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Dave St-Pierre
(Montréal)

La Pornographie des âmes
(Bare Naked Souls)

Part of Québec Now!

Premiere Dance Theatre
207 Queens Quay West
November 12 – 15, 8:00 p.m.
\$15-30

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Dave St-Pierre – *La Pornographie des âmes*

Production Notes and Overview

La Pornographie des âmes premiered at Montreal's Flexx Divers/Cité in 2004 and immediately drew a lot of negative attention. Choreographer David St-Pierre (AKA "Pina Bausch's pornographic son") employs the brutal honesty of 14 naked bodies, blood and passion precisely to provoke audiences. *La Pornographie des âmes* is the first part of a trilogy on human relationships that St-Pierre describes as "a hymn to mankind, a celebration of his beauty and ugliness, his depth and superficiality." It sweeps the audience along in a grand spectacle and leaves few taboos untouched. Not everyone objects to *La Pornographie's* uncompromising content. In only a few years, the work has taken St-Pierre from near-obscure as a dancer, to a contract with Cirque de Soleil and international recognition, especially in Europe where his works are in demand. St-Pierre says he wants audiences to leave his shows "rapturous or raging", but connected: "Life is a risk. War is shocking. Making a show isn't. I want to speak to people."

Company History

Dave St-Pierre was born in 1974 in St. Jérôme, Quebec, and attended ballet school as a child. He later trained and danced with well-known dancers and major companies. Dave St-Pierre founded his own company of dancers and actors in 2003, which provides experimental ground for both the choreographer and ensemble alike. Dancer Enrica Boucher: "You can really push your limits and explore your fantasies." Dancer Erik Robidoux: "It means something. Instead of concentrating on the nudity, you should have a good time. It makes the performance authentic and artistic."

Biography & Performance History

Choreographer Dave St-Pierre has been dubbed an *enfant terrible* by many dance critics, but he is reluctant to accept the label himself. "It's weird," he says. "Because it was a Fred Astaire movie I saw when I was five years old that began my life-long love affair with dance." He accumulated an impressive résumé as a dancer, notably with Brouhaha Danse, staying with the company for more than six years.

Following that, he danced for many Quebec choreographers including Harold Rhéaume, Daniel Léveillé, Jean-Pierre Perrault, Estelle Claretton, Pierre-Paul Savoie and Alain Francoeur throughout Canada, the United States and Europe. He was featured in many other shows, such as *Amour, Acide et Noix* and *La Pudeur des Icebergs* by Daniel Léveillé, as well as the musical *Notre-Dame de Paris*.

As a choreographer, St-Pierre is best known for his groundbreaking 2004 creation *La Pornographie des Âmes*, which he performed five times in Montreal with his dance company before more than 2,000 people (an unprecedented feat in contemporary dance.) And during the same season they also performed the work in Munich, Berlin, Salzburg, Wolfsburg and Amsterdam has played all over the world to rave reviews. The piece won the 2004 prize for best show in Frankfurt and St-Pierre was named Personality of the Year, 2004-5 by Radio-Canada, the Quebec media outlets *Mirror*, *The Gazette*, *ICI*, *La Presse* and *Le Devoir* as well as the German magazine *BALLETANZ*.

Dave St-Pierre's work has been featured in several Montreal stage productions, including works directed by Claude Poissant at Espace Go in 2005. Brigitte Poupart approached him to work on her show *Cérémonials* and the Théâtre du Nouveau Monde engaged his services as Movement Director for its production of *La Tempête*, directed by Victor Pilon and Michel Lemieux. He also appeared in two productions for Cinéquanon Film, including the film *l'Enfant de la Musique* in which he played the lead character, Mozart.

Press Notes and Reviews

"La Pornographie des âmes (Bare naked souls) is a smorgasbord of short sketches. Violence and cruelty are on the menu, as well as nakedness, the human body is shown in all its splendour, ugliness and vulnerability. Dave St-Pierre and his troupe consist of 14 dancers-actors in a symbiosis of dance, theatre, text, video and music by Björk, Coldplay, Maria Callas and others." – DeSingel, Sweden

"At last year's FIND, St-Pierre caused a stir with this piece, which tackles head-on subjects of love, sex and violence - complete with graphic images. In his distinct choreographic style, St-Pierre mixes up dance, theatre and performance art. Most of all, he loves to provoke the audience, who, after watching the bold and brutal show, often feel a range of emotions from inspiration, to violation or confusion." – Montreal Mirror, July, 2004

"It's been a meteoric rise for this young Montrealer who, in just three years, has become one of the hottest stars in contemporary dance. From Munich to Amsterdam by way of Salzburg and Las Vegas, his bold creative vision has attracted unanimous critical praise. A little tenderness for crying out loud! is the second part of a planned triptych about contemporary utopias – a reconstruction of self-esteem, a search for another way of loving. Dave St-Pierre experiments with tension and release, both spontaneous and imposed. The body too tightly constrained must eventually expel a burst of energy; the movement is repeated to the point of exhaustion. Robot-like bodies and crumpled forms twitch with raw, instinctive impulses, leaps and spasms, primal expressions of immediate emotion. Despite its harsh premise, the work is deeply compassionate; its tangible, physical sweetness ultimately conveys a sense of peace and enjoyment." – Quebecscene.ca, April, 2007

David St-Pierre on the naughty side of dance

Dave St-Pierre's got a reputation as a one-man wrecking crew, blasting from one project to another with untold reserves of energy and a flair for the decadent.

Last fall this experimentalist got lots of reaction with *La Pornographie des âmes (Bare Naked Souls*, in English), which wowed audiences with its hardy sampling style of choreography, video-clip pacing, raw energy, nudity and the blurry chaos of sensory overload that makes everything look like psychedelic channel surfing.

La Pornographie has a seductive title, no doubt about it. "There's marketing going on," he admits. The performers play out everything from suicide to rape to fat jokes. Some people walk out devastated, changed by something they consider radical. On the other side of the spectrum are those who cry that St-Pierre is a considerable talent who

indulges in a kind of participatory narcissism. But the "can't miss" guy understands punctuation and manages to eke out some remarkable juxtapositions.

Drive seems to propel him from one thing to the next - a mix of impulse, enquiry, compulsion and a need to express himself and have an interesting, varied life. It's been a hectic month. Mass audiences saw snatches of the choreographer's work during the mega Cirque du Soleil/Jazz Fest closer. And there's more: He's showcasing at Divers/Cité's dance night, Flexx, with the kind of off-kilter storytelling that cleverly marries theatrical riffs to dark matters.

Themes of "squalor, suffering, disillusion, solitude, distress, helplessness and the never-ending quest for the absolute" preoccupy this sharp 30-year-old. But *La Pornographie* is also a love story. What satisfies is St-Pierre's ability to unite dance and performance with theatre and work with large groups. In the past he used to whip together shows in maybe two days flat; now, St-Pierre is taking more time in the creation process. "I function on nerves, adrenaline and the last-minute [deadline]," he says. "I need pressure to function."

Several years ago, in these pages, I named him one of the rising dance talents - an artist forging his own identity and charming folks with his boundless energy. He hadn't done much dance making at that point, but he was dancing constantly, taking roles with companies like Brouhaha Danse and then hopping on the Notre-Dame-de-Paris juggernaut. Now he's on another tear, working like a Chosen One. "I have the sense that I'm 18 [years old]. My body gives me lots of messages," he admits. St-Pierre allows himself freedom to indulge in excess and error, and gives himself license to fail. "When I get the shivers, I know it's working," he says. — Philip Szporer, hour.ca blog