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Political Mother at Brighton Dome

Debra Craine



Hofesh Shechter has a problem with authority and he's not afraid to shout about it. His latest show, *Political Mother*, which had its world premiere at the Brighton Festival, is a noisy, brutal, no-holds-barred attack on power and its destructive, abusive agenda. This is one angry piece, delivered like a roar of defiance in the face of an omnipotent, malevolent force. It's visceral, painful and very, very exciting.

Shechter, an Israeli choreographer based in Britain, has set his sights on the agencies of power — government and the military — but the show's clever subtext is the parallels that he draws between hectoring demagogues and mighty rock gods. Both have the crowd in their hands, both incite a kind of suicide of the ego, leaving the masses totally subservient to their will. It's what they do with that power that frightens Shechter, and of course us.

His choreography loves rhythm (not surprising, since he is also a rock drummer) and his movement rides it with a thrilling commitment. The choreography, set on ten dancers, is filled with images of obeisance and surrender, of primitivism, animalism and mass meltdown, of the destruction of the human spirit and the drive of outright rebellion. But even in the dark void at its centre there is humanity and tenderness, never quite extinguished.

Shechter, whose early training was in folk dance, is a master of ensemble formation, his dancers marching like soldiers or circling like warriors advancing upon prey. His demonic phrases pulse with intense energy and watching this production is like having a gun pointed at your head, which actually happens at one point. The music (which Shechter also takes credit for) is a wall of sound — literally — with guitarists and drummers lined up on a tiered platform at the back of the stage, one above the other. The soundtrack veers between earsplitting rock and contrasting interpolations by other composers (including Bach, Verdi and Joni Mitchell). At times the music seems headed for a sonic breakdown; at others it works to stir our quieter emotional juices. In dance and music, this is a show about sensation and the only way to appreciate it is to sit back and let it happen.

Political Mother is at Sadler's Wells (0844 8710090) July 14-17

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