

Dancing Review

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Political Mother – Hofesh Shechter: Sadler’s Wells, London, 14 July 2011

Posted on July 15, 2011 by [gerarddavis09](#)

Pardon?

Not many shows open with a gentle string sextet accompanying a samurai committing hari-kari only to be spectacularly overwhelmed by three tiers of musicians thrashing out the crunchiest, but surprisingly melodic, Middle-Eastern enhanced Heavy Metal. With eight specialist drummers, four electric guitarists and a vocalist who screams rather than sings, the impact of **Hofesh Shechter’s** *Political Mother* is unforgettable.



Where there is pressure there is a man dressed as an ape in a suit.

God knows what it all means though. Beneath a series of indecipherable dictators the dancers dart around like down-and-out Hare Krishnas overdosing on caffeine. Shechter’s choreography almost entirely consists of ensemble pieces; highly complex, superbly co-ordinated onrushes of shifting shapes where an apparently random swirl of people can form a dotted rectangle with one quick flick of the legs. The sixteen dancers excel in their timing and in the constant jitteriness of their movement and if the repetitive nature of *Political Mother* begins to pall towards the end it’s not through lack of energy.

It was funny too. A whole line of the oppressed marched on stage at one point in preparation of something momentous, then think better of it and amble back off again. Likewise, after the constant cochlea-busting din of metal the show closes with a sugary rendition of **Joni Mitchell’s** sentimental ballad *Both Sides Now* while the dancers bolt around in half-darkness.

Lee Curran’s lighting is excellent, startling without being obtrusive. The deep crimson that drowns the performers part-way through is gorgeous and the seven-veiled fashion in which sections of the performance are revealed is well-planned and brilliantly executed.

The advertising poster’s claim that *Political Mother* is the future of dance is pushing it but it’s deafeningly different and the theatrical showmanship should certainly be encouraged in a generally austere age of contemporary dance. Now, where’s my Ozzy T-shirt?

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