

Hofesh Shechter Company

ARTS FESTIVAL
AUCKLAND
March 7-24 2019



GRAND FINALE

21-23 March • ASB Theatre, Aotea Centre



hofesh

HOFESH SHECHTER COMPANY

Internationally celebrated choreographer Hofesh Shechter's latest work, *Grand Finale*, is a spectacularly bold and ambitious new piece featuring an 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 eight different countries. They are Robinson Cassarino, Chien-Ming Chang, Frédéric Despierre, Rachel Fallon, Mickaël Frappat, Yeji Kim, Kim Kohlmann, Erion Kruja, Attila Ronai and Hannah Shepherd, with Associate Artistic Director Bruno Guillore.

The musicians are James Adams, Christopher Allan, Rebekah Allan, Sabio Janiak and Richard Phillips.

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

Creatives

Choreography & Music

Hofesh Shechter

Set & Costume Designer

Tom Scutt

Lighting Designer

Tom Visser

Music Collaborators

Nell Catchpole

Yaron Engler

Associate Artistic Director

Bruno Guillore

Design Assistant

(Set + Costume)

Rosie Elnile

Production

Technical Manager

MJ Holland

Re-Lighter

Andrej Gubanov

Sound Technician

Laura Hammond

Stage Manager

Leon Smith

Assistant

Stage Manager

Emma Dymott

Tour Manager

Linda Peterkopa

Music

Original Score

Hofesh Shechter

Percussion on Soundtrack

Hofesh Shechter

with Yaron Engler

Score transcribed by

Christopher Allan

Musicians

James Adams

Christopher Allan

Rebekah Allan

Sabio Janiak

Richard Phillips

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

Performers

Robinson Cassarino

Chien-Ming Chang

Frédéric Despierre (*Rehearsal Assistant 1*)

Rachel Fallon

Mickaël Frappat

Yeji Kim (*Rehearsal Assistant 2*)

Kim Kohlmann

Erion Kruja

Attila Ronai

Hannah Shepherd

Produced by Hofesh Shechter Company and commissioned by Georgia Rosengarten.

Commissioning Partners: 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 Dresden Musikfestspiele, Dansens Hus Oslo, Athens and Epidaurus Festival, HOME Manchester and Scène Nationale d'Albi.

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

1hr 45mins inc. interval (20 mins)

COVER & IMAGES: RAHI REZVANI
HOFESH SHECHTER PORTRAIT:
HUGO GLENDINNING

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“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.”





Biographies



HOFESH SHECHTER 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.

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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 gjumm.com



HOFESH SHECHTER
Choreography & Music

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.

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 four week festival celebrating Shechter's work across four 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.

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.

TOM SCUTT

Set & Costume Designer

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

Tom is a Donmar Associate Artist and curator of the Donmar on Design festival. He was Creative Director for Christine and The Queens at Salle Pleyel, Paris and Sam Smith at Tate Modern. He was Production Designer for MTV Video Music Awards 2015 at Microsoft Centre and 2016 at Madison Square Garden.

Theatre: *Berberian Sound Studio* (as Co-Designer), *Belleville*, *The Lady from the Sea*, *Elegy*, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* (& Booth, NY), *The Weir* (& Wyndham's) (Donmar); *Summer and Smoke* (Almeida/Duke of York's); *Jesus Christ Superstar* (& Lyric Opera, Chicago/Barbican), *Little Shop of Horrors* (Regent's Park Open Air Theatre); *King Charles III* (Almeida/West End/Broadway); *Constellations* (Royal Court/West End/Manhattan Theatre Club); *Julie*, *The Deep Blue Sea*, *Medea*, *T3* (National); *Woyzeck* (Old Vic); *A Number* (Nuffield/Young Vic); *The Merchant of Venice*, *Mr Burns – a Post Electric Play*, *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); *The Life of Galileo*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Merchant of Venice* (RSC); *The Lion*, *the Witch and the Wardrobe – WhatsOnStage Award* (Kensington Gardens).

Opera and dance: *Tosca* (Opera North); *How the Whale Became* (ROH); *Wozzeck* (ENO); *The Flying Dutchman* (Scottish Opera); *Rigoletto* (Opera Holland Park).

As Director: *Berberian Sound Studio* (Donmar).

TOM VISSER

Lighting Designer

Irish lighting designer Tom Visser joined Shechter's team for *Grand Finale* as their first creative collaboration.

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.

Other work includes Crystal Pite's creation, *Flight Pattern*, for the Royal Ballet season 16/17, as well as work with other choreographers including Alexander Ekman, Johan Inger and Joeri Dubbe.

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/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.

YARON ENGLER

Music Collaborator

Yaron Engler is a drummer, speaker and educator.

He has been involved in artistic and educational projects across Europe, USA, Asia and Australia and was a featured speaker at TEDxJaffa.

He is a long-time collaborator with Hofesh and played a leading role in the creation of some of the company's major productions and tours around the world (*Grand Finale*, *Political Mother*, *In Your Rooms*, *Survivor*, *Uprising* and the *Choreographer's Cut* versions).

Yaron was involved in the creation of Akram Khan's piece *Until The Lions* (2016) and has been touring with his company as drummer and performer.

Yaron composed the music for the 2016 Open Theatre Production of Shakespeare's play *Henry V* and the opening piece of the 2014 *Walled City Tattoo* in Derry.

His most recent recordings include his album *Release* and his trio *After They Left*.

Yaron is the founder of UpBeat where he uses music, drums and rhythms as tools to help organisations create long lasting transformation in the areas of Leadership, Teamwork and Communication.

He is a Summa Cum Laude graduate of Berklee College of Music and holds a certificate in Body Mind Healing.

Te Ahurei Toi o Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland Arts Festival is a place for ambitious ideas by storytellers, provocateurs and creators.

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