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## Review: *aKabi*

by [Sylvain Verstricht](#)

It only seems logical to approach choreography by providing dancers with as much freedom of movement as possible. Yet sometimes by providing constraints, movements that couldn't otherwise emerge seem to come to life naturally. It is as if by limiting the body, it needs to reconfigure itself otherwise and find new ways to move in space. Turkish choreographer Aydin Teker isn't afraid to take this to the next level in *aKabi* (short for "shoe"), where her four dancers are afflicted with enormous platform shoes of different sizes and shapes.



Aydin Teker's *aKabi*, photo by Levent Oget

The structure of the work is profoundly simple; the lights come on to reveal a scene to us where movement is often minimal, with quiet or no music, only to send us back to black before offering another scene. In the first scene, the dancers are sitting on their feet. Two dancers standing next to each other (one with the disproportionate shoes and one without) slowly stand up at the same time, maintaining the same height. However, while the one without shoes stands completely erect, the other keeps extending high above the other, seemingly mutating before our eyes.

Of course, it is only an optical illusion, but it doesn't matter because it works. Our brain may tell us that this is only because of the shoes, but our eye constantly finds itself fooled despite our better judgement. That's the beauty of the entire endeavour; it's so simple, yet so strange, forever incomprehensible despite being always already understood.

A dancer without shoes stands on the shoes of the other, and they get into positions otherwise impossible, using each other's weight to find a balance. The one with shoes leans back as if sitting into an invisible chair, hanging to her partner's waist as she reaches forward, floating above the ground. They sit between their legs, leaning back and using the soles of the shoes as armrests. Or they send their legs flying in the air, the soles of their shoes so thick that they don't even follow the foot, but their own interaction with gravity. I can't even imagine what kind of strain it must put on the ankles.

The shoes are also used for their percussive capacities as the dancers roll around on the ground, their feet close to the floor, so that their soles create an uncommon ruckus. Because everything emanates from the shoes, one could say that *aKabi* is gimmicky, but it's an unusual gimmick and one that is explored so fully that it is able to transcend it. The few with A.D.D. quickly left the room last night, but most who stayed seemed as equally transfixed as I was by the spectacle slowly unfolding before our eyes.

When the four dancers slowly walked high on their thickest platform shoes towards the audience, looking like aliens from another planet, it was enough to make a child cry. Literally. A kid started crying out for his mom, who had to take him out of the room, his cries resonating throughout the space for minutes. His outburst seemed oddly legitimate, and speaks volumes about the affective power of *aKabi*.

***aKabi* plays one last time tonight at 8pm at Centre Pierre-Péladeau. Tickets are 38\$ and can be purchased by calling 514.844.3822. For more information on this and other shows at the FTA, visit their website at [www.fta.qc.ca](http://www.fta.qc.ca)**