



Episode 5 *Survivor*

Behind the scenes with Afla, Felicity, James and Mehdi

On 12th January 2012, Hofesh Shechter and Antony Gormley's *Survivor* will open at the Barbican Theatre. For the last episode of this weekly newsletter, we meet four new members of Hofesh's band, all of whom are students at Guildhall School of Music and have joined the project thanks to our collaboration with the Barbican/Guildhall Creative Learning team. We've been overwhelmed by the response for tickets for this new adventure for Hofesh and the Company, and are looking forward to getting into the theatre in January to put the final touches to the work. You can still book online via the link at the end of this newsletter for an opportunity to see Hofesh's first ever concert of music and his first creative collaboration all rolled into one performance.

Felicity Hindle was born and brought up in North Wales where she began to play percussion from the age of seven. Since then she has played with ensembles such as Brian Stone's 'Percussion Unlimited', the North Wales Youth Orchestra. She is currently studying Percussion and Timpani at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

Born in the middle east to Anglo-Egyptian parents, **James Adams** is always looking to broaden his understanding of music and its values. He travels extensively and several encounters led him to develop a keen interest in how music may be used to bridge communication gaps and promote understanding in areas of conflict.



Mehdi Ganjvar is a percussionist from Iran. He has knowledge of traditional Iranian music and plays Santur and Middle Eastern drums. He enjoys working with people and bringing diversities and cultural differences together. He is also interested in cross-arts and collaborative work within projects.

Afla Sackey was born in Ghana. From a musical family of percussionists and dancers, he started performing at the age of six with a company called Opense folkloric as a Percussionist. He has also performed with different bands and has collaborated with different musicians in the UK.

To begin, who is the first artist you saw on stage and who is the best you have ever seen?

James: The best was a jazz-funk gig, a bass player called Pino Palladino and a drummer called Chris Dave at Ronnie Scotts in London. The sound was perfect! And the first... Rolling Stones at Wembley Arena.

Felicity: For me, the first is Evelyn Glennie. The best...it is a really difficult question. It's probably when I went to the Proms this year and I saw Tchaikovsky's 5th symphony - it was so good.

Afla: I used to go to concerts a lot but when I was a little boy, so, if I put my mind to it the one I really loved was Stevie Wonder. And the best, actually, I would say Fela, the musical.

Mehdi: The first was LOJO from France. And the best: Roberto Fonseca, Fusion Latin.

And what is the craziest concert you have performed in?

Felicity: Probably this one.

Afla: Actually, I am with her!

Mehdi: Big Sticks, a Project with Young people and their grand parents.

James: Quite recently, I played at about 2.30 in the morning, it was called the Rumpus event and it was full of people hanging from the ceiling playing instruments. I was on a little stage full of very drunk people, with one foot on the stage and one foot on the chair. I couldn't hear what the hell was going on because people were falling around me all over the place.

Can you describe Hofesh's music in 3 words?

Afla and Felicity: Moving, superb, dramatic.

James: Heavy, eastern, rich.

Mehdi: Rich, sensful, simple.

How is the atmosphere between musicians?

Felicity: It feels like we have been playing together for longer than we have... it's only been 2 weeks.

Afla: Amazing!! It's brilliant. I mean there is no tension whatsoever. It's all fun and, actually that is very helpful because it makes you feel like you're a part of something and gives you more energy to learn and focus.

Mehdi: Amazingly homey... outside the norm but very comfortable and full of humanity.

James: It's nice. It always takes a while to get to know people properly. When musicians come together, especially when they join a group of musicians which are already part of something, it can take time but everyone is very nice. After two weeks you begin to know people. There is a nice atmosphere... good people, good humour.

What are your feelings about Survivor?

Mehdi: It's absolutely a brand new first class collaboration with lots of unique moments. I'm glad to be part of the Survivor show. I'm looking forward to the actual feel of the whole show soon. I think its gonna be an unforgettable experience for all.

Afla: The way I see the whole thing: before, it was a little bit like 'Oh, what's happening, am I getting this right?' but now, it's getting to a point where I feel like it will be amazing and from yesterday to today, I am like wow this will be great.

James: It's quite an interesting piece. It's quite dark and moody. It's just starting to come together. All the different elements are making a big difference. I still don't completely understand the collaboration between Antony and Hofesh. It's still a little bit of a mystery to me. Time may reveal all.

Felicity: When we first started, I didn't really know what to expect, I didn't really know what was going to happen, but now the thought of moving into the Barbican in January is really good.

Have you already played at the Barbican ? Which stage could be very special for you?

Afla: Yeah I have played there several times; it's one of the theatres that bands or groups with higher reputation play, so for us to play there, it's great. I would say the stage I would like to play next is The Royal Albert Hall.

Felicity: Yeah, it's very famous. I've never played in the Barbican before, I played in the foyer and the concert hall. Barbican is quite important to me because it was where my first big orchestral concert in London was.

James: Yeah I have played in the Barbican before. It's a hard question... I'd be happy to play on a raised platform, over a busy street, in a pair of tight leather trousers, no top, with a wig, and a loud guitar!!! That would be a nice stage to play on.

Mehdi: I'm not sure about Barbican being special but this work is certainly making it a special experience.

To finish, what is the most important thing you have learnt by being involved in Hofesh's band?

James: It's definitely the way to lead a group of artists through a drawn out and lengthy rehearsal process. It's hard to keep everyone enthusiastic.

Felicity: I think I've learnt quite a lot about my own playing because most of the playing I do is with orchestras and being involved in this band is quite different to that. I think it shows that you don't have to just stick to one thing and that you should always do what you enjoy doing.

Afla: In my opinion, I think the path I want to take has a lot to do with what Hofesh is doing at the moment. I first didn't realise that I might achieve and learn so much. But the course I do at the moment is called 'music leadership' and is about how you can lead a group of musicians or music orchestra, stuff like that... For me, I've learnt so much about how he handles musicians... He has a way of making you want to do more, or making you want the rehearsal to continue. It makes you feel so much at home, it's a lot of fun. I have got a band myself and being a leader in a band means you need to know how to handle people before you can handle musicians especially musicians at a higher calibre. And I am learning a lot from the way he handles people.

Mehdi: The way to make people love what they do. The secret of being cool and professional at the same time. The importance of trust, respect and fun.

Survivor

**12-14 January 2012, 7.45pm
(plus 3pm matinee on 14 Jan)**

Venue: Barbican Centre, Silk Street, London EC2Y 8DS

Box Office: 020 7638 8891

Book your tickets [here](#)

For more information about *Survivor*, click [here](#)

Hofesh Shechter Company T: +44 (0) 20 314 26823 www.hofesh.co.uk

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Quercus outset.