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DANCE REVIEW

## A Fragmented World, Not Far From This One

By ROSLYN SULCAS

BECKET, Mass. — Hofesh Shechter. It’s a name to remember. The Israeli-born Mr. Shechter, whose company made its first appearance in the United States at the Jacob’s Pillow Dance Festival here on Wednesday night, is one of the most inventive new choreographic voices to turn up in quite a while. And in two pieces, “Uprising” and “In Your Rooms,” he shows that physical invention as part of a fiercely contemporary universe: pounding soundscapes, brilliantly moody lightscapes, changes of scene as abrupt as flickering television channels.

The overall aesthetic of these two works is fairly consistent. But Mr. Shechter, who, remarkably, also composed the powerful scores, creates distinctive worlds in each. And throughout, he shows a particular talent for a kind of organized chaos, scattering his wonderfully intent dancers through space, then weaving them into rigorously counterpointed sequences, only to let them disperse and dissolve away again.

At countless moments in both “Uprising” and “In Your Rooms,” apparently random patterns coalesce into tight lines or resolve into strictly synchronized groups, each performing a different sequence of movements with equal precision and intensity. And the dancing itself offers the same paradox: wildly, roughly physical and large scale, it is also manically precise and detailed.

In that detail — the jerky dislocations of the upper body, the obsessive, fast repetitions (a hand pushing at the air, a leg repeatedly kicking to the side) — resides the influence of Ohad Naharin, the director of the Batsheva Dance Company, with which Mr. Shechter danced before studying percussion in Paris then moving to Britain in 2002, where he and the company are based.

But Mr. Shechter has his own choreographic view of the world, one in which movement is both primal force and nuanced expression of the inexpressible. “Uprising,” from 2006, opens with a rhythmic pounding noise and a bank of lights blaring from the back of the stage. Seven men (including the lanky Mr. Shechter) appear suddenly from the darkness behind and take up silhouetted position at the front, one leg raised to the side in a balletic retiré.

But then the image dissolves, and the men swing themselves, chimpanzeelike, across the stage using knuckles and feet; align themselves in tight battlefield formations; and run wildly with their

arms held back like wings. In this portrait of the male tribe there are also moments of tenderness, humor, anguish and frustration. Mr. Shechter suggests all of this purely through the movement, never letting an image solidify for long enough to become overstated.

That physical and theatrical subtlety is even more apparent in “In Your Rooms,” from 2007, a larger-scale work that uses five women and six men, together with five musicians, who play from a lighted box halfway up the stage. The rhythmic, rich score, by Mr. Shechter with string arrangements by Nell Catchpole, offers the haunting tones of cello, violin, viola and percussion, occasionally overlain by electronic sound and by a disembodied voice discussing chaos and order.

At the start the relationship between the text and the stage landscape can look overly schematic, as brief scenes echo that chaos and order, an architectural disposition in space. But Mr. Shechter soon becomes less literal, and as the lighting (ingeniously designed by Lee Curran) flares and fades, we see the dancers alone, in groups, in pairs: snapshots of lives, tiny narratives untold, actions obsessively repeated.

The endlessly evolving choreographic landscape is superbly theatrical, intensely physical. Mr. Shechter’s ability to keep you looking, hard, at what he is doing is thrilling. And so are these pieces. The fragmented, rich, disordered world they show is the one we live in now.

*The Hofesh Shechter Company will perform through Sunday at Jacob’s Pillow, Becket, Mass.;*  
*(413) 243-0745, [jacobspillow.org](http://jacobspillow.org).*

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