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Dossier de presse

Saison
20/21

Hofesh Shechter Company

Grand Finale

13 > 16 avr.

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HOFESH SHECHTER COMPANY



Image: Rahi Rezvani

GRAND FINALE

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HOFESH SHECHTER COMPANY PRESENTS

GRAND FINALE

CHOREOGRAPHY & MUSIC BY HOFESH SHECHTER
PERFORMED BY HOFESH SHECHTER COMPANY

'Grand Finale was quite simply one of the most astonishing performances of dance I have seen in the last 30 years.' (Audience member)

Internationally celebrated choreographer Hofesh Shechter's latest work, *Grand Finale*, is a spectacularly bold and ambitious new piece featuring our exceptional ensemble of dancers and a live band of musicians.

Grand Finale is at once comic, bleak and beautiful, evoking a world at odds with itself, full of anarchic energy and violent comedy. Filtering this irrepressible spirit, Shechter creates a vision of a world in freefall: part gig, part dance, part theatre and wholly original.

The company's diverse tribe of extraordinary international dancers come from 9 different countries. They are Robinson Cassarino, Chien-Ming Chang, Frédéric Despierre, Rachel Fallon, Mickaël Frappat, Natalia Gabrielczyk, Yeji Kim, Kim Kohlmann, Erion Kruja, Attila Ronai, Hannah Shepherd with Associate Director Bruno Guillore.

Grand Finale premiered at La Villette Paris with Théâtre de la Ville on 14 June 2017.

Choreography & Music by Hofesh Shechter
Set & Costumes designed by Tom Scutt
Lighting designed by Tom Visser
Music Collaborators: Nell Catchpole and Yaron Engler

Please note our co-commissioner credits must be included in venue brochures and on venue websites:

Produced by Hofesh Shechter Company and commissioned by Georgia Rosengarten.

Our Commissioning Partners are Sadler's Wells, Théâtre de la Ville-Paris / La Villette-Paris and Brighton Dome and Festival. Co-commissioned by Colours International Dance Festival Stuttgart, Les Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg, Romaeuropa Festival, Theatre Royal Plymouth and Marche Teatro / Inteatro Festival together with Danse Danse Montréal, HELLERAU – European Center for the Arts Dresden in cooperation with Dresdner Musikfestspiele, Dansens Hus Oslo, Athens and Epidauros Festival, HOME Manchester and Scène Nationale d'Albi.

Grand Finale is generously supported by the International Music and Arts Foundation.



PRESS QUOTES

ABOUT HOFESH

'The mighty contemporary choreographer – a combination of dance-maker and rock-star, but with film-director sensibilities.' - The Times

'One of the British dance scene's hottest properties, the creator of works that are full of raw, visceral energy, set to blasting percussive scores that he composes himself.' - New York Times

ABOUT GRAND FINALE

Nominated for an Oliver Award 2018 for Best New Dance Production

★★★★★ 'heart-stopping...Hofesh Shechter's [Grand Finale] has arrived with a bang' - Laura Capelle, Financial Times

'Choreographic fireworks... Set, music, pounding percussion and dancers bodies soaring high, the apocalypse of Grand Finale shakes the compass of tribal dance. A must see.' - Rosita Boisseau, Le Monde

'An epic fresco of body and emotion ... Hofesh Shechter is the king of dramatic contrast' - Marie Soyeux, La Croix

★★★★★ 'A mature and magnificent work ... sulphurous, visceral and surprisingly tender' - Neil Norman, The Stage

★★★★★ 'a wild waltz for the end of time ... (Grand Finale) ranks among Shechter's most sophisticated creations' - Judith Mackrell, The Guardian

★★★★★ 'The ultimate danse macabre [...] Hofesh Shechter's existential anguish and his often beautiful choreography fight to the death' - Luke Jennings, The Observer

'You marvel at the sustained pulse of their fierce energy: Shechter dancers seem a breed unlike any other [...] It is an ironic expression of a dark theme, of a world out of control and maybe heading for doom; a bleak vision in which even a sly humour is cruel, and we are dancing on the edge of the precipice' - David Dougill, The Sunday Times

'Life flirts with morbidity in Grand Finale, a touching and exhilarating work loaded with emotion. The Israeli choreographer, in his artistic prime, reveals once again the evocative power of his abstract and expressionist creations based on a mastery of rhythm and explosive sounds [...] Not to be missed.' - Mélanie Carpentier, Le Devoir

Image: Rahi Rezvani



PROGRAMME NOTE

WRITTEN BY SARAH CROMPTON

“Many times people want to know what I meant in a particular dance piece,” says Hofesh Shechter, thoughtfully. “And I think it doesn't really matter. What matters is what happens on stage, then if something happens to the audience when they watch it. Or not.”

This is an unexpected observation from a choreographer whose works from *Cult*, to the mighty *Political Mother*, to *barbarians*, seem to burn with meaning and the need to be understood. But it springs from his sense that people can be put off dance if they feel they don't grasp what is unfolding in front of them and are failing a type of test. “When someone sits and watches the performance, it is about what is happening to them in their head, how they feel. It doesn't matter that they get it right in some way.”

Having said all that, it would be impossible to miss the fact that *Grand Finale* reflects the uncertainty and confusion of the troubled times we are living in. He explains: “I was curious observing the news that there's this sense that things get out of control and people get panicked or excited. Everything collapses but it's almost like a celebration. It's a chaotic state of being, it's an apocalypse, and yet there is something amusing about it. Perhaps from an optimistic point of view, it's part of the cycle of life and evolution. Things collapse, and then we build them up again.”

Shechter also wanted to explore the way in which society itself is responding to crisis. “Everybody's an observer these days,” he says. “None of us feel personally responsible, even though all of us are equally responsible. It's a funny place we're in.”

The title of the piece, with its reference to the flourishes of classical ballet, underlines its mix of deep seriousness and playfulness. “I like that it's clashing with what is essentially quite a dark work,” he says. “It's a title I've wanted to use for a few years and I thought I had better use it while I was still young. To me, it's **very funny.**”

That mixture of bleak humour and profound themes has always characterised Shechter's creations. But the actual genesis of *Grand Finale* was prompted by his desire to explore new territory as a choreographer, extending and deepening a vocabulary that is instantly recognisable. “I think I get bored quite easily. I am quite aware that I could reproduce, more or less, my earlier work and probably survive. But I don't know why I would do that. It would be really boring if I did *Uprising x 10*. I have a style, I have a taste and I have things that excite me, but I want to set myself new challenges.”

Grand Finale is a work that both looks back and breaks new ground, he explains. The new ground involves his decision to work with a designer for the first time, and with a group of musicians playing classical compositions rather than his own soundtrack. “It made a big difference having scenery,” he says, of his collaboration with Tom Scutt. “I had some sleepless nights about that. Tom and I went through a journey of trying to understand exactly what we were doing.”

The set originated from a dream he had, of a city made out of Japanese paper. “Tom looked at it and said ‘OK, we’re not going to do that, but it is a good starting point.’” Scutt’s final designs, of structures moved by the dancers, that seem to float across the stage, allow Shechter to shape the space, not only with light, but physically. The effects generated, in turn, inspired the dance that unfolds within them. “The idea was to create a setting that is a solid, hard world and yet everything is flexible, everything is nothing.”

In the same way, the band became integral to the action and to the themes. “I was craving to come back to live music because of that urgency it creates in performance, and I didn’t want to do something I had done before. So I imagined the musicians keeping the human flame alive. I explained it to Tom and he said, ‘Oh, like the Titanic’ and then we dressed them in that way. Regardless of what happens around them they keep on going, they don’t panic. They just keep the love together, and the harmony.”

Simultaneously, Shechter returned to basics in the actual creation of the piece. He worked with his dancers in a studio in a remote village in Italy, far from the madding crowd. The concentration and peace was “amazing,” he says and it triggered a burst of ideas. “I felt I wanted to go back into something I had abandoned for a few years, which was dealing with the actual skilfulness of choreography, of actually moving bodies on stage.

“We started in a very experimental manner, trying to develop the material. For me the group working together in contact was a big thing that hadn’t happened before in my work. And a lot of things that actually happen on stage were discovered in the studio. For example, I didn’t come in with the idea of waltzing dead bodies; we were just playing and I liked something about the bluntness and the humour and the emotion of it.”

In the past, especially when under pressure, he has found the process of choreography difficult. “There is a place deep inside me that is quite dark. When I go into creation, people who are close to me know that I disappear and apparently I am not that much fun in those periods. It is like a soul-searching. And then the work comes out.”

Because he mines his own interests and his own life so strongly for inspiration, the pieces that emerge can feel exposing. “But I stand behind the idea of going with what happens and not being too careful because it’s all part of the process and part of the growing and the pushing yourself. Part of the scary thing about being a choreographer is that you don’t have a script but you have to be confident – or even if you’re unconfident, you have to keep on working.”

With *Grand Finale*, he found liberation in the exploratory approach, tentatively trying out ideas and seeing where they took him. “It was very hard to envisage what was going to happen. *Grand Finale* is quite a messy piece but at the same time there is something very clear about it. It’s one of the first times that I have actually finished a piece and look forward to doing the next one. I might go back into the studio and get a slap in the meeting with reality but something has opened up for me – a sense that there are so many options.”

For a choreographer who has been acclaimed as the future of the dance since the moment his piece *Cult* won the audience award at the Place Prize in 2004, the need to have an ongoing sense of discovery is acute. Both the outside world and his inner desire to make new work, constantly push him onward. But the journey is never simple.

“Looking at the future of your creation is like looking at the ocean in the night,” he explains. “You know it is there, and you might be able to swim as far as you can, you might not, you just don’t know.”

“So really, at the moment of *Cult* I couldn't know that I was going to make a piece like *Grand Finale*. Creation is something that happens in the time you are in; it’s an art of being in the moment. “

Sarah Crompton is a writer and broadcaster

CREDITS

HOFESH SHECHTER COMPANY PRESENTS
GRAND FINALE
CHOREOGRAPHY & MUSIC BY HOFESH SHECHTER
PERFORMED BY HOFESH SHECHTER COMPANY

CREATIVE TEAM

Choreography & Music	Hofesh Shechter
Set & Costume Designer	Tom Scutt
Lighting Designer	Tom Visser
Music Collaborators	Nell Catchpole and Yaron Engler
Associate Artistic Director	Bruno Guillore
Design Assistant (Set & Costume)	Rosie Elnile

PERFORMERS

Dancers: Robinson Cassarino, Chien-Ming Chang, Frédéric Despierre (Rehearsal Assistant 1), Rachel Fallon, Mickaël Frappat, Natalia Gabrielczyk, Yeji Kim (Rehearsal Assistant 2), Kim Kohlmann, Erion Kruja, Attila Ronai, Hannah Shepherd (**subject to changes; please check before publishing**)

MUSIC

Original Score	Hofesh Shechter
Music Collaborators	Nell Catchpole and Yaron Engler
Percussion on Soundtrack	Hofesh Shechter with Yaron Engler
Score transcribed by	Christopher Allan

Additional Music: 'Merry Widow Waltz' by Franz Lehar, as performed by the London Philharmonic Orchestra and by arrangement with Glocken Verlag Limited, Andante Cantabile String Quartet No.1 and Suite No. 4 in G Major by Pyotr Tchaikovsky and 'Russian Tune' by Vladimir Zaldwich



COMMISSIONERS

Produced by Hofesh Shechter Company and commissioned by Georgia Rosengarten.

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Grand Finale is generously supported by the International Music and Art Foundation.

FOR HOFESH SHECHTER COMPANY

Board of Directors: Gerard Lemos (Chair), Sarah Coop, Jason Gonsalves, Jonny Kanagasooriam, Martine Simmonds

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Hofesh Shechter Company is supported using public funding through Arts Council England. Hofesh Shechter Company benefits from the support of BNP Paribas Foundation for the development of its projects.

Hofesh Shechter is an Associate Artist of Sadler's Wells and Hofesh Shechter Company is Resident Company at Brighton Dome.

The Health and Wellbeing Programme is delivered by GJUMM www.gjuum.com



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ENGLAND**

ABOUT THE COMPANY

A boundary-breaking dance company that produces exceptional work created by Hofesh Shechter, with at our core a diverse tribe of extraordinary international dancers.

Based in the UK, but playing on major stages throughout the world, our work celebrates and inspires the freedom of the human spirit.

We believe that dance has the ability to prod and poke and tap into our deepest emotions; a visceral part of ourselves that we rarely access in modern life.

We dance to know what it feels like, not just to live, but to be alive. In all our work, we strive to move ourselves, and our audiences, beyond reason.

Founded in 2008, our repertoire includes *Uprising* (2006), *In your rooms* (2007), *The Art of Not Looking Back* (2009), *Political Mother* (2010), *Political Mother: The Choreographer's Cut* (2011), *Sun* (2013), *barbarians* (2015) and *Grand Finale* (2017). We have played in cities around the world including Paris, New York, Melbourne, Tokyo, Berlin, Tel Aviv, Rome, Seoul, Rio de Janeiro and many more.

2018 saw the continuing international tour of *Grand Finale*; a revival of Hofesh's production of Gluck's *Orphée et Eurydice* at La Scala, Milan, co-directed with John Fulljames and a UK and international tour of *SHOW* performed by our apprentice company, Shechter II. *East Wall*, our four year talent development project, culminated in a large-scale spectacle of dance and live music at the Tower of London, in partnership with East London Dance, Historic Royal Palaces and LIFT, and BBC Two presented our first dance film, *Hofesh Shechter's Clowns*, which was broadcast in September as part of the Performance Live strand to exceptional and extensive new audiences for the company's work.

For more details of forthcoming work, to access our learning resources and to join our mailing list, please visit www.hofesh.co.uk



BIOGRAPHIES

HOFESH SHECHTER CHOREOGRAPHY & MUSIC FULL BIOGRAPHY

Choreographer Hofesh Shechter OBE is recognised as one of the most exciting artists making stage work today. Inspired by influences as diverse as Israeli folkdance, rock-gigs, installation art and film, his immersive and high-energy dance work is performed to percussive, cinematic musical scores that he composes himself. Since 2008 his eponymous company has performed at leading festivals and on major stages from Rio to Sydney, Shanghai to New York, winning him a passionate worldwide following.

Following his choreographic debut, *Fragments*, in 2003, Hofesh was commissioned by The Place Prize in 2004 to create *Cult*, winning the Audience Choice Award. This was followed in 2006 by *Uprising*, a work for seven men that has since been staged on companies around the world.

In 2007, The Place, Southbank Centre and Sadler's Wells Theatre commissioned Hofesh to create *In your rooms*, which earned him the Critics' Circle Award for Best Choreography (Modern). In 2008, Hofesh formed Hofesh Shechter Company, which rapidly established an international reputation. Sadler's Wells subsequently commissioned him to create *Uprising/In your rooms: The Choreographer's Cut* (2009), which was performed at London's iconic Roundhouse. That same year Hofesh was commissioned by Brighton Festival to create *The Art of Not Looking Back* for six female dancers.

His first full-length work *Political Mother* – commissioned by venues in Paris, Lyon, Rome, London and Barcelona – also had its premiere at Brighton Festival in 2010, and a year later he re-visited the work to create *Political Mother: The Choreographer's Cut*, which toured rock venues in Berlin, Montpellier, London, Paris and Hong Kong. Hofesh collaborated with Antony Gormley in 2012 to create *Survivor* for the Barbican Centre. His 2013 work *Sun* toured extensively after opening at Melbourne Festival. July 2015 saw the premiere of his trilogy, *barbarians*, at Berliner Festspiele. As part of #Hofest (2015), a 4 week season showcasing a range of Hofesh's work across four iconic London venues, he premiered Gluck's *Orphée et Eurydice*, co-directed with John Fulljames, at the Royal Opera House. *Grand Finale* is his latest full-length work, which premiered at La Villette with Théâtre de la Ville in Paris on June 14th, 2017 and was nominated for an Olivier Award for Best New Dance Production.

He has also worked as a choreographer in theatre, television and opera notably at The Royal Court Theatre for *Motortown* by Simon Stephens (2006), *The Arsonists* (2007), and for the National Theatre's award winning production of *Saint Joan* (2007). In television Hofesh choreographed the hit dance sequence 'Maxxie's Dance' for the opening of the second series of Channel 4's popular drama *Skins*. In 2013 Hofesh created the choreography for Nico Mulhy's opera *Two Boys* at the Metropolitan Opera, New York. Hofesh was Guest Director of Brighton Festival in 2014. He premiered a new work *Untouchable* (2015) for the Royal Ballet, at the Royal Opera House performed to a score co-composed by Hofesh and long-time collaborator, Nell Catchpole. He choreographed Bartlett Sher's new version of *Fiddler On The Roof* (2015) on Broadway, for which he was nominated for a Tony Award. His creation, *Clowns*, for Nederlands Dans Theater premiered in April 2016 and is being performed as part of *SHOW* throughout 2018 by his apprentice company, Shechter II, who received the Prix de la critique award for Meilleurs Interprètes - Best Performers – at Théâtre des Abbesses in Paris. He recently created a special version of his iconic all-female production, *The Art of Not Looking Back*, with Paris Opera Ballet (2018).

In 2018 Hofesh Shechter was awarded an honorary OBE for Services to Dance and the company's first dance film, *Hofesh Shechter's Clowns*, was broadcast by the BBC in September to great acclaim. Hofesh Shechter is an associate artist of Sadler's Wells Theatre. Hofesh Shechter Company are a Resident Company at Brighton Dome.

HOFESH SHECHTER - CHOREOGRAPHY & MUSIC - SHORT BIOGRAPHY

Choreographer Hofesh Shechter OBE is recognised as one of the most exciting artists making stage work today, renowned for composing atmospheric musical scores to compliment the unique physicality of his movement. He is Artistic Director of the UK-based Hofesh Shechter Company, formed in 2008. The company are resident at Brighton Dome and Shechter is an Associate Artist of Sadler's Wells.

Hofesh Shechter's repertoire for the company includes *Uprising* (2006), *In your rooms* (2007), *The Art of Not Looking Back* (2009), *Political Mother* (2010), *Political Mother: The Choreographer's Cut* (2011), *Sun* (2013), *barbarians* (2015), *Grand Finale* (2017) and *SHOW* (2018) with his apprentice company, Shechter II.

Shechter has also staged and choreographed works on leading international dance companies including the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Batsheva Ensemble, Candoco Dance Company, Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet, Nederlands Dans Theater 1, Paris Opera Ballet, Royal Ballet and Royal Ballet Flanders.

He has choreographed for theatre, television and opera, notably at the Metropolitan Opera (New York) for Nico Mulhy's *Two Boys*, the Royal Court on *Motortown* and *The Arsonists*, the National Theatre on *Saint Joan* and for the Channel 4 series *Skins*. As part of #HOFEST, a 4 week festival celebrating Shechter's work across 4 iconic London venues, he co-directed Gluck's *Orphée et Eurydice* with John Fulljames at the Royal Opera House. In 2016 he received a Tony Award nomination for his choreography for the Broadway revival of *Fiddler on the Roof*.

Grand Finale is the latest full-length work in his canon, which premiered at La Villette with Théâtre de la Ville in Paris on June 14th, 2017 and was nominated for an Olivier Award for Best New Dance Production.

In 2018 Hofesh Shechter was awarded an honorary OBE for Services to Dance and the company's first dance film, *Hofesh Shechter's Clowns*, was broadcast by the BBC in September to great acclaim.

TOM SCUTT - SET AND COSTUME DESIGNER

Tom was nominated for a Tony and an Outer Critics' Circle Best Costume Design Award for *King Charles III*.

Tom is also an Associate Artist for The Donmar Warehouse and has designed the 2015 and 2016 MTV Video Music Awards.

Theatre: *King Charles III* (Almeida/West End/Broadway); *Constellations* (Royal Court/West End/Manhattan Theatre Club); *The Deep Blue Sea*, *Medea*, *13* (National); *Jesus Christ Superstar* (Regent's Park Open Air Theatre); *Elegy*, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* (also Broadway), *The Weir* (Donmar); *A Number* (Nuffield/Young Vic); *Mr Burns*, *King Lear*, *Through A Glass Darkly* (Almeida); *East is East* (Trafalgar Studios/UK Tour); *Hope*, *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas*, *No Quarter*, *Remembrance Day* (Royal Court); *Absent Friends* (West End); *South Downs/The Browning Version* (Chichester/West End); *The Life of Galileo*, *The Merchant of Venice* (also Almeida) *Romeo and Juliet* (RSC); *Edward Gant's Amazing Feats of Loneliness*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Headlong); *On Off* (Aarhus Teater Denmark); *The Lion*, *The Witch and The Wardrobe* (Kensington Gardens).

Opera: *Wozzeck* (English National Opera); *How The Whale Became* (ROH); *The Flying Dutchman* (Scottish Opera); *Rigoletto* (OHP).

In 2007, Tom received Linbury Biennial Prize for Stage Design and the Jocelyn Herbert Award for his work with Headlong Theatre. In 2013, he then received the Whatsonstage Award for Best Set Designer for *Constellations* and *The Lion*, *The Witch and The Wardrobe*.

Image: Rahi Rezvani



TOM VISSER - LIGHTING DESIGNER

Irish lighting designer Tom Visser joined Shechter's team for *Grand Finale* for their first creative collaboration. Recent work includes Crystal Pite's new creation, *Flight Pattern*, for the Royal Ballet season 16/17. His work with other choreographers includes for Alexander Ekman, Johan Inger and Joeri Dubbe.

Tom was born to a theatrical family. He began his career in musical theatre and later turned to contemporary dance as a member of Nederlands Dans Theater. He began his career as a lighting designer in the mid-2000s and has since worked extensively as a designer for dance, working with companies including Nederlands Dans Theater, Royal Swedish Ballet, Compañía Nacional de Danza, Norwegian National Ballet, Ballet Vlaanderen, Sydney Dance Company, Göteborg Ballet, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, Les Ballets de Monte-Carlo and Balé da Cidade de São Paulo.

YARON ENGLER - MUSIC COLLABORATOR

Yaron Engler is a drummer, speaker and a mentor.

After graduating Summa Cum Laude from Berklee College of Music, Yaron became involved in the creation and production of projects across the US, Europe and Israel. He is a long-time collaborator with Hofesh and has played a leading role in producing many of Hofesh's major productions.

Yaron took part in the creation of Akram Khan's piece *Until The Lions* and is currently touring with the company.

Yaron composed the music for the 2016 Open Theatre Production of Shakespeare's play *Henry V*. He was commissioned to create the opening piece of the 2014 Walled City Tattoo in Derry while his trio *After They Left* was commissioned to create the sound track for John Ross - the New Adventures Award winner that year.

Fluent in three languages, Yaron has delivered workshops, masterclasses and talks in Europe, Asia, USA, New Zealand and Australia. He was a featured speaker at TEDx Jaffa in 2012.

NELL CATCHPOLE - MUSIC COLLABORATOR

Nell studied classical violin and holds an MA in Social Anthropology. She specialises in exploring and creating new work and processes across art forms.

In 1995, she co-founded music theatre company, The Gogmagogs with theatre director, Lucy Bailey, who have toured extensively worldwide. Nell has since composed music for several of Lucy's theatre productions.

Nell has worked as a creative partner and musical director with choreographer, Hofesh Shechter since 2007. In 2015, she co-composed the music for *Untouchable* with Hofesh, a new piece commissioned by the Royal Ballet and Orchestra of the Royal Opera House.

She has worked extensively with Brian Eno, arranging and recording strings on his solo albums as well as with John Cale and U2. Other recording credits include string arrangements for Mumford and Sons on their first two albums. In 2012, she composed and devised the music for the live band in Kate Tempest's *Brand New Ancients* which won a Herald Angel at the 2013 Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

Nell is Course Leader on the Masters in Leadership Programme at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.



Rehearsal Image: Victor Frankowski

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