

# LÉONARD ENGEL

## “PAVANE”

Premiere | 13.1.2019 | Tanztage Berlin | Sophiensæle



© Oliver Look

**“The haunting beauty of birdsong, the provocative performance of erotic display in primates, the attraction of insects to the perfume of plants are all in excess of mere survival.”**

Elizabeth Grosz  
Chaos, Territory, Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth

Contact [engeleonard@gmail.com](mailto:engeleonard@gmail.com)

Website [www.leonardengel.com](http://www.leonardengel.com)

---

## SHORT DESCRIPTION

“Pavane” is an exploration of the connections between human and animal art forms. In collaboration with musician Korhan Erel, choreographer and performer Léonard Engel extracts shapes, movements and sounds from animal courtship displays, and puts them in relation with human artistic creations like Renaissance dances or electronic music. The performance is built on the idea of a structured ritual that intensifies sensation and seduces the audience with rhythm and vibration through states of hypnosis and excess.

<https://vimeo.com/312071531> (full length)

<http://www.tanzforumberlin.de/produktion/pavane/> (trailer)

## CREDITS

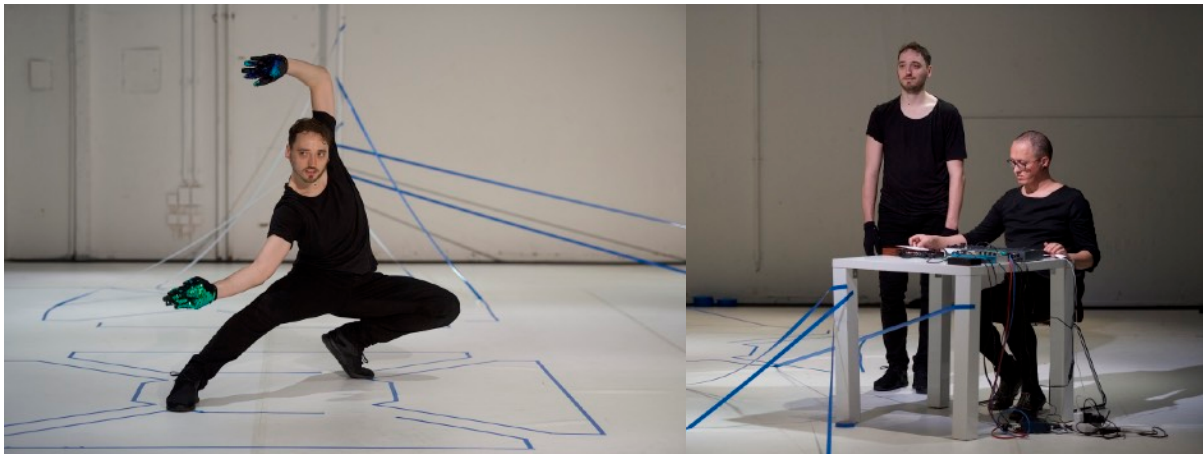
Concept, Choreography & Performance  
Music & Performance  
Dramaturgy  
Light design  
Realization Costumes

Léonard Engel  
Korhan Erel  
Maja Zimmerman  
Erik Pade  
Lisa Simpson, Tamara Saphir

Thanks to Sebastian Matthias, Ricardo Pereira (Department for Evolutionary Biology, LMU Munich)

Produced by Léonard Engel, Co-produced by Sophiensaele, Berlin

© Dieter Hartwig



## SPECIFICATIONS FOR TOURING

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <u>People on tour</u>           | 2 (dancer + musician)  |
| <u>People provided by venue</u> | 1 Light technician to run show   |
| <u>Stage measurements</u>       | min. 9mx9m (ideal 12mx12m)   |
| <u>Set provided by venue</u>    | 3 rolls of blue gaffa per show, simple white table 90w-90d-75h, white dance carpet |
| <u>Duration set-up</u>          | 6h   |
| <u>Duration Performance:</u>    | 45min.   |

---

## TEAM



© Debora Ramos

**Léonard Engel** is a performer and choreographer based between Munich and Berlin. After graduating from Paris Opera Ballet School in 2005, he joined the Victor Ullate Ballet in Madrid, before working for 8 years with the Bayerisches Staatsballett in Munich under the direction of Ivan Liska, where he reached the rank of soloist. As a performer he notably worked with Paula Rosolen, Richard Siegal, Gintersdorfer/ Klassen

and Billinger & Schulz. In 2018, he received a scholarship from the Munich cultural department to research on animal mimicry and its correlation to human society. “Pavane”, the first piece developed through that process, premiered at Sophiensæle, Berlin in January 2019 in the frame of the Tanztage Berlin (Dance Days Berlin). He also started a series of miniature pieces with composer and violinist Diego Kohn. As a performer he will collaborate in 2019 with choreographer Laurent Chétouane as well as collective LA FLEUR (Monika Gintersdorfer & Franck Yao). In September 2019 he will also premiere a new work called “How to get rid of a body. A magic manual” at HochX Munich, supported by PACT Zollverein Essen.

[www.leonardengel.com](http://www.leonardengel.com)

**Korhan Erel** is a Berlin-based electronic musician, improviser and sound-designer. He’s a pioneer of the free improvisation in Turkey. He uses electronics as an instrument and a tool for composition, sound-art and sound-design.

He performs improvised and structured concerts in different groups and orchestras, and is part of the project « The Liz » together with Liz Albee und Liz Kosack. He often works with video artists, writers and dancers for various interdisciplinary projects.

His sound installations have been presented in Turkey and Germany, and he has performed in the biennales of Istanbul (2013) and Riga (2018).

[www.korhanerel.com](http://www.korhanerel.com)

**Maja Zimmermann** is a dance scholar and dramaturge. She collaborated with choreographers and artists like Lea Moro, Ligia Lewis and Planningtorock as well as the festival Tanztage Berlin. She realizes her own artistic projects on relationality and touch, and most recently co-curated the exhibition Touch at nGbK, Berlin.

---

## BACKGROUND



© Jürgen Otto

“**Pavane**” explores the notion of art in the animal kingdom by translating the animal mimicry and mating rituals to the human body. Bringing this practice in correlation with the pavane, a Renaissance dance of the 16th century which gets its name from the spanish word *pavón*, (engl. peacock) the piece observes the display of beauty and its related hierarchies.

The piece finds its core motivation from the Aristotelian idea that human art finishes what nature begins.

Aristotle expressed that all the

inspiration for art is in nature and it is the task of humanity to extract this inspiration to create something, which is not based on survival purposes, but for simple aesthetic enjoyment. The piece originated from a research on aesthetic preferences as a driving force in mating rituals. Rituals resulting in aesthetics and principles of beauty one doesn't only find amongst animals, but also resonate in human behavior.

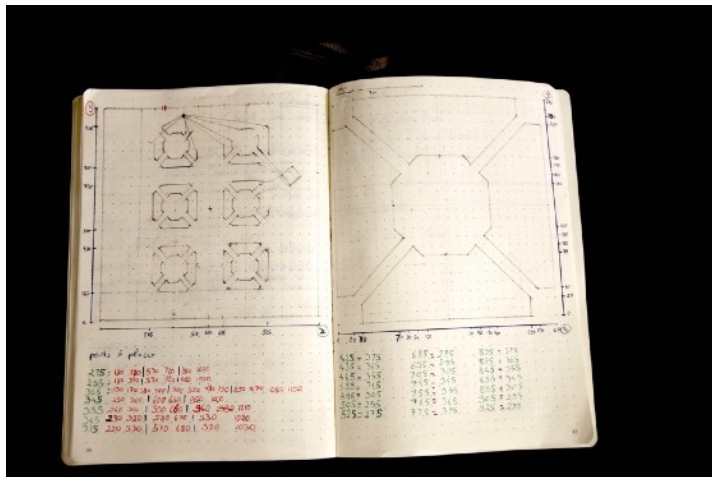
In his book *Survival of the beautiful*, New Jersey Institute of Technology's professor of philosophy and music David Rothenberg makes a case for the theory that animals also developed a sense for aesthetic. He takes the example of sexual selection, in which the female will chose a partner amongst the males to mate with, leading the males to develop secondary sexual characteristics to please them, such as the plumage of the peacock, or the song of the nightingale. Rothenberg argues that those evolutionary traits are arbitrary: the female is attracted by a feature of the male that doesn't necessarily implies a better chance of survival, but clearly responds to an aesthetic interest.

Following a similar idea, Elizabeth Grosz, professor of women's and gender studies at Rutgers University, describes the courtship displays of birds and other species as one of the first form of art, their goal being the intensification of sensations through rhythm and vibration. The highly choreographed mating rituals of the birds of paradise or the peacock spider, or the singing of the lyre bird could then be considered artistic performances, just like human dance and singing.

PAVANE intends to build a bridge between animal art and human art, and creates a performance where those two approaches coexist.

---

## ARTISTIC APPROACH



### CHOREOGRAPHY

The pavane is a slow processional dance, designed to allow the dancers to display their outfits as a sign of wealth, much like a male peacock would do to impress a female with its tail. As most Renaissance dances, it's highly codified in terms of steps, but also of movement patterns in space. "Pavane" builds a parallel between this organized form and animal courtship displays.

Mating ritual in species like the bowerbird or the jumping spider are extraordinarily choreographed performances that give a special attention to rhythm and texture of the movements, crucial elements to please the female aesthetic taste. By recreating those dances, Léonard Engel attempts to recreate their hypnotizing quality and charm the audience the same way these animals do with their females.

The result is a dance where human and animal behaviors are never really separate. The choreography plays with the perception and the expectations of the spectators. Is the dancer readjusting his clothes, or is he slowly flapping his arm like a wing? Is he flirting with the audience or is he simply twisting his neck the way a bird might? The demarcation between one species and the other become less and less clear, the images more and more abstract and spellbinding.

### SET

The set is made of blue patterns taped on the floor, which are evoking the design of a French Garden. The precise construction and perfect symmetry of those shapes respect the strict codes of classicism. Yet this order is disrupted when the lines of the shape are progressively extended to a pole on the back of the stage, creating a structure reminiscent of the construction the bowerbird (in French "jardinier", gardener) builds as a space for his courtship performance.

### MUSIC

The music, composed and performed live by electronic musician Korhan Erel, is inspired by Jacob van Eyck's variations for flute on John Dowland's pavane *Lachrymae*. Like a lyre bird, mimicking sounds from his surroundings to find a mate, Erel uses his electronic instruments to create not only a replica of van Eyck's score, but also natural sounds like bird calls and low frequency noises emitted by insects or vibrating feathers.

The music, operating the same way as the choreography, tries to seduce the audience through its own medium, intertwining Renaissance music, electronic experimentations and natural sounds.