



Stage

POLITICAL MOTHER: HOFESH SHECHTER COMPANY, BRIGHTON DOME



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Friday May 28, 2010

By Neil Norman

IT BEGINS with seppuku: a samurai impales himself on his sword. Then it gets really exciting.

With five drummers, five electric guitarists, 10 dancers and an actor, Hofesh Shechter's incendiary new work explodes on stage. Above the stage a ranting dictator (who morphs into a raging lead singer) delivers hoarse, indecipherable speeches to a succession of shuffling, loping figures below.

The rhythmic patterns of movement suggest prison systems, from the chain gangs of Angola to the horrors of Auschwitz with the inmates staggering and trembling their way through existence. At times Shechter dares to leave his audience in total darkness, assaulted by the thunderous music for long minutes. He can disorientate, tease and shock in a sequence, cutting musical forms together like a motorway pile-up.

Beneath the sound and fury lies a naked, vulnerable humanity. Shechter's musical instinct is so assured that he can wed electric cacophony to Jewish folk dance, or searing images of brutality with Joni Mitchell. He assaults us with a wall of white noise before snapping into the brief tranquillity of Bach or Verdi, then delivers a shattering military tattoo beaten out on the snare drums.

A former rock drummer, Israel-born Shechter has created a work that spits blood, hurls fireballs into the audience and leaves you shaken, stirred and blasted. It is a sustained howl of anger against all political systems that would refute the rights of the individual and lock down people into calibrated units, that would extinguish joy.

If anyone is going to bring the iPod generation into the dance theatre it is not Matthew Bourne with his glad-ragged cinematic excursions but Hofesh Shechter whose visionary amalgamation of heavy rock and human gesture is without equal.

He is not just a dance innovator. He is a revolutionary and Political Mother is his call to arms.

VERDICT 5/5

Touring until 22 November: www.politicalmother.co.uk