

# Lenio Kaklea: Les Oiseaux

An ensemble dance that hovers on the cusp between human and bird

*Les Oiseaux*, by Paris-based Greek choreographer Lenio Kaklea, is about freedom and control, imitation and embodiment. The piece opens with a sunrise, when two dancers evoke the shaking of bird feathers. The gesture is so uncannily convincing that it feels both familiar and strange, a rhythmic tremor that makes the body appear at once animal and human. When five others join them, a seven-member ensemble forms. Electronic sounds suggest birdsong, whether through field recordings or a carefully constructed illusion, and a collective body begins to emerge. The dancers combine technical refinement with non-human suppleness. Their semi-nude bodies, feathered accents and makeup create an unstable threshold between human and bird. At times it seems that people are imitating birds, at other moments that birds are imitating people.

The tension between individual curiosity and collective assimilation returns throughout the work. In moments of perfect unison, one wonders whether mastery equals freedom or self-restraint, and when control shifts into play. The piece unfolds like a blues structure, with repetition and subtle variation. Group scenes alternate with duets of seduction, surrender and physical chemistry.

As the synchrony begins to fray, there is a flicker of visible joy, as if small deviations open a space for freedom. A trapeze sequence introduces the suggestion of flight and vertigo, yet despite its virtuosity it feels less urgent. Text projections, including lines such as 'The blackbirds are silent,' evoke a wider field of surveillance and containment but never fully merge with what happens on stage. At times, the work seems more invested in its formal elegance than in exploring friction between openness and regulation, giving the impression that it almost smooths over the discomfort that hovers beneath the surface.

When a drone appears, the interplay between freedom and control becomes literal. It observes, attacks, films the dancers, and projects their masked faces and bare bodies onto the large backdrop. In the final image, the drone lands on an outstretched hand, like a tamed falcon. Is this a gesture of domination or voluntary submission? *Les Oiseaux* appears to reach for the moment when discipline turns into freedom, yet often remains within the realm of play and aesthetic pleasure. The tension between bird and human, control and release, is constantly present, but only rarely takes flight.

Choreography and direction: Lenio Kaklea

With: Nefeli Asteriou, Liza Baliasnaja, Amanda Barrio

Charmelo, Luisa Heilbron, Louis Nam Le Van Ho, Dimitri Mytilinaios, Jaeger Wilkinson

Research and dramaturgy: Lou Forster

Sound composition and technical direction: Éric Yvelin

Set design: Clio Boboti

Lighting: Jean-Marc Ségalen

Costumes: Olivier Mulin

Scientific advisor: Thierry Aubin – Director of Bioacoustics at CNRS, Paris-Saclay University

Assistant set designer: Angeliki Vassilopoulou-Kampitsi

Costume designer: Angeliki Baltsaki

Administration, production: Olivier Poujol, Fanny Virelizier

Coproduction: Charleroi danse – Choreographic Centre of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, MOCA L.A., Festival d'Automne Paris, CCN Ballet de Lorraine, Théâtre de la Vignette, NEXT Arts Festival, CCN Ballet national de Marseille