

# HOFESH SHECHTER COMPANY



## AS & A LEVEL STUDY NOTES

[www.hofesh.co.uk](http://www.hofesh.co.uk)

For students and teachers wishing to study Hofesh Shechter's work. These notes are intended to be used alongside a short film resource.

**"...a mix of explosive choreography and sensory musical overload... in adding the vibe of a rock concert to contemporary dance, Shechter is bringing the form to life for a new generation of spectators."** **William McEvoy, The Stage**

**“Political Mother is... as ambitious and as heads-down, hair-prickingly exhilarating as modern dance gets... Part dance show, part heavy-rock gig, Hofesh Shechter’s first ever full-length work is an audio-visual marvel... existential anguish; the uniquely tribal, simian steps; the driving score (by Shechter himself); the cinematic, spot-lit “jump-cuts” between different parts of the stage – all are here, but cranked up to a new, astonishing level.”**  
**Mark Monahan, The Telegraph**



From September 2016 Hofesh Shechter will be a Named Artist on the new specifications for both AS and A Level Dance.

In order to help students and teachers who wish to use Hofesh’s work as a stimulus to perform a solo in the style of a specified practitioner, Hofesh and the company offer a short film resource and these accompanying notes.

In this context Hofesh shares an extract from his 2010 work *Political Mother*, which he feels best encapsulates his movement style. The extract in this film is danced by company member Chien-Ming Chang (known to us all as Ming) who was an original cast member of *Political Mother*.

### A word from Hofesh

“When creating your solo, I really hope that you will enjoy discovering for yourself some of the juiciness and anarchy that we try to connect to when we are performing *Political Mother*. It’s wild, it’s precise, it’s angry, and it’s fun. I wish you all the best in your dance studies. Make sure you are enjoying it... and work hard!”

### Watch the resource film here:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=0-OiffUY5uQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0-OiffUY5uQ)

### FEATURED IN THE FILM RESOURCE

Dancer Chien-Ming Chang

Associate Artistic Director Bruno Guilloro

Participation Producer Lucy Moelwyn-Hughes

## THEMES IN POLITICAL MOTHER

**“The choreography 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.”** Debra Craine, *The Times*

Thinking about the overall themes Hofesh explores in *Political Mother* may be helpful as a stimulus for creating your own solo.

The full work tackles themes of oppression and rebellion, subservience and elation as well as neediness and power. Hofesh discusses these themes and his creative process in an interview, given when he was creating *Political Mother* in 2010. This interview can be found in the *Political Mother* resource pack (pages 3 - 5):

[www.hofesh.co.uk/participation/resources-for-teaches-and-students](http://www.hofesh.co.uk/participation/resources-for-teaches-and-students)

More recently, Hofesh has said, “As a piece of work, *Political Mother* is full of opposites, of contradictions... We have ‘the losers’ - they are the oppressed part of our society - versus the high energy, tribal band of entertainers. We also have a rock band at the back of the stage. We have a politician/dictator figure who is shouting loudly, though we are not sure what he says. There are very quiet moments where the dancers do very little, very subtle movements. So very subtle things happen on stage, and very wild things happen on stage. It is, at its heart, a piece of opposites.”

### Resource packs

The company already offers in-depth resource packs for contextual studies on Hofesh’s five major works; *Uprising* (2006), *The Art of Not Looking Back* (2008), *Political Mother* (2010), *Sun* (2013) and *barbarians* (2015). There will also be a sixth in-depth resource pack to accompany Hofesh’s full-length creation in 2017. These resources all contain interviews with Hofesh about his work, influences and process, break down studies of different elements in the works, creative tasks sections with ideas for development, footage extracts, and much more.

All of these comprehensive resources can be downloaded for free by visiting: [www.hofesh.co.uk/participation/resources-for-teaches-and-students](http://www.hofesh.co.uk/participation/resources-for-teaches-and-students)

# GENERAL THEMES IN HOFESH'S MOVEMENT LANGUAGE

Considering one or two of the key elements in Hofesh's movement vocabulary may be a useful starting point for your solo:

Hofesh's movement is in his own words "...a combination of all the things I know and all that I have been exposed to". This is a mixture of pedestrian, urban grooves with both folk dance and classical references, always driven by his music composition. In 2011 he started the process of trying to quantify what this movement vocabulary is, and what the underlying and fundamental principles of his dance language are. From this four main themes, that broadly encompass Hofesh's work and methodology, emerged:

## 1. Energy & Emotion

"The movement is born from the inside out, we connect to the sensation, concentrating on the feeling more than on any other technical or even physical aspect. The emphasis should be on energy and emotion rather than shape."

**Hofesh**

Improvisation is a useful tool, to connect to the energy and emotion of your own movement. It is a key component in Hofesh's creative process and the company use it to warm up. Being comfortable improvising can take time and patience. Having the confidence to go with your energy - in response to the music, to others in the room - is a skill that comes with practice, breathing and letting go. Use Hofesh's warm up ideas and images from this video for improvisation stimulus and inspiration:

[www.vimeo.com/131820606](http://www.vimeo.com/131820606)

## 2. Totality

"Totality means that every instruction you give to your body will be applied to the whole of it. Totality is what makes us simple as dancers. Use images as tools to find this sensation of totality - dancing in water/honey, strings connecting our extremities, dancing inside a stretchy bubble, dancing in total silence, or dancing continuously."

**Hofesh**

Perhaps this notion of your whole body being fluid and connected is an idea that grabs you. If so then follow that instinct. Use Hofesh's imagery suggestions of moving through honey, thick treacle, or water to find this totality in your own body. Pay attention to your hands, which are often forgotten! Open your palms as you move, have an awareness of your skin, your back, the soles of your feet. Try moving for 2 minutes continuously and quietly inside an imaginary bubble full of water to feel totality throughout your body. Apply this sensation to your solo material.

**"Hofesh Shechter's latest work detonates on stage in a scattershot of shattering political imagery... Shechter has created a work of galvanising challenging power..."**

**Judith Mackrell, The Guardian**

## 3. Groove & Rhythm

"The urge to move to music is essential to developing our musicality as dancers. 'Feeling the groove' is finding the most natural, harmonious and positive way of moving - movement that is led not by order or by force, but by pleasure and enjoyment. Always come back to the simplicity of connecting to the groove and the music if you get lost... it means you are re-connecting to your body's instincts." **Hofesh**

This is a great starting point; you can see how the extract in this film is driven by Hofesh's music composition. Find some good pulsing music that instinctively makes you want to move. A consistent rhythm that builds is what you should aim for. See what happens when you allow your body to be driven by the music, when it's nice and loud, and you let yourself be guided by your physical instincts. See what movement you come up with intuitively and then develop it!

If you wish to use music from *Political Mother*, composed by Hofesh, you can buy the album download via our shop:

[www.ebay.co.uk/usr/hofeshco](http://www.ebay.co.uk/usr/hofeshco)

## 4. Floorwork

"It is extremely natural for me to go down to the floor when creating movement material. I find that every second or third movement I come up with whilst creating will take me down to the floor. Fluidity is a huge helping factor in floor work. It means that you are naturally finding a way in and out of the floor, concentrating on the continuity of the movement therefore not seeing the floor as an obstacle, but as a tool, as a helper, a supporter to the movement."

**Hofesh**

There are small moments of floorwork in this extract. Watch how Ming moves seamlessly from standing to lunging (see film: 09:04). He needs real strength to do this, especially in his legs and centre. As part of their weekly classes, all of the company work on strength training with GJUUM, to increase their stability and stamina. You can find out more about GJUUM here: [www.gjuum.com](http://www.gjuum.com)

## Inspiration...

Consider a few of these themes that inspire you, and that you think are demonstrated by the extract Ming dances in this film. Use them as a base for your solo, taking advantage of Hofesh's warm up tasks as inspiration. You can access these tasks here:

[www.vimeo.com/131924640](http://www.vimeo.com/131924640)

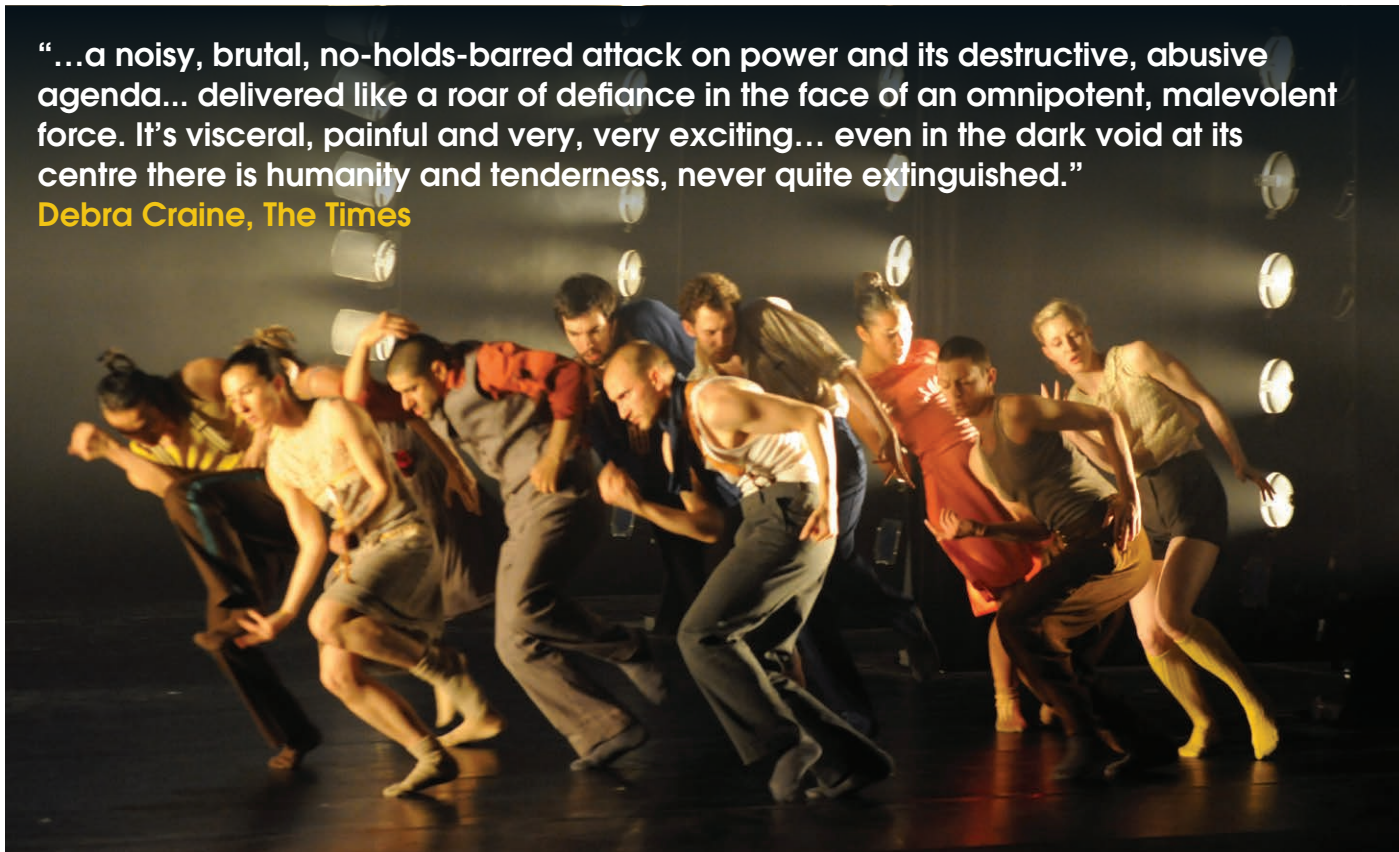


## FILM EXTRACT - BREAKDOWN FOR STUDY

"This extract from *Political Mother* that you are going to work with is about opposites. There is a lot of looseness in the movement, and you will also see a lot of punch, a lot of energy, a lot of wildness in it. There is precision there too, a lot of tension. So see if you can find the different energies when you start to learn it. The most interesting thing about this part for me is the ability to move from one energy to another very, very quickly... to tell a lot of stories in a short amount of time. To go from something that is extremely soft to something that is extremely wild, to something that is extremely precise and tight, extremely tense. It's pulsing, punchy... sentimental, emotional, harsh. You know, all of these things can exist in a very short amount of time, one after the other." **Hofesh Shechter**

**"...a noisy, brutal, no-holds-barred attack on power and its destructive, abusive agenda... delivered like a roar of defiance in the face of an omnipotent, malevolent force. It's visceral, painful and very, very exciting... even in the dark void at its centre there is humanity and tenderness, never quite extinguished."**

**Debra Craine, *The Times***



Watch the [resource film](#) a few times and consider the following:

### Timing

You'll notice the timing and rhythm of Ming's feet in the close up. Listen to how Bruno chants this rhythm when he rehearses Ming in this extract. Can you develop a similar attention to rhythm in your own solo, using Ming's stamping as a starting point?

### Use of space

The solo starts on the spot, then circles away and back to the starting point. When you devise your own solo, think about the circular floor patterns you could make as you migrate away from the centre and back again.

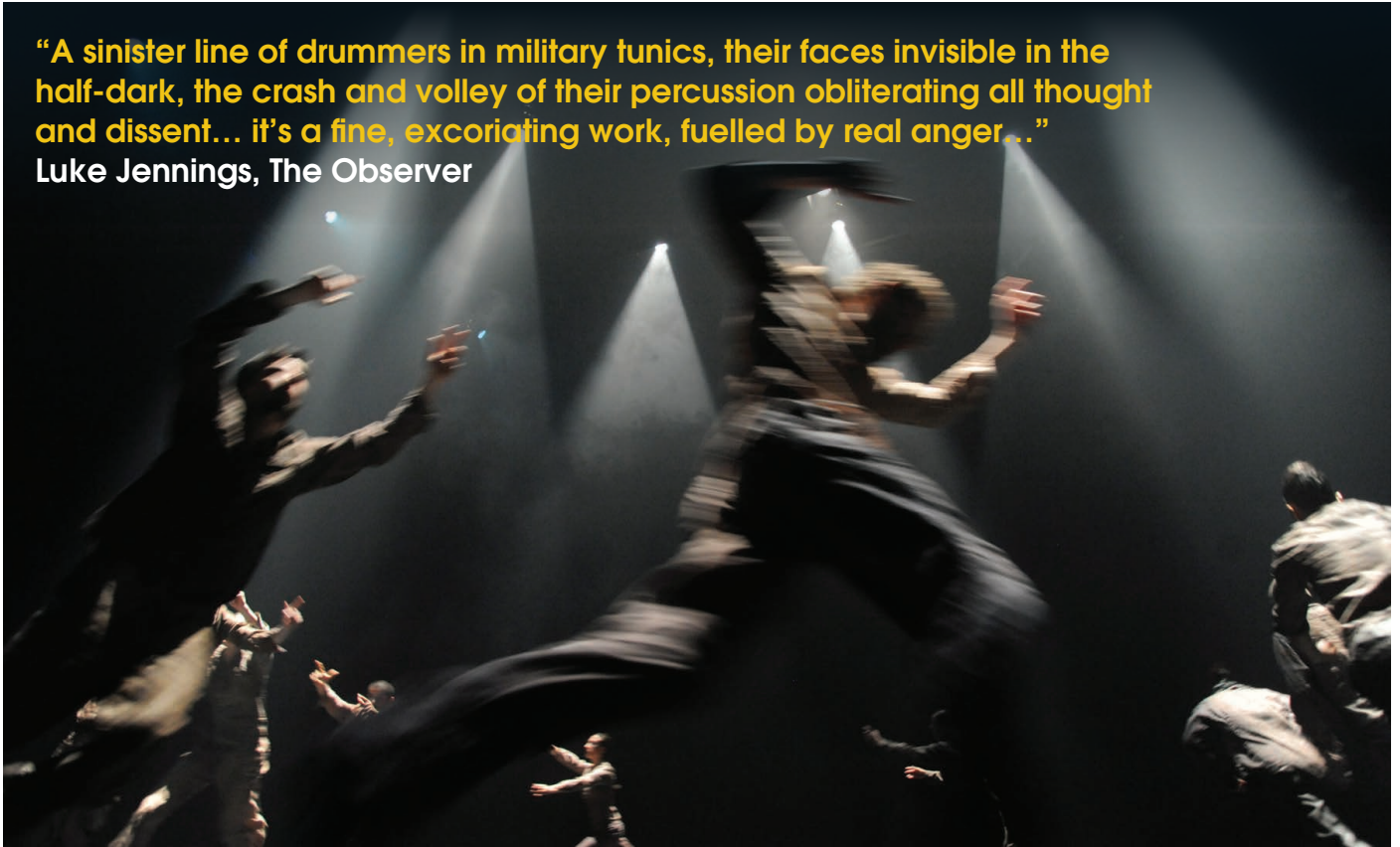
### Embodiment of style

This extract demonstrates some very recognizable 'Hofesh-style movements' such as use of low floorwork, use of the arms over the head as if in prayer or supplication, open palms and a loose and heavy pelvis. Try to incorporate some of these stylistic features into your solo. A tip from Hofesh; "When you use this extract you have to remember to be really nice and heavy in your pelvis, relax your feet, relax your ankles..."

- When watching this movement can you tell it's from a Hofesh Shechter piece? Why do you draw that conclusion? If you watch extracts from his other works, are there particular movements that you feel are common across his repertoire? What are they? See our online resources: [www.hofesh.co.uk/participation/resources-for-teaches-and-students](http://www.hofesh.co.uk/participation/resources-for-teaches-and-students)
- Are there any other elements across the range of his pieces that feel universal? Music? Lighting? Use of dynamic changes in lighting or movement?
- To demonstrate your knowledge and understanding, think about some of the technical skills you'll need to highlight in your solo - such as whole body participation (what Hofesh calls 'Totality') and transference of weight (fast in this case!)
- Timing, musicality, rhythmic control, dynamic variation, focus, and emphasis - all these elements noted in the AS and A Level syllabus can be found in this extract. Think about how you will demonstrate them in your own solo.

**“A sinister line of drummers in military tunics, their faces invisible in the half-dark, the crash and volley of their percussion obliterating all thought and dissent... it’s a fine, excoriating work, fuelled by real anger...”**

**Luke Jennings, The Observer**



### **3 movement elements to study in this solo and perhaps include in yours**

#### **TRANCE JUMPING (SEE FILM: 03:41)**

“...there are those people that are dancing for such a long time that it almost becomes an enlightenment; they are dancing ‘up’... almost in a trance.” **Bruno**

See if you can find a moment in your solo where this feels appropriate. Remember what Hofesh and Bruno both say about the fast changes of energy in this extract. Be prepared to switch to a movement that is powerful and punchy to contrast with this looser style of jumping.

#### **FAST FOOTWORK (SEE FILM: 05:31 & 07:00)**

“When I dance this extract I have to think about how the rhythm sounds, it’s like a drum in my head. Quite often when we rehearse we are almost chanting - with sounds and breath - the shape and rhythm of the movement. It really helps...” **Ming**

Watch Ming as he practices the fast footwork in this extract. Can you find something similar to include in your solo? Think about how the rhythm sounds in your head, to help you translate it down to your feet.

#### **USE OF ARMS (SEE FILM: 06:40)**

“There is a lot of intensity in the arms. The whole story, the whole choreography is told through the arms. You are like a storyteller and your arms are like the mouth that speaks the words. So this is where, in the intensity in your arms, most of the movement happens, and that leads the story.” **Hofesh**

Watch Bruno talking about the use of arms at the start of this extract. How can you discover this for yourself? Use the image he mentions, of sending them down a tube and retracting them. Does this help? Hofesh uses a lot of imagery like this in his movement.

“For me it is important that a dancer understands how a movement feels, from the inside. For this, many times I find it useful to use imagery from ‘life’ - simple actions or emotions that the dancer can draw on from their lives in order to ‘fill’ the movement...” **Hofesh**

# A CHOREO-CHRONICLE OF SELECTED WORKS BY HOFESH SHECHTER

## Fragments

KUOPIO, FINLAND, 2003  
Choreography & Music Hofesh Shechter  
Additional Music J.S Bach, Eric Idle

## Cult

LONDON, UK, 2004  
Choreography & Music Hofesh Shechter  
Lighting Designer Chahine Yavroyan  
Music Advisor Matthew Davidson

## Uprising

LONDON, UK, 2006  
Choreography & Music Hofesh Shechter  
Lighting Designer Lee Curran

## In your rooms

LONDON, UK, 2007  
Choreography & Music Hofesh Shechter  
Lighting Designer Lee Curran  
Costume Designer Elizabeth Barker  
Musical Collaborator Nell Catchpole

## The Art of Not Looking Back

BRIGHTON, UK, 2008  
Choreography & Music Hofesh Shechter  
Additional Music John Zorn performed by Mike Patton  
Lighting Designer Lee Curran  
Costume Designer Beccs Andrews

## Political Mother

BRIGHTON, UK, 2010  
Choreography & Music Hofesh Shechter  
Additional Music J.S Bach, Cliff Martinez, Joni Mitchell, Giuseppe Verdi  
Lighting Designer Lee Curran  
Costume Designer Merle Hensel  
Musical Collaborators Nell Catchpole & Yaron Engler

## Political Mother: The Choreographer's Cut

An extended version with 40 performers  
LONDON, UK, 2012  
Choreography & Music Hofesh Shechter  
Additional Music J.S Bach, Cliff Martinez, Joni Mitchell, Giuseppe Verdi  
Lighting Designer Lee Curran  
Costume Designer Merle Hensel  
Musical Collaborators Nell Catchpole & Yaron Engler

## Survivor

LONDON, UK, 2012  
Choreography & Music Hofesh Shechter  
Staged by Anthony Gormley & Hofesh Shechter  
Musical Collaborators Nell Catchpole & Yaron Engler  
Video Collaborator Harry Dwyer

## Sun

MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA, 2013  
Choreography & Music Hofesh Shechter  
Additional Music Irving Berlin, Wagner, Sigur Ros,  
The Queen's Royal Irish Hussars  
Lighting Designer Lee Curran  
Set Designer Merle Hensel  
Costume Designer Christina Cunningham

## Two Boys (an opera)

NEW YORK, USA, 2013  
Choreography Hofesh Shechter  
Composer Nico Muhly  
Director Bartlett Sher

## barbarians

Choreography & Music Hofesh Shechter  
Lighting Collaborator Lawrie McLennan

### Part 1: the barbarians in love

ST PÖLTEN, AUSTRIA 2014  
Additional Music François Couperin, Jordi Savall  
Voice Victoria with Natascha McElhone  
Lighting Collaborator Lawrie McLennan

### Part 2: THE bAD

MANCHESTER, UK, 2015  
Additional Music Mystikal, Jordi Savall  
Costume Design Hofesh Shechter & Amanda Barrow  
Choreography created with the original cast Maëva Berthelot,  
Sam Coren, Philip Hulford, Kim Kohlmann & Erion Kruja

### Part 3: Two completely different angles of the same fucking thing

BERLIN, GERMANY, 2015  
Additional Music Abdullar Ibrahim, Bredren & MC Swift  
Choreography created with the original cast  
Bruno Guillore, Winifred Burnet-Smith & Hannah Shepherd

## Disappearing Act\*

BUDAPEST, HUNGARY, 2015  
Choreography & Music Hofesh Shechter  
Lighting Designers Lawrie McLennan & Hofesh Shechter  
Costume Designer Holly Waddington  
\*Performed by Shechter Junior, as part of a triple bill  
*deGeneration* alongside *Fragments* and *Cult*

## Untouchable

Performed by The Royal Ballet  
LONDON, UK, 2015  
Choreography & Music Hofesh Shechter  
Lighting Designer Lee Curran  
Costume Designer Holly Waddington

## Orphée et Eurydice

Performed by Hofesh Shechter Company,  
English Baroque Soloists & Monteverdi Choir  
LONDON, UK, 2015  
Choreography Hofesh Shechter  
Co-Director John Fulljames

## Fiddler on the Roof

Performed by Broadway cast  
NEW YORK, USA, 2016  
Choreography Hofesh Shechter  
Music Jerry Bock  
Director Bartlett Sher  
Full list of collaborators [www.fiddlermusical.com](http://www.fiddlermusical.com)

## Untitled

A new full length creation  
PARIS, FRANCE, 2017  
Choreography & Music Hofesh Shechter

For a full list of all the collaborators for these works, please visit:  
[www.hofesh.co.uk/productions](http://www.hofesh.co.uk/productions)





## POLITICAL MOTHER - ORIGINAL CAST & COLLABORATORS

Performed by Hofesh Shechter Company

Dancers Maëva Berthelot, Winifred Burnet-Smith, Chien-Ming Chang, Katherine Cowie, Christopher Evans, Bruno Guilloro, Phillip Hulford, Jason Jacobs, Sita Ostheimer, Hannah Shepherd

The Band Joe Ashwin, Yaron Engler, Joel Harries, Ed Hoare, Norman Jankowski, James Keane, Vincenzo Lamagna, Andrew Maddick

Strings (on soundtrack) Christopher Allan (cello), Rebekah Allan (viola), Laura Anstee (cello), Nell Catchpole (viola), Tim Harries (double bass), Andrew Maddick (viola), Kai West (double bass)

Choreography & Music Hofesh Shechter

Musical Collaborators Nell Catchpole, Yaron Engler  
Percussion Arrangements Hofesh Shechter, Yaron Engler

Additional Music J.S. Bach, Cliff Martinez, Joni Mitchell, Giuseppe Verdi

Lighting Design Lee Curran  
Costume Design Merle Hensel

Text for sign stolen kindly from FOS

Duration 70 minutes with no interval

*Political Mother* was commissioned by Brighton Dome and Festival, Sadler's Wells and Movimentos – Festwochen der Autostadt in Wolfsburg. The work is co-commissioned by Biennale de la Danse de Lyon, Théâtre de la Ville, Romaeuropa and Mercat de les Flors.

Produced in collaboration with Theatre Royal, Plymouth and with support from DanceXchange, Birmingham.

The score for *Political Mother* was created in collaboration with the Guildhall School of Music & Drama and barbicantbite09; with research supported by Jerwood Studio at Sadler's Wells.

Collaboration with FOS supported by Outset.

The use of *Solaris* by Cliff Martinez is by arrangement with EMI Music Publishing Limited.

*Political Mother* received its premiere on 20 May 2010 at Brighton Festival.

### Selected reviews of Political Mother

[www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/dance/7725244/hofesh-shechter-steps-fromanother-dimension.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/dance/7725244/hofesh-shechter-steps-fromanother-dimension.html)

[www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/dance/7749759/hofesh-shechers-political-mother-at-the-brighton-dome-review.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/dance/7749759/hofesh-shechers-political-mother-at-the-brighton-dome-review.html)

[www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2010/may/23/hofesh-shechter-political-mother-review](http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2010/may/23/hofesh-shechter-political-mother-review)

[www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2010/may/23/political-mother-shechter-babel-cherkaoui](http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2010/may/23/political-mother-shechter-babel-cherkaoui)

[www.thestage.co.uk/reviews/review.php/28317/political-mother](http://www.thestage.co.uk/reviews/review.php/28317/political-mother)

### Political Mother trailer

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=yv4TBdmeZs8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yv4TBdmeZs8)

## RE-STAGINGS & COMMISSIONS

**Hofesh Shechter has re-staged his existing works on other companies and created new works internationally, including:**

Uprising Carte Blanche Dance Company (2011)  
Uprising Batsheva Ensemble (2013)  
Uprising, In your rooms Nederlands Dans Theater (2013)  
Uprising Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre (2014)  
Clowns Nederlands Dans Theater (2016)  
Violet Kid Ballet Basel (2016)

**Hofesh Shechter has choreographed for theatre, film and television including:**

Motortown Royal Court Theatre (2006)  
The Arsonists Royal Court Theatre (2007)  
Saint Joan National Theatre (2007)  
Skins Channel 4 (2008)

**Hofesh Shechter has also been commissioned to make shorter works for companies including:**

Bare Bones Dance Company (2004)  
Berlin Skanes Dansteater (2005)  
EDge (2005 & 2013)  
Scottish Dance Theatre (2008)  
Bern Ballet (2008)  
CandoCo Dance Company (2008)  
Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet (2010)  
U-Dance Ensemble (2012)  
Body Traffic Dance Company (2014)  
Staatstheater Kassel (2014)

In 2014 Hofesh Shechter was Guest Director of Brighton Festival.



## HOFESH SHECHTER COMPANY

### Board of Directors

Robin Woodhead (Chair), Jules Burns, Andrew Hillier QC, Karen Napier

Founding Patrons Angela Bernstein CBE, Robin Pauley, Bruno Wang

Artistic Director Hofesh Shechter

Executive Producer Henny Finch

Administrative Director Colette Hansford

Executive Assistant Fionna McPhee

Associate Artistic Director Bruno Guillore

Producer Niamh O'Flaherty

Head of Production and Touring Adam Hooper

Participation Producer Lucy Moelwyn-Hughes

Technical Manager Lawrie McLennan

Tour Manager Silvia Maroino

Rehearsal Assistants Winifred Burnet-Smith, Frédéric Despierre

Administration and HR Manager Lee Bamford

Company & Projects Manager Melanie Zaalof

Administrator Ellie Baker-Smith

Projects Administrator Emily Gatehouse

Hofesh is an Associate Artist of Sadler's Wells and Hofesh Shechter

Company is Resident Company at Brighton Dome.

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Design Stem Design

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