

## The Telegraph

# Hofesh Shechter's Political Mother - Choreographer's Cut, Sadler's Wells, review

Hofesh Shechter's quest to fuse dance and rock-gig continues apace in this Sadler's Wells show, says Mark Monahan. Rating: \* \* \* \* \*



By [Mark Monahan \(http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/culturecritics/markmonahan/\)](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/culturecritics/markmonahan/)

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Well, the wonder from Israel has done it again. Last year, in Brighton, Hofesh Shechter – choreographer, composer, musician, Kubrick nut and general downright theatrical visionary – premiered his new creation *Political Mother*, which turned out to be 2010's single most exhilarating piece of contemporary dance. This week, at Sadler's Wells, he returned to the work in a revised "*Choreographer's Cut*" – and the result is mind-blowing.

To get my one cavil out of the way, I'd suggest that the original opening of this 70-minute audio-visual extravaganza had a slightly superior snap and rhythm. It cut more quickly to the bizarre, noirish, scene-setting spectacle of an on-stage samurai warrior falling on his sword, and its five snare drummers trapped in glass cases (reminiscent of that fearsome pop video for the Prodigy Girls) made for a scarier spectacle than the now-liberated three.

In all other ways, though, the piece feels not only bigger than before, but also better, as tight a knitting of dance, music and spectacle as a British theatre can ever have seen. Shechter places all 24 of his musicians – far more than before – on stacked platforms at the rear of the stage: strings across the bottom (say, 15 feet up), percussion and guitarists right up to gods level. When they're all playing his self-penned, piledriving score at full tilt, they become a vast living, breathing, seething sculpture, a terrific counterpoint to what's happening on the stage proper, and scarcely less hypnotic in their own right.

But make no mistake, the steps are also stupendous. The piece is essentially a whistlestop tour – as energetic as it is compassionate – through a strange, parallel universe of oppressed peoples and cultures. And, with mood, lighting and "worlds" constantly changing at camera-shutter speed, surging crowds constantly metamorphose into anything from tenderly clinging couples to prisoners cowering before gun-toting guards.

As beats pound, guitars scythe and crazed dictators roar, Shechter's beefed-up posse of 16 dancers show an extraordinarily athletic commitment to those strangely primal steps of his. Shoulders are hunched, fists clenched, arms thrust into the air in desperate supplication to foes seen or unseen, but along with the increased scale there's also – as Shechter promised – an increased playfulness that softens the piece's harder edges. (The four later, gently jiggling samurai are a charming example.)

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[Hofesh Shechter: steps from another dimension](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/dance/7725244/Hofesh-Shechter-steps-from-another-dimension.html)

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[The Place turns 40](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/culturevideo/cultureminute/7742084/The-Place-dance-theatre-turns-40.html) (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/culturevideo/cultureminute/7742084/The-Place-dance-theatre-turns-40.html>)

[Hofesh Shechter's Political Mother at Brighton Dome](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/dance/7749759/Hofesh-Shechters-Political-Mother-at-the-Brighton-Dome-review.html)

(<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/dance/7749759/Hofesh-Shechters-Political-Mother-at-the-Brighton-Dome-review.html>)

[Hofesh Shechter Dance Company at the Brighton Dome](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/dance/5345240/Hofesh-Shechter-Dance-Company-at-the-Brighton-Dome-review.html)

(<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/dance/5345240/Hofesh-Shechter-Dance-Company-at-the-Brighton-Dome-review.html>)

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Perhaps cleverest of all, though, is that although Political Mother never goes where you expect it to, in any way, every strange new development feels entirely welcome. Oh – and did I mention that he's had the seats removed from the front nine rows of the stalls to allow standing-room for hundreds? Shechter's quest to fuse dance and rock-gig continues apace, and boy, it's an electrifying ride.

*Until tomorrow. Tickets: 0844 412 4300*

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