



“Oiseau”, La Cage ©Yanina Aisla

## Still Bursts, Frills, and a Mating Call

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Language: EN

“Oiseau” from Berlin–Paris company *La Cage* undertakes a detailed movement examination of birds, under the direction of Aliénor Dauchez and viewed at Kultur Büro Elisabeth in Berlin–Mitte on 26 February 2023.

Some of today’s more effective performance approaches to environment embrace the naivety of the human position, not pretending to have some scientific insight into the natural world and instead continuing traditions of careful observation and almost mathematical abstraction that have been part of art since it can be identified as practice.

Although “Oiseau” positions itself as a work that “reaches over our species-specific perception”, there is something about its proposals that are relentlessly, refreshingly human. The performance space of the St. Elisabeth Church, transforms into an atmospheric aviary for the two-hour duration, as the three dancers (Jessica Gadani, Josefine Mühle and Antoine Sarrazin) intimately imitate their subjects of study: Birds. The dancers play with variation and communication through the space – perhaps deliberately timed to coincide with the setting sun, which naturally streams through the lancet windows and is often the only source of light – and for the first part of the work, the stillness and slowness of bird watching is replicated in the spectator experience. As the dancers preen, twitch, twist and writhe around the space, occasionally bursting into song or perching on available safety railing, a particular movement language develops that mirrors the communication of its subjects of study.

From this still opening, as the soundtrack (Michael Rauter) creeps into a Vangelis-esque synthesiser, the performance subtly morphs into a weird fashion show, as the ‘birds’ emerge from backstage to promenade around the audience for about 20 minutes of stage time. Cue tulle headdresses, stick-noses, and bird of paradise mating dance performed in a black and sparkling blue addition (costumes: Miriam Marto and Aliénor Dauchez). On cue, an oddly informative narration comes over the soundtrack: “They come to these arid desert plains to give a breath-taking performance. This is not a competition: it’s a show.”

There is something deeply honest in the mimicry of “Oiseau” – as the narration states in relation to bird behaviour: “Imitation is not simply a form of copying”. The mode of addressing the audience is never exactly direct (except, perhaps, when one of the audience’s many child-members inevitably intervenes), and this creates an air of watchful, wonderful attention. Where other performances might fall flat in the terrain of stillness and silence, “Oiseau”’s quiet commitment to the creation of an atmosphere coupled with its honest and detailed observations mark it apart from others. Working with simple variation, observation, and listening practice, the collaboration creates a deep, dream-like experience, one that drifts through its duration meditatively and without feeling the need to announce itself. It’s not explicitly a children’s show, yet there’s something enthralling about seeing a young audience recaptured from the screen and into a calm, deep form of observation themselves – no less their adult counterparts.

“Oiseau” by company *La Cage* (concept/direction: [Aliénor Dauchez](#) – performance: Jessica Gadani, Josefine Mühle and Antoine Sarrazin – composition: Michael Rauter – dramaturgy: Jette Büchsenschütz – stage/costume: Miriam Marto and Aliénor Dauchez) premiered at [Kultur Büro Elisabeth](#), St. Elisabeth-Church in Berlin–Mitte, on 24–26 February 2023.

Tags: [Aliénor Dauchez \(EN\)](#), [Antoine Sarrazin \(EN\)](#), [Jessica Gadani \(EN\)](#), [Jette Büchsenschütz \(EN\)](#), [Josefine Mühle \(EN\)](#), [La Cage \(EN\)](#), [Michael Rauter \(EN\)](#), [Miriam Marto \(EN\)](#), [St. Elisabeth Kirche \(EN\)](#)

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