

APRIL 2009

REVIEW

ballet.*magazine**Hofesh Shechter Company**The Choreographer's Cut:
'In Your Rooms', 'Uprising'**February 2009
London, The Roundhouse**by Graham Watts*

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This performance was not so much about the choreographer's reworking of his two best-known works, but more about the event itself. Shechter is that rare dance maker whose art is seeping into mainstream popular culture. Teenagers all over the UK know of the man who choreographed Mitch Hower's vibrant dance solo to open the second series of *'Skins'*, and thousands of potential extras for C4's teen drama were jamming away in the standing-only central auditorium of the Roundhouse. This was a dance performance that looked and sounded more like a rock gig. A few seats were kept up in the second circle for elderly dance critics and the like. In this crowd anyone over 20 was definitely past it.

Finding these few seats was a test since the lights were down from the moment the house doors opened and an old-fashioned usherette's torch would have been handy. A 20-strong live band commanded the show's opening, perched high above the initially blackened stage, in due course spectacularly illuminated with searchlights criss-crossing the heads of the

packed crowd, before the seven male dancers of *'Uprising'* (which began the programme despite the stated order) stalked menacingly forward in a line from out of the darkness to stand in one-legged attitude at the edge of the stage. From then to the end – eventually reached in a choreographed curtain call that mimicked this opening posture - the choreographer's cut was characterised by a permanent ebullient energy, loud percussive noise and a smoky, aggressive



atmosphere through which dramatic lighting cut like a knife.

Shechter's choreography – in both works –specialises in maximising the full kinetic sphere around each dancer's body, in a manner not unlike early Forsythe movement; and he also demonstrates a complex understanding of the matrices interlinking the dancers' movements within the stage space. His ability to maintain fluid patterns for the full cohort of 17 dancers as the co-ordinated and flexible organism of *'In Your Rooms'* was always beautiful, in a strangely macho and aggressive manner. This is the fifth time that I've seen *'Uprising'* and it is undoubtedly best suited to this lively setting, integrally more profound in relation to the thumping live music from above and melding with the perpetually moving audience dynamic. *'In Your Rooms'* has been evolving all the time, developing to fit the very different spaces of its three co-producing venues (The Place, Sadler's' Wells and the South Bank) and now it has taken a further step – commissioned by Sadler's' Wells – to occupy the unique space of the Roundhouse.



Winifred Burnet-Smith in *The Choreographer's Cut: In Your Rooms/Uprising*

Sitting high above the throng, it seemed that the musicians above, the dancers on stage and the audience in the middle were seamlessly interconnected, integrated into an holistic experience that in all previous performances of either work has hitherto been missing two of these three essential elements.

This wasn't conventional dance in a proscenium theatre, as evidenced by the many young people who were taking photos and filming the performance on mobile phones, but judging by the huge crowd of young people present, the '*rock concert*' experience is certainly part of a new future for dance and Shechter's work fits the crossover model perfectly.

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...apr09/gw_rev_hofesh_shechter_0209.htm

revised: 1 March 2009

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