
Hofesh Shechter's Political Mother at the Brighton Dome, review

Part dance show, part heavy-rock gig, Hofesh Shechter's first ever full-length work is an audio-visual marvel. Rating * * * * *

By Mark Monahan

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It's not every dance work that bears the caution: "Warning: noise levels may exceed 100db", or that begins with a lone warrior committing hara-kiri. But then, Israeli-born, London-based Hofesh Shechter is no ordinary choreographer.

His full-length piece, Political Mother, in many ways calls to mind In Your Rooms and Uprising, the diptych with which he first blew audiences away three years ago. The existential anguish; the uniquely tribal, simian steps;

the driving score (by Shechter himself), the cinematic, spot-lit "jump-cuts" between different parts of the stage – all are here, but cranked up to a new, astonishing level.



Stunning: Hofesh Shechter's new work 'Political Mother'

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No sooner has the soldier expired than the smoky auditorium is filled with a pulverising guitar-riff and beat, and two boys suddenly appear at the front of the stage, arms raised as if in desperate supplication. Then the

stage is plunged into darkness, but the music continues for a few seconds, before – at the rear, lit as if trapped in glass cases – five martial-looking percussionists appear from nowhere, each pounding the hell out of a snare-drum. A Stalinesque dictator on a podium adds an indecipherable vocal roar to the swell; below him, five dancers begin a blazing routine; and above, a row of live guitarists crank the music up to a Metallica-like pitch.

Political Mother, then, does not sit around. Throughout, like a crazy film director with a twitchy “edit” finger, Shechter whisks us between different (oppressed) worlds and societies, groups and couples, states of mind and even styles of music. (Some way in to its 75 minutes, in a lovely moment of calm, baroque-style chamber music appears out of nowhere.)

Particularly striking is the way he zaps between exterior spectacle and interior monologue. Sometimes the drummers are simply drummers: part of a fascistic-looking political rally. But at other points, their furious pummelling seems more like a striking audio-visual manifestation of the torment in the dancers’ heads.

Ideally, Shechter might have devised a slightly more varied choreographic palate for each “world” . The hunched, sexy movement and rough-hewn stage geometries could only be by him, and the 10-strong troupe dance (aptly for such an apocalyptic piece) as if there’s no tomorrow – but the steps can be samey. And be warned: the score is played at the sort of volume that rearranges internal organs.

Whatever. Political Mother is a marvel of son et lumière, as ambitious and as heads-down, hair-prickingly exhilarating as modern dance gets – and, on July 14, it hits Sadler’s Wells for a four-night run. Move quickly.

- Tickets for Hofesh Shechter in July: 0844 412 4300

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