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Hofesh Shechter Company

Brighton Dome

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**Judith Mackrell**

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The Art of Not Looking Back may be Hofesh Shechter's first all-female work, but in its physical and emotional power it is as high-voltage as anything he has made for men. Striding the stage with their fists bunched, thrashing up a perfect storm of energy, the six dancers are recklessly, stridently full-on - as is everything else in this work. It opens with Shechter's recorded voice, offering a babble of autobiographical background that is cut short with a stark statement: "My mother left me when I was two." An ear-splitting howl of pain follows. As the voice continues, "No content can fill a broken structure", the work becomes an intensely wrought metaphor of deferred despair - an artist struggling to create, a man trying to fill the deepest gap in his life.

How personal Shechter means this to be is beside the point. The six dancers are driven to fill their own world with movement that ranges from body-shuddering abandon to delicate lines of folk dance. As always with Shechter, the rhythm of the choreography is riveting, meticulously judged, even as the jagged pieces of dance jostle to fit. The performances, too, are stunningly precise. At the end, the clamorous electronic soundtrack gives way to an Urdu song of extraordinary sweetness, and the women begin to backtrack through the choreography. As their movements accelerate to near inhuman speeds, it is like watching the home move of a life unravelling. The pathos and strangeness of this device are like nothing I have seen before.

The backtracking continues through the three dances of the opening half. They all demonstrate the precocity of Shechter's craft, but it is *Untitled* (2005) that sings out his originality - a plangent, funny meditation on the loneliness of the choreographer, Shechter's recorded voice engaging fruitlessly with his dancers in a debate about the epistemological status of his work.