

CURATOR NOTE

The producer Marie-Andrée Gougeon introduced me to the work of Frédéric Gravel. “I know what you like and you will like Frédéric. *Absolument.*” She said.

She was right. I have a jones for artists who grapple with the music/movement problem aka the where-to-put-the-band problem. It’s interesting to see various strategies for integrating music into performance, though I can’t believe I just typed that given I started my career hating on musical theater. Even more, I have a jones for artists who don’t make assumptions about the way they work, their relationship to their fellow artists or how they relate to audiences. It was evident upon seeing *Usually Beauty Fails* that everything is wide open for Frédéric in terms of how he approaches movement, text and sound. At the same time, there’s something generous about his approach. For example, he counters his skepticism of the false or affected beauty of pop culture by pursuing expressions of beauty in this show that are more tangible or even personal. He seems intent on engaging the audience more than spiting it.

It’s worth noting that Marie-Andrée’s colleague George Skalkogiannis, who made this engagement in Seattle possible, also produced early performances of La La La Human Steps at OtB some 30 years ago. This groundbreaking dance company also from Montreal featured the choreography of Eduard Lock and the body-slammng dancing of the Aphrodite of the 80’s, Louise Lecavalier. Images of her frizzy white blond hair and topless body adorned in tulle skirt, tennis shoes and kneepads as she bounced off the floor at Washington Hall are synonymous with the early days of our organization.

While I don’t really care about whether or not GravelArtGroup are descendants of La La La, I like the idea of artists continuing the research of earlier generations. Too often any hint of intergenerational synergy gets used by critics to dismiss the work of younger artists whereas I think in a case like La La La to Gravel, it validates the complexity and value of what they once did and what they’re now doing.



Lane Czaplinksi, Artistic Director