need a lot of money if you want to make something authentic. The tragedy is that in Vancouver you cannot simply commit to this mode of almost immersive art making because survival itself is so hard, unless you come from wealth, in which case your stories are overrepresented anyways. Not that we should expect our artists to starve but there is something to say about the need for a simple, monastic existence to be closer to the true meaning of life. To quote Viktor Frankl, "what man actually needs is not a tensionless state but rather the striving and struggling for some goal worthy of him." Maybe then gentrification is this struggle. As millionaires move into "cute" neighbourhoods to enjoy culture, they're essentially killing the source of this culture- the people who create it. The culture might live on in logos of quirky cafes or on open mic nights at dive bars, but without sustenance from its grassroots originators, it will be short lived. Gravel reminded me of what we have lost and are losing everyday- our artists and their invaluable weird and wacky perspectives.

So what are the solutions? More grants for artists? Living spaces for them? Rent control? Funding for the arts that Stephen Harper took away?

Maybe. But for now, we'll make do with witnessing Gravel's latest production, filling up the Playhouse, giving his crew a standing ovation, and hoping there were a few dancers in the building who walked out inspired enough to make something breathtaking of their own.

"Some Hope For the Bastards" had a one night run but you can get tickets to all the other amazing PuSH [shows here now!](#)

-Prachi Kamble