



HOFESH SHECHTER'S

SUN



PERFORMED BY
HOFESH SHECHTER COMPANY

The world is perfect...
"WHERE THERE IS SUN
THERE IS SHADE TOO"
HOFESH SHECHTER

A RESOURCE
PACK FOR
TEACHERS
& STUDENTS



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HOFESH SHECHTER'S SUN

**PERFORMED BY
HOFESH SHECHTER COMPANY**

CHOREOGRAPHY & MUSIC Hofesh Shechter

DANCERS Maëva Berthelot, Winifred Burnet-Smith (Rehearsal Assistant),
Chien-Ming Chang, Sam Coren, Frederic Despierre, Bruno Karim Guillore,
Philip Hulford (Rehearsal Assistant), Ye Ji Kim, Kim Kohlmann, Erion Kruja,
Merel Lammers, Sita Ostheimer, Hannah Shepherd.

APPRENTICE DANCERS Marla Phelan, Attila Ronai, Diogo Sousa

SPECIAL GUEST Chloe Walshe

SET DESIGN Merle Hensel

LIGHTING DESIGN Lee Curran

COSTUME DESIGN Christina Cunningham

ADDITIONAL MUSIC

Let's Face The Music And Dance Composed by Irving Berlin.
Published by Universal Music Publishing Ltd.

Tannhauser WWV 70' by Wagner – Arrival of the Guests at Wartburg.
Composer: Richard Wagner.

Sigur 1' written by Sveinsson/Birgisson/Holm/Dyrason.
Published by Universal Music. Used with kind permission.

Abide With Me (Traditional arrangement by David Cresswell)
Published by Music Masters Ltd. Performed by The Queen's Royal Irish Hussars
and used by courtesy of Music Masters Ltd.

**"THE SUN...IT SHINES,
IT'S BEAUTIFUL AND IT'S
SOMETHING WE ARE ALL
LONGING FOR...BUT IT
HAS A DANGEROUS HOT
SIDE TO IT" HOFESH SHECHTER**

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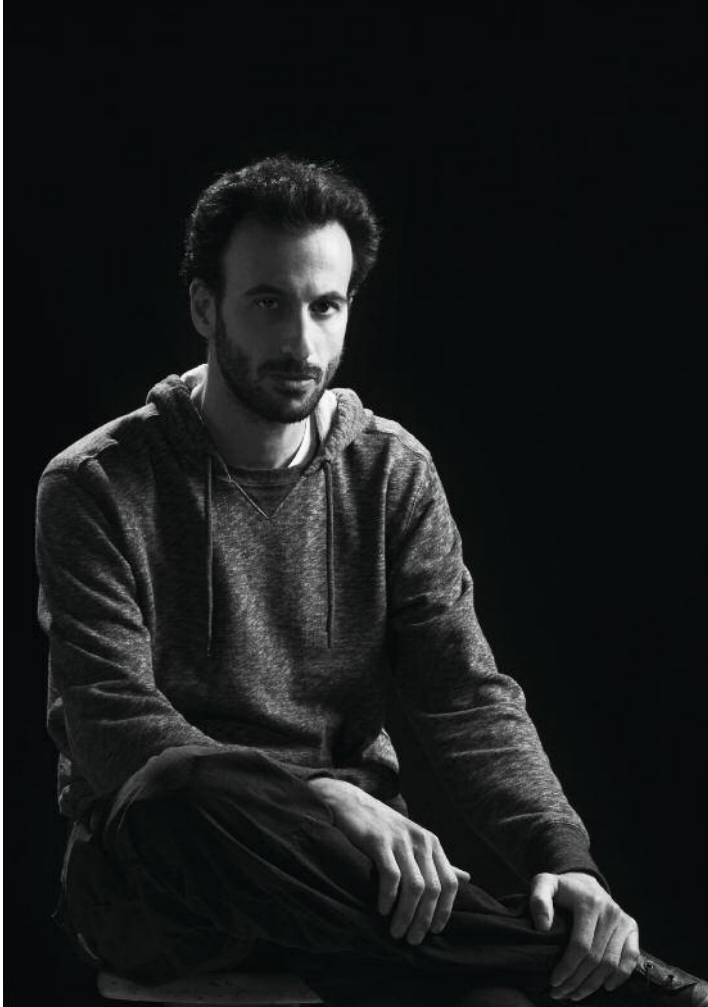
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THE CREATIVE JOURNEY



“WITH SUN IT’S IN THE HANDS OF THE PERFORMERS. I CAN’T COMPLETELY CONTROL THE OUTCOME. IT’S THE WAY THEY TELL THEIR STORIES.”

HOFESH SHECHTER

Sun started its life in Barcelona, Spain early in 2013. The company stayed in the city as guests of dance venue Mercat de les Flors - one of the commissioners of the work. Hofesh remembers it as a good time creatively, with no boundaries. He recalls his first day in that sun-filled Spanish studio. “A research period is my time to really play with ideas. Never expect anything from Day 1 – it is just like the fluff. It’s kind of nice because it takes away the pressure for me. I remember I used to come into the studio on Day 1 and expect to MAKE something. Over time I have learnt that this really doesn’t happen. Day 1 is just about getting warm. This time I just started making stuff, just movement material. Just getting into stuff. I didn’t get too ambitious about it. Then on Day 2 I was like “Argh! We have nothing!!” No, I come into it slowly. I want to discover what happens with the movement material, what attracts me to it. What kind of feeling comes out of it. And then I start asking questions about it...”

After this Research & Development period you were talking about how you wanted to make an optimistic piece – that you had been thinking a lot about the stream of life, the future of the world for the next generation, and so on. You sounded very positive about this piece! It’s a few months later now...as the first day of your creation period fast approaches; do you still feel like that?

H: That feeling sort of comes and goes...I remember it and then I don’t remember it. So it goes darker and lighter and darker and lighter... I am also aware that it might be part of the process of making a ‘bright’ piece...that such a piece can’t just be all sunshine. In a way this positivity about what happens in our life is one thing...but how we feel it, how we look at it, is another thing. So in the piece, maybe there will be a game about how we look at things. Our perception and if it is possible to shift your perception of something or not. These are philosophical questions and you know...it’s also just a dance piece...but I can see that I’m starting to deal in my head with ideas of truth and deceit, with deceiving...what we present and what is actually there. And all of this is somehow connected to the fact that we will never know the truth. And that positivity is just about how you look at things. So it comes and goes...and sometimes I can see that I’m going to darker places. Dealing with truth and deceit is a bit dark! There is a natural process and I allow it to happen. I don’t want to focus on what I think the piece is going to be, because then it becomes really boring. I’m kind of letting myself get thrown around a bit and letting these thoughts happen...

Does answering questions like this ever become a little bit annoying? Talking about a piece that hasn’t been made yet? Due to the marketing and the touring cycle of making new work you have to talk about it, decide on a title, images for publicity and so on, a long time before it actually exists...how do you find this?

H: It’s sort of the nature of the job. The truth is I’m slightly anticipating it because I know it is going to be like that, that I must decide a title, that people will need this from me before the piece is made... And anyway it’s a good thing to have a title, it gives you a bit of a direction. So to talk about it now...it doesn’t really matter. You can talk about it before or after but that doesn’t change the piece itself, what it is. If anything it can focus me a little bit. I can discover some things about the piece through talking about it with people at an early stage. So no, I don’t mind... For me the problem is the promise - talking about WHAT it is going to be. Now that... I cannot be helpful with, as I don’t entirely know!

When we spoke about your last piece *Political Mother* a few years ago, I asked you if you had any starting images to work from, and you had a really clear opening scene planned. I wondered if you had any images like this for *Sun* at this stage?

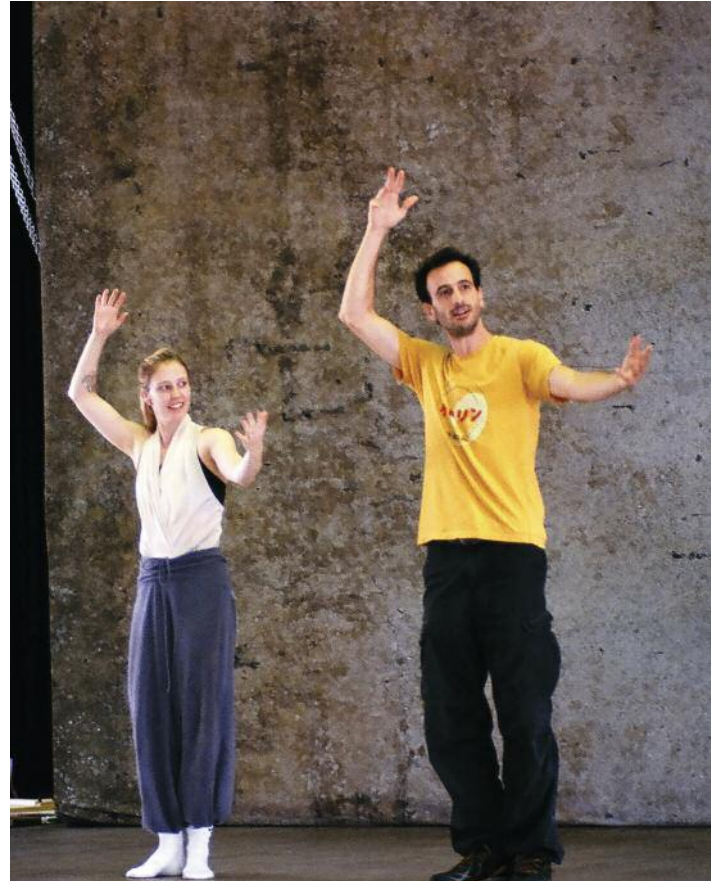
H: I do actually. I don’t know if I’m going to try it though. I have this one idea and I don’t even know the reason...earlier we spoke about the world of pretence and the world of truth...and one day I had an image for perhaps the opening scene for *Sun*. The idea is that the show starts quietly and the stage is revealed immediately as this white, open space...and it’s pretty quiet. Perhaps you hear a bit of

"IT'S LIKE THE CLOWN WHO CAN PRESENT TO THE KING SOMETHING THAT NOBODY ELSE WOULD DARE SAY...PERHAPS SUN IS CLOWNING AROUND WHILST BRINGING THINGS THAT PERHAPS WE DON'T KNOW IF WE'RE SUPPOSED TO SAY" **HOFESH SHECHTER**

HOFESH REHEARSING WITH HANNAH

classical guitar playing softly...something almost biblical...perhaps little nature noises. And one of the dancers is entering with a sort of cardboard cut out sheep. A real life-size sheep but it's pretty lo-tech, it's just a painting of a sheep on some board...with handles on the back. And the dancer is extremely serious about the sheep - the way they walk in, the way they handle the sheep, and they slowly come to the front. Then another dancer comes with a sheep at the back. Then of course you have a wolf. Someone comes on stage with a cut out of a wolf, coming slowly closer to the sheep at the front... who is now eating a piece of fake grass on the floor. And he's so self-absorbed with grass and the guy with the wolf comes closer and closer. Then somebody in the audience stands up and is shouting "BEHIND YOU. THE WOLF!!!! CAN'T YOU SEE THE WOLF?????" So this person is really losing it, yelling about this wolf. And the wolf comes closer and closer and darkness comes...and big noise. And then I thought it would be really funny to play "Let's Face the Music"...and then suddenly all the action starts. And I love the words in that song, about how we're heading for trouble but let's just dance! So all that, it's all a bit sick somehow...it's like it's funny but I like the fact that it leaves a question like 'Is there a statement there? Or...is it just nonsense?' I don't know if this is more for people who know my work...or for those who don't. So they are like 'No. We're not going to get out of it that easily, this isn't going to be just a puppet show with a musical entrée!' I like the sense of danger, not only with the wolf and the sheep, but also danger in the way that you're maybe thinking 'No, it can NOT be just that...' I almost wondered if I can make a whole show like that. That you just feel like this is really wrong. Like something really bad is going to happen...all the way through and it doesn't quite happen. Then you realise that it was really bad. All of it.

So that was my initial image. These puppets, really stupid puppets and how you can do really interesting things with this. And then you have dancers too, like live puppets because they are doing what I ask them to do...and I in turn do what the government tells me to do. And the audience is playing along with the illusion of all it - whether it's with the dancers or the puppets or with me. And it actually started feeling quite powerful at moments. I know so many works have been done about theatre and the pretence of theatre...the illusion of it. But the question for me is how it all ties back to *Sun*. I have a lot of thoughts there about it...because we can see a lot of stuff about the world, how it is really disturbing. But then we want our little piece of grass. And then we can say 'Ok if it's all an illusion then your piece of grass is your piece of happiness, which can be an illusion as well. But if you go around shouting that it's all an illusion - then you can be happy now, with what you have. If the sun is shining then forget about all our wealth whilst Africa is starving. In a way it is true - how far can you take this with all the crimes and the horrible things that are happening in the world.



Do you ever think, even at this early stage in a creation...about how it will be received?

H: Not really, that's dangerous! However a scene like this, if we do it, will play out differently. I think it can be funny for some people but there will be other audiences who will look at it completely silently.

This brings us onto an interesting point, and we've spoken about this before - it's an observation that those who know you make...that you're a really funny guy, in your life...but that is not necessarily reflected in your work so far. Though to slightly contradict myself I think there are moments in some of your pieces that are really very funny. But generally speaking, the way people write about your work, it's not ha ha funny. I wondered how you feel about that? If you mind that people think that perhaps you're an intense and dark person who rarely laughs?

H: Nah...I don't mind! And anyway to make a piece that is intentionally funny, it's kind of dangerous. It's not my skill to make 'funny dance'. I know people that do it really well and I really admire them, I don't know how they do it. I do feel that humour exists in my work, but maybe I'm the only one seeing it! Of course my pieces aren't the only thing I do, but people take it seriously because it's on stage so that also becomes a little bit funny. I don't think I will intentionally try to make a funny piece, but I think I may try to find lightness with the dancers and see where it goes...and if it brings us witty moments, then great.



HOFESH & DANCERS
SHARE A JOKE
DURING REHEARSALS

"SHECHTER UNLEASHES PRIMAL ENERGIES IN THAT GUT-WRENCHING, NON-SPECIFIC LANGUAGE WHERE DANCE SPEAKS THE LOUDEST." THE GUARDIAN

Ok, well I look forward to seeing your funny/unfunny piece then! Can we chat a little now about the passage of time? As an artist who has made bigger and bigger works and has a profile that has grown and grown...with international acclaim on the touring circuit...Do you have something now you would say to your younger self. Anything you've learnt along the way?

H: I'd say only one thing to myself – 'Just carry on'. For me creation is such a random situation...I don't know how to put it. There is no system other than to carry on until something happens or you are happy. So yes, I'd say 'Carry on, it's gonna be alright...' In fact I never know if it's going to be alright. Each piece has its own journey...it encapsulates something. For me it's a bit of fulfilment. So something happened. Something was delivered. Something was transferred...between me and the dancers, between the dancers and the audience.

Helen (Executive Director of the company) said it's really interesting how your approach remains the same even though the machinery of the company has got much bigger. Would you agree?

H: Yes, it really doesn't matter how many people work with me or for me...on one level nobody can help me make the piece! And that hasn't changed from the very beginning. As a company of movers we improve all the time, but to bring the ideas, the heart, the emotion into the work...nobody can save me! It doesn't matter how much money we are turning over...that one fact keeps my feet on the ground. It's not enough to have all this wonderful team...I have to make the work or we are just a great team of people. I have to go through these processes to find something powerful, an emotion, to find the heart of the thing. In a way, that will never change, and that's a good thing. It is something not connected to time, money, place...it's connected to something I have to do myself. It's the searching and the finding, it happens inside me, then when it clarifies I can pass it on. But there has to be something there to start with.

That's interesting and leads me to ask you about communication and language. There are things you've said before about communication, how your work reflects the human need to communicate, but how we don't always say what we mean. Our human need to be understood but that we can't articulate what we mean. It makes me think about language, how the company is multi-lingual, both in the studio and the office. Lots of different languages and cultures... How do you feel about communicating – in the studio, in life?

H: I do think about it sometimes. I normally think (and I can't always follow it unfortunately...) that to be concise with language is good. It allows more echo for people to understand things. I mean there are simple words and there is a reason why in life we only use a certain number of words in general. These bigger words that supposedly bring subtlety? No. Not for me. I think there is a thing about finding the right word. I hate complicated words that mean four things. I think if you can explain something simply, then that's the best way.

Is there a word you use a lot in the studio?

H: Um..... *(followed by a very long pause)*

Maybe I should ask the dancers! Do you have a favourite word in English?

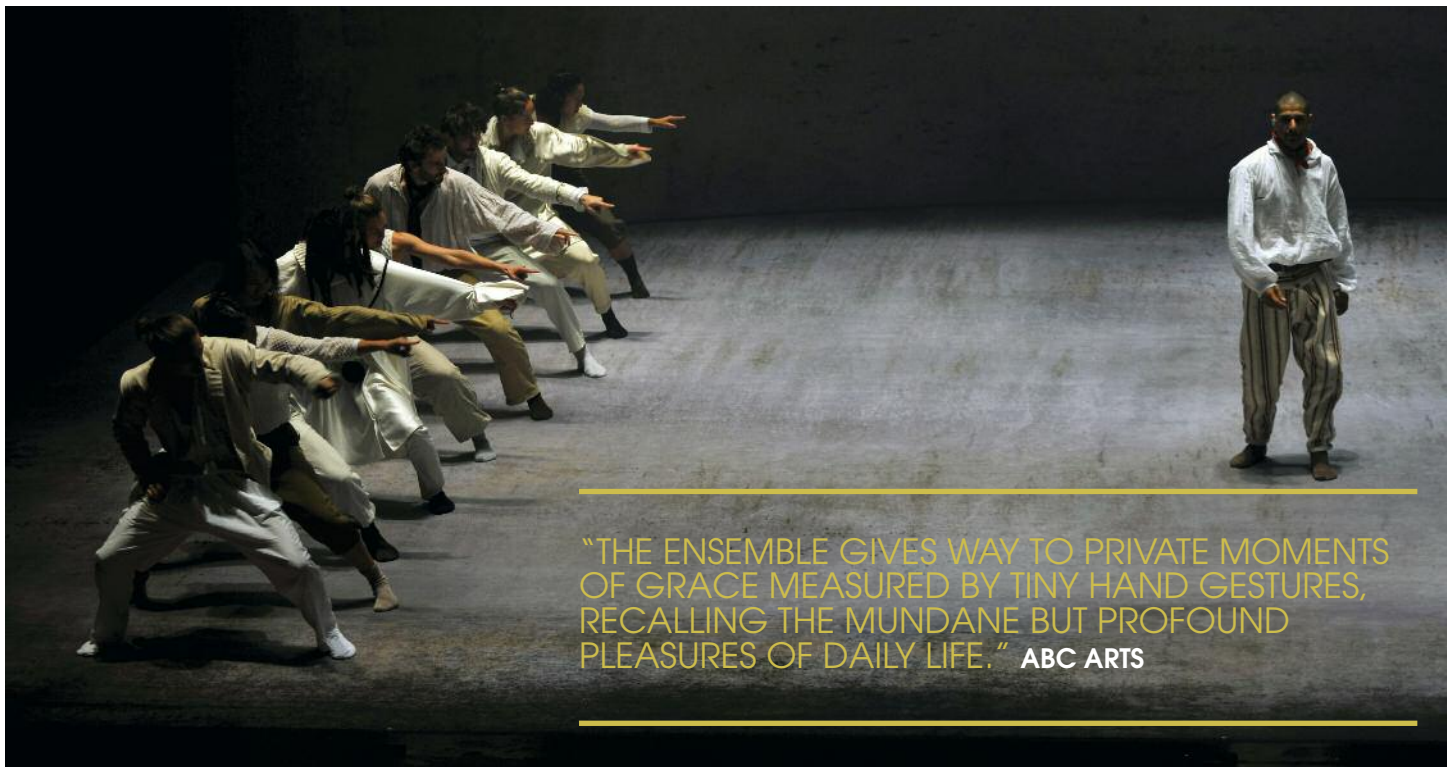
H: Wow I don't know! Let me think...Well, for some reason all I can think of is 'giraffe'. It's a funny word. It's a funny animal... giraffes have some big problems right? I mean you don't want to get a sore throat if you're a giraffe....

Hah! I think that's a perfect place to finish this interview...

I look forward to chatting again mid way through your creation period...Good luck next week!

H: Thank you. Luck yes...and LOTS of work between now and then...

"THE MOVEMENT IN SUN IS COMPLEX AND GORGEOUS, WEAVING EXTREMELY DISPARATE PHYSICAL LANGUAGES INTO SEAMLESS, TIGHTLY-WOVEN PHRASES." THE GUARDIAN



"THE ENSEMBLE GIVES WAY TO PRIVATE MOMENTS OF GRACE MEASURED BY TINY HAND GESTURES, RECALLING THE MUNDANE BUT PROFOUND PLEASURES OF DAILY LIFE." **ABC ARTS**

"EVERYTHING IS FINE ON THE SURFACE BUT IT IS ABSOLUTELY NOT FINE UNDERNEATH. THERE IS A DANGER BUBBLING..."

HOFESH SHECHTER

We catch up with the company again in Week 7 of the creation period. The dancers are hard at work in a large studio at the top of Sadler's Wells theatre in London. The atmosphere is light, there is plenty of banter, despite the fact that it's nearly 6pm and they have been here since 10am in the morning. Hofesh is working on a small section of the piece involving a moment of improvisation before the company has to regroup for a unison phrase. "Careful not to make it too big..." he warns the dancers. "You want to keep it ridiculously small. Suggest the rhythm of it, not the movement itself..." he explains to them. This kind of clarity and cleaning of movement even in a sketched form, is very much part of Hofesh's approach. The dancers take a short break for a drink; there is laughter as they share a joke, looking at somebody's tweet. It's all very relaxed.

After the break Hofesh runs through a different phrase of material made that week, adding layers of information as he goes. To one dancer "I want 'bad' improvisation dancing here...a little more open, like it's coming from your chest...Yes. Now it needs to come from an angrier place...slightly faster in the arms..." Hofesh adds specific details to even the shortest of movements, despite the fact that he may cut this section anyway. To another small group of dancers he suggests "Try doing this as cleanly as possible. This is an exercise in cleanliness..." One dancer returns to the studio having been treated in A&E the day before for a fractured finger. No fuss, she's straight back into the rehearsal. "Have a juiciness in the elbow here..." Hofesh says to another dancer before he runs the same section over a few more times adding nuances of emotion or visual imagery to get it to a place he envisages, and to help the dancers find the emotional connection to the movement. It's simple layering of information and movement. It's also extremely specific.

I ask Hofesh how it's going, how he's feeling. "I'm not sure..." is his response. "What the piece is at the moment, I can't say. Is it a comedy? I try to come in to work every day full of positivity for this new work, even though it feels like a real struggle this time. *Political Mother* felt easy by comparison even though the themes were dark. This piece by contrast I want to be lighter and yet it feels way harder to catch it and get a hold of what I want. I'm not sure I'm getting it...the atmosphere we are working within, the world I want to create...it's all much harder to get to. I feel like I mostly haven't succeeded yet. So by the afternoon the pretence of my positivity, the façade...it's all crumbled. By the afternoon on most days the negativity has crept in. I am worried that maybe I'm making cringe-choreography... It's what I'm aiming for in a way...to get to that world where the dancers are putting on a 'show' for us. Yes it feels like a Ben Stiller choreography right now..." laughing he return his attentions to the dancers once more. There's still a way to go before he feels he has arrived at what he calls a 'sketch' of the work.

"THROUGH THE BRIGHTNESS, THE LIGHTNESS...WE CAN DEAL WITH QUITE HEAVY THINGS" HOFESH SHECHTER

Later in the day Hofesh lets the other dancers go, deciding to concentrate on a duet he had started to make the day before. He works with Wins and Fred, standing in between them as he builds the duet material a movement at a time; the music he has created for this section plays on a loop from his laptop. Bruno, the Associate Artistic Director shadows the group in the background. He learns the material as it is being created. He needs this kind of insight and first hand knowledge in order to rehearse the movement and keep it true to its source when Hofesh is not on tour with the company. Christina the costume designer arrives quietly with armfuls of costumes that she hangs on a clothes rail in the corner. It's almost 6pm and still the movement seems to flow out of Hofesh as he works on this duet - the speed with which he builds the phrase is quite surprising. After he lets the dancers go home he shares a thought on it.

"These two people are presenting this kind of confusion. I'm having a lot of fun making this duet. I just want to keep adding, perhaps more people tomorrow. We'll see..."

It's time for me to leave but Hofesh stays on, playing the music on his laptop over and over, making adjustments to what he has composed so far. In the past he has said that when he is making a piece there is nothing else he does...even when he's asleep he's still thinking of it. That is very clear today - he is consumed by the work, but in a very accepting way. He looks comfortable. He's creating.

"SHECHTER IS A MASTER AT MELDING SOPHISTICATED SENSUALITY WITH RAW BEATS AND AT POWERING HIS ENSEMBLE WITH A CHARISMATIC AND THRILLING DYNAMIC" THE TIMES



Finally we chat to Hofesh at the end of this whole process. He has successfully premiered *Sun* at the Melbourne Festival, Australia in October 2013, and has had a few weeks to reflect before we ask him how he's feeling to have come out of the other side of this creation.

So you are now at the end of the tunnel and about to send the piece off on tour. I know it's early days for the life of *Sun*, but how are you feeling about it right now?

H: I felt a lot of different things about the work in the last few weeks, but at the moment I feel the love... *Sun* to me is one of the most interesting and challenging works I've done, not only to myself but to the audience, and as a work that questions the very essence of art, or dance, what it is, how it's supposed to look and feel, how ordered and smooth should a work be, how coherent or abstract/surreal it can be and so on... *Sun* to me is like a magic crystal ball - each person sees in it something completely different, depending on who they are and how they walk into the theatre, but also depending on the show itself on the night. It's hard for me to say whether the show evolves and feels different every night I see it, or is it me that is changing, but this piece is the most colourful and flexible piece I created, and that is fascinating to me. I'm enjoying the fact that the response to the work is so extreme - that in one theatre it will get a very reserved numb response, and in another it will get a rowdy standing ovation - it's like it's not the same piece. It teaches me a lot about detaching myself from the audience response, from feeling like it's an indication or validation of the work. I'm not quite sure what's the 'truth' anymore - is the work wonderfully powerful or a clunky bizarre collection of scenes? However somehow that feeling is liberating and I believe it will make me a more confident artist, in the way that I may stop seeking the 'perfect' work, and perhaps be able to follow to a stronger place, true to my instincts and heart.



"A POWERFUL, DELIBERATELY UNSTABLE & WHOLLY ABSORBING WORK." ABC ARTS

You have mentioned along the way that you wanted to make a lighter piece than previously. Do you think you have achieved that in some way?

H: It's hard to say - it depends who you're asking I guess! But you are asking me, so I'd say - it depends on the day. I think *Sun* is highly comic, sometimes it makes me laugh out loud, not only because of what's in it, but because of the situation it puts the audience in - contemporary dance goes swirled into a corner of seriousness. I think it's not only interesting but also important that we laugh at ourselves, at the form, it's part of a ridiculous culture we invented and follow, and this self-humour may help us on the way to see some truth, get some perspective. But at times, *Sun* feels to me very angry, very powerful, with an air of defeat to it, very sarcastic - in that sense some days I experience the piece as very heavy, very sad. It's a clown of a piece, and when you're looking at a clown, sometimes you find strong emotions in the nonsense he does, and sometimes it's funny, or awkward, or cringey, but the beautiful thing about a clown is that he is both a fool and an intelligent commentator at the same time.

There are some challenging images in *Sun* - amidst the humour and parody. And yet these images (the brutal beating, for example) can also be read as a little bit funny too, in the context of the piece, because we know the dancers are putting on a "Show" for us the audience, so we know it is pretence. How hard have you had to work to find the right balance in the piece?

H: Part of what's funny about the piece, or sad, is that everything is so obviously pretended. It's a show that is put on stage for us, the audience, allegedly to 'teach us a lesson'. The pathetic-ness of this set up, is part of the uncomfortable position the audience is put in - it could be that they are either treated like fools, or are given an opportunity to laugh, or have perspective, on the obviousness of deceit. The idea that everything is a deceit in the piece, gives a very un-settling feeling, and to some can produce interesting thoughts and emotions to do with their life or the life around them, to others it can be a disturbance and something that makes them feel they 'can't connect', or are not allowed in. But... altogether, for me, *Sun* is funny. Very funny.

Can you tell us a little about the ringleader/circus master character and how he plays into this deceit?

H: He is yet another layer of deceit and decoy, another element that makes us feel that there is more than what there is on stage. My point is - the lie is so wide open, just right there in front of our eyes, but all the arrows and hints are pointing in so many directions, so we miss it. His is a hollow character in a world that searches for meaning. And this is another element that can make people feel uneasy - a sense of hollowness, a cardboard world. Which makes me ask if the work itself is hollow of meaning, or is it commenting on a world that is hollow? Tough call. I don't know.

You say that this process has been among one of the hardest you have experienced when making a piece of work? What factors do you think may have made it so?

H: I really think that the change in my personal circumstances (ah just call it what it is!! Had a baby! She is SO cute...) meant simple things, like that I was more tired physically and mentally, and therefore had to work much harder to pull my concentration together. But at the same time (and it may be because I had a baby as well...) I was tackling here in this piece the un-tacklable. A work that attempts to assess the outlines of the social/values-ridden prison we all sit stuck in... is very ambitious. But in a way my difficult process doesn't matter - it was a fascinating one, it's on-going, and the result is fascinating, almost on the level of a social experiment.

What will you take with you from the experience of making this piece?

H: Hard to say. A lot of the answers above may shed light into that...but weirdly this piece has given me confidence.

What will you not miss?

H: Well...falling on a pen that stabbed a hole in my hand. It's fine now, but it was really, really painful...

**"A PITHY VISION OF CIVILISATION."
THE GUARDIAN**

INSIGHTS FROM THE STUDIO

"THE DANCE AND THESE SUPERB DANCERS TELL THE STORY." **THE AUSTRALIAN**



Bruno Guillore, Associate Artistic Director and company dancer, talks about his role in the company and how *Sun* is shaping up.

What does your job as Associate Artistic Director involve?

B: Well what I actually do is replace Hofesh on tour, to lead the technical team and the dancers, to make sure that the show happens as well as if he was there. So on one side there is nothing artistic about it. I need to be Hofesh's alter ego when he is not around. You could say that what I do is basically PR! When we're on tour it's making sure the dancers are happy, it's making sure everybody is working the best they can. And to make sure that the staging, the dancers, the sound engineer...that everyone is happy...to create an atmosphere that is loose enough but also secure enough to enable everyone to pull in the right direction.

So far, from the Research and Development time and these creation weeks now, what is emerging for you from the process? Either as a dancer, or from the perspective of your other role? What's coming out of the studio? Do you have a sense of what it might be already?

B: To be honest I'm not sure. Right now I think it's going to be really difficult to rehearse because I think there will be a huge amount of group sections, with more dancers than we have ever had, without any beats to support some of the sections. It will make it extremely challenging. I'm not sure how we're going to solve it. The more people on stage...the harder it becomes to make them all look good.

So are you thinking 'Ok, this might be tricky to rehearse'?

B: Yes because we have 16 dancers...doing different things, holding onto a rhythm they have in their heads. But then everything is on quarter counts or half counts...and at some point they have to join together. And even now, making it work...I don't think we've really succeeded because the metronome in your head can speed up or slow down. So it's really challenging to have 16 people all with slightly different metronomes in their heads. We have found a way to solve this on stage, but it's a secret! It'll be interesting to see if anyone can work it out.

Do the stakes feel higher than previous pieces - does it feel more pressured with more dancers? Are you worried about the outcome?

B: Well, I really trust Hofesh and I know he's experienced enough to not do a bad piece. Whilst we are creating it, it's impossible to know whether it is a masterpiece, but somehow I don't think he's really able to make a bad piece. Even sometimes when he's not happy about something in a piece he knows how to save it...how to make something good come out of it. So I'm not so worried about that.

Hofesh has said to me, when I asked him over the years what his process is...that he throws every single idea he has into the space and see what works. Does it ever feel like that in the studio?! Like a mash up of ideas? I'm interested to know from your perspective if it actually feels more structured, like there is a plan?

B: Well he's very honest with the dancers, if he doesn't know where something is going he'll say so. He tells us if he's trying stuff or if he's not sure about something, so we always know where we are. I think that he has certain ideas, and he follows them, I don't feel that it's random. If something comes to his mind he'll want to try it, but I think there is a direction, that everything is connected. So it's not just 'whatever' in that sense. Perhaps he doesn't know it because he lives in it...but say he leaves the studio then goes straight off to make the music, then he sees some of the costume designs. Every element – the lighting, the floor, the set – it's all decided by him during the creation process...so every element influences him. For example something pops into his head to try with us in the studio, because he just saw a drawing from the costume designer maybe. So it's never all random...and he will always tell us why we're trying something – a piece of movement, an expression of energy – which makes it easier for a dancer, as you know the direction that you are hunting in. So it never feels like it's totally random because it's all connected with the other elements of the piece as they are created.

What's your wish for *Sun*?

B: What I care most about is that Hofesh lets himself go to extremes...and pushes himself and us. I think sometimes we always fear how far we can go, how far we can push it, without alienating people...but I hope he pushes it as far as possible, without making it unwatchable. Like I said, I trust him...

Next we meet a few of the dancers and see what they are up to. We start with Phillip Hulford, who has been with the company since its inception.



How did you come to join Hofesh's company?

P: Before Hofesh started his company he worked with London Contemporary Dance School students for a term. I was in my second year of training, and was in the group Hofesh was given to create a little piece with. At the start I really couldn't understand his movement vocabulary but I quickly caught on and became more and more comfortable with it. I realised it's really how I enjoyed to move and his silent and thick qualities began to sink in, so I ended up doing very well in that module. Over the next year or so Hofesh was around the building and eventually he expressed his interest in me and invited me to join a tour he had planned for his all male piece *Uprising*. That was back in 2006 and I have been with him ever since, half finishing my degree at LCDS and half touring with him.

What attracted you to Hofesh's work?

P: I really like dark, atmospheric work with a heavy, rhythmic energy. That coupled with Hofesh's floor work got me massively interested.

Hofesh's work is very popular with young audiences. Why do you think this is?

P: I think young audiences love bass, beats and intensity. There is plenty of all this in his work, but more than that I feel Hofesh has a fresh mix of highly physical movement and an eye for telling a story in a very open, conceptual way. I think that's the key, people are really left open to their own interpretations and if they don't want to interpret anything at all that's fine...there is such rich movement and choreography that some leave satisfied simply because they have been entertained.

You've been a dancer in the company since 2006, so what have you learnt about yourself in that time?

P: This answer could go on for a while but I'll boil it down to the biggest parts. Being with Hofesh has taught me a lot about confidence. I have to fake it a few times in order to actually have confidence with anything (improvised solos mainly). The first time Hofesh asked me to improvise alone on stage was terrifying but also very exciting. Through pushing myself to be calm and "take my time" I have learned to deal with higher levels of pressure not only on stage but also in my day-to-day life. One other big thing...rhythm. I have always had good rhythm, but Hofesh is better!

*** Foursquare is a ball game the company regularly play as a warm up.*

"THE INTRICATE ARTICULATION OF ARMS AND UPPER TORSO IS, AT TIMES, SPELL-BINDING AND CREATES A KIND OF NARRATIVE OF ITS OWN."

DANCE AUSTRALIA

What has been your best moment on stage so far as a Hofesh Shechter Company dancer?

P: The *Political Mother* tour 2012, first show at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, New York. It was the first time Maëva and I had to do one of the central duets for the first time. In part of the duet I had to go to the middle of the stage with closed fists and look desperately into the air while feeling "stuck". Maëva had to come to me to try to calm me down ... Just before the show I was given a note by Bruno (who was then our Rehearsal Director) that in this moment I need to try to make it a bit difficult for Maëva to get close to me. The moment in the show happens and I do as I have been instructed only to accidentally throw a punch at the exact moment Maëva decides to put her face towards my chest. My fist connects firmly with the bottom of her jaw and she kind of flops onto me, I stagger over her and we both fall unexpectedly to the floor in a tangle of twisted legs. Luckily our experience as performers paid off and we were able to jump back to our feet and continue the duet, I'm pretty sure nobody noticed except the other dancers watching (and laughing) from the wings!!

Do you think Hofesh's style has evolved over the years you have been dancing in his works?

P: Yes. His movement has become increasingly more complex to learn, which can sometimes be a nightmare during the first few days of fresh material in the studio, until it has time to sit in the body. He has become even more rhythmic, much faster.

Could you describe Hofesh's choreographic process?

P: The only thing I will say is its very intense and can be really fun. Oh and... foursquare :) **

What ideas/images have you been playing around with in the studio during the creation of *Sun*? What kind of world is Hofesh creating?

P: *Sun*... Sheep and crazy costumes. Well, where to start... we have been playing around with the concept of clowns, but the really old school clowns not modern day circus clowns. Wooden puppet sheep yes, trying to create a "sheep ballet". We have been literally barking like dogs at times... no idea why but it was fun! We have been working on music that is set on 3's for the first time! Mostly it has been a lot of group work, concentrating on spacing, timings, how we form lines, circles and all kinds of different formations together.

"I WANT THE AUDIENCE TO TAKE AWAY A MIXED BAG OF EMOTIONS... HOPEFULLY IT WILL MAKE THEM ASK A FEW QUESTIONS OF THEMSELVES OR OF THE WORLD AROUND THEM... BUT YOU KNOW, THIS IS A BIG AMBITION... IT'S JUST A DANCE PIECE!"

HOFESH SHECHTER

What has been your favourite or most inspiring time during the *Sun* creation period so far?

P: By far my favourite section so far is the section on 3's... don't know why, I just connect with it. My other favourite was messing around with the puppet sheep... so much fun, I'm a boy full of adventure and curiosity and I love ridiculous things, I think its quite ridiculous and I LOVE it!

Do you think *Sun* will have a message/theme?

P: *Sun's* message... hmmm. Like I said before I think the work is up for anyone's mind to create a story. There are running themes of clowns, circus presenter type characters, good and evil, and story-telling but they are loose enough to tell various things to different people, it really depends how the individual thinks or how he/she feels on that particular day they see the work.

Do you have any pre-performance rituals?

P: Yes. 1) I stick on my headphones and I meditate for 10 minutes on stage in a dark corner. 2) I improvise my warm up so I can really "feel" my body and get emotionally ready. 3) I try to find a friendly dancer to give me a 2-3 minute "shake down massage" to remove any lactic acid and tension before the show. In exchange I of course give them the same "mini treatment"! As I write this though, *Sun* has not been on tour yet so who knows... maybe my "rituals" will change. I am not one to stick religiously with one thing - life is a changing, living organism!

Three things you always pack on tour?

P: Laptop, headphones, bible.

10 years from now, what will you be doing?

P: Wow. That I really don't know! Perhaps still dancing for Hofesh, perhaps with another dance company/choreographer, maybe doing tattoo art, maybe studying, maybe working in the film industry as a motion capture artist/actor, maybe I will be living in the wilderness building a completely sustainable home, or maybe I will be sent to a distant country to invest myself in people, maybe I will be teaching English in Japan, perhaps trying to raise 10 children with my wife, maybe touring the USA in a camper van...maybe I should stop! My point is as I said before, life is a breathing organism and its possibilities really are endless... I'm open...

Next we meet Maëva Berthelot who has been with the company since 2010.



How did you come to join Hofesh's company?

M: Ha! It's a pretty funny story. Let me put it into context...

Tel Aviv, 2009. Watching the sun setting on the sea from an incredible rooftop with one of my friends from Batsheva Dance Company. We were having a really deep conversation about Life, Future, Love, Choices. A very special moment. Anyway, he asked me what I wanted to do after the project I was doing at the time with Batsheva and I answered "You know this guy in London? Hofesh Shechter? It's been a while since I got in touch with the company. I'm trying to meet him but unfortunately, it never happened.. I guess I'll try again but this time, I'll change my action plan. I'll stop asking for permission and being too polite. I won't give him any choice, he'll have to meet me! Ha!". I was actually trying to convince myself more than anything else....The day after that discussion, I had an email from the same friend. He just found out that the company was looking for a new female dancer for the new creation (*Political Mother*). I actually hesitated to send my application because I thought going to an open audition wasn't the best way to meet Hofesh properly. My friend convinced me, saying that it was Destiny. I guess he was right. Took a day off from work to go this audition in Lyon. 400 dancers, 1 contract. Got the job! Yep. Destiny.

What attracted you to Hofesh's work?

M: It was so different from what I've seen before. It felt so fresh. The physicality was incredible. But for me, the main thing was the place of music in his creations. I feel more like a musician than a dancer and I've always been dancing because of music, so it's easy to understand why I completely connected to his work.

Hofesh's work is very popular with young audiences.

Why do you think this is?

M: I guess pretty much for the reasons I just mentioned. It's fresh, non conformist, there's something "rock n roll" about it.. and maybe young audiences can easily connect to this angry side of the work.

What has been your best moment on stage so far as a Hofesh Shechter Company dancer?

M: So many of them, it would be hard to just pick one. So, I'm going to go for the funniest one: Phil and I had to learn a duet originally created for Wins and Bruno (a duet where the tension and the miscommunication between the man and the woman keeps on building up). The first time we performed it, we were so much into the emotions of the characters that Phil ended up punching me straight in the face. Phil is such a powerful dancer, an incredible creature. So, imagine... I was knocked out for few seconds. Mixed feelings. Wanted to laugh (or cry) so badly but couldn't let these feelings out because we had to keep on performing. The show must go on!

What has been your best moment off stage so far as a Hofesh Shechter Company dancer?

M: I will never forget the Japan Tour in 2010. It was unbelievable! Tokyo and the fridge filled with Haagen-Daaz at the theatre, the crazy shopping (best record shops, fashion designers, technology stuff...I could not stop buying...), Yamaguchi and the onsens (hot springs), the most incredible food experiences of my life, the bikes provided by the theatre...It was definitely one of the highlights of my time in the company. But to be honest, all the moments I spend with every single person (talking, laughing, crying...) are so valuable...Some of the people of the company are definitely more than colleagues. We became with time a real family.

How does the *Sun* creation period so far compare to the *Political Mother* creative period? Is Hofesh creating the same worlds/atmospheres in the studio? Or does this piece feel like it will be a departure from his 'usual' themes? Maybe it's too early to say?

M: I would say it feels more like a logic evolution rather than a new departure. Firstly, in terms of scale, the company got bigger. *Political Mother* was a piece for 10 dancers and we're 16 today, almost double. So the energy, the dynamic in the studio has definitely been influenced by that change. And then, in terms of creativity and process, Hofesh is pushing everything forwards too. He already has a stamp, a very singular style but he's also very young so logically, he keeps on growing with every work as a choreographer and as a human being (he became a dad for the first time), he keeps on challenging himself, looking for new things...That's why I'm still here! It's so interesting to observe and to be part of it as well...

Do you think *Sun* has a message/theme?

M: There is always a message...

Do you have any pre-performance rituals?

M: I think I'm someone that has a strong energy and the danger with that is to be overwhelmed by it and lose control. My problem would be more the "too much" than the "not enough". Life and experience shown me that I don't necessarily need a super physical warm up, it's really about calming myself down, focusing myself so yes, I do have rituals now. I really need to do my breathing exercises. I need to meditate. If I'm feeling like I'm about to fall asleep before a show, it means I'm ready!

Three things you always pack on tour?

M: My Nikon camera. I've always loved keeping a trace of places, people, and time by taking pictures. My sketchbook and pens - need to keep on improving my style and it's simply the best way to kill all these hours of waiting (in airports, planes, theatres...). My laptop and hard drive. Even though it's a virtual dimension of life, it allows me to stay connected with my life, friends and family. And it's also great to keep on working on different projects (editing pictures, making music, etc...)

Ten years from now, what will you be doing?

M: Oh la la... I have no idea to be honest. Life is full of surprises and is usually making choices for us..But I really wish that I'll keep on working and developing the different passions I deeply love: dance, music, photography and graffiti. Maybe I'll find a way to combine them. Doesn't really sound achievable but who knows?

And finally we chat to Fred, who joined the company in 2011 as an apprentice dancer, then was offered a permanent contract in 2012.



What attracted you to Hofesh's work?

F: There are a lot of things that I loved when I first discovered his work, but if I had to choose one I would say his sense of timing. From a short sequence of movements to the scale of a 70 minute piece of work, the rhythm created always feels right. The changes of energy, ideas, scenes always happen for a specific amount of time that makes the experience interesting, surprising, unexpected and yet justified. And honestly from a young dancer that was a fan at first, I just thought, "Wow that's cool!"

Can you tell me a bit about your pathway from dance school, apprenticeship with Hofesh Shechter Company to then being offered a job?

F: I first met the company doing a small internship with them during their performances in Paris while I was a student at the Paris Conservatoire. I then naively sent my CV for a position as male dancer in the company, which Hofesh and Bruno gently refused but invited me and my best friend to an apprentice audition instead. We were then very lucky and grateful to get the job together. Then followed an amazing year of learning, performing, touring. I got the chance to perform in *Political Mother*, *Uprising*, and *In your rooms*. I also had the chance to perform Phil's piece for *In Good Company* and I think that's when I got offered the job as a full member of the company. (see Supporting Information. Page 25)

***Sun* will be your first new creation with Hofesh. How is this experience different from learning existing repertoire, is it a deeper experience? Harder maybe? Or is it the opposite?**

F: It is in fact a completely different experience. When learning existing material you have to find your way through images, energies, concepts, characters that are already set and strong. It is your way to interpret a role. In the creation you still have to do this job but also to create your character, to experience new ways to move, to say things. It's just really, really exciting because everything is possible.

So far in the creation period, does the material Hofesh is working on have a theme, a feeling, an atmosphere?

F: What I like about Hofesh is that every single movement he creates has a really strong feeling and universe attached to it. If I think of a general atmosphere for this piece it will be something really playful and revealing. There's a sense of playing with really honest feelings and showing what is usually hidden but known by us all too.

What is the best thing about being a Hofesh Shechter Company dancer?

F: The music! As a performer the music is definitely one of the best things for me. The soundtrack is so strong and it just makes me want to move. As a person, the fact that everybody is just so passionate and committed to the work just makes me feel very comfortable and able to try anything.

What has been your best moment on stage so far as a Hofesh Shechter Company dancer?

F: My first show in Spain, it was *Political Mother* and I just got completely carried away in the piece, I completely forgot the audience then. And any performance of *Political Mother: The Choreographer's Cut* just makes me feel like a rock star.

What has been your best moment off stage so far as a Hofesh Shechter Company dancer?

F: A trip on a small island in Singapore, where we hired tandems and saw monkeys, birds, had a nice dinner in a local restaurant then enjoyed the rest of the day in the outdoor swimming pool under the rain. That day was pretty awesome...

Three things you always pack on tour?

F: Swim shorts, iPod, and one shirt for occasional post-show receptions.

Ten years from now, what do you hope you'll be doing, or maybe you don't think that far ahead?!

F: The way I love the work at the moment I think I might still be playing around with Hofesh! I don't really have too many plans... I'd like to have a go at creating my work at some point, doing some music, doing some cooking...who knows.

Next we chat to Merle Hensel, designer for *Sun*, who first collaborated with Hofesh on *Political Mother* in 2010.

Tell me about your initial conversations with Hofesh when you first began collaborating on *Sun*? He has been talking about making a much lighter piece for a long time – was this something you discussed in your first conversations about *Sun*?

M: Hofesh did talk about making a piece that is lighter, but then has darker undertones, e.g. a piece of light and happy music contrasting with darker choreography. Initially we worked on an idea that the space that would start off white and clean, but then would transform into a black space at some point.

A curved 'wall' and a printed floor – these are the two things I have overheard Ed (Technical Production Manager) talking about. Can you tell me briefly where these aspects of the design came from?

M: As I mentioned we were initially looking at two spaces, a white and a black one. This was to create a clean/superficially 'happy' space, and a dark, more ominous space. We then developed this idea and came up with a space that can be both. The change between atmospheres could come through lighting, choreography, sound and costumes. I found an image of a concrete texture that is quite beautiful; it has something of an old wall fresco about it. Together with the glowing grid of light bulbs it can look like an old beautifully aged wall, there are baroque undertones. But the concrete can also look very bare and hard and with the fully lit naked light bulbs it gives prison/bunker/institution like associations. The wall is curved to create an architectural space rather than just a flat backdrop with a dance floor. It will take the light more interestingly.



This is your second large collaboration with Hofesh – has the process become easier/more productive as you now know each other, know what makes each other tick creatively, and have one very successful and critically acclaimed collaboration under your belts?

M: The communication in collaborations always becomes easier the longer you work together. As you say, you understand better what creatively excites the other person, what their creative process is and how does that work with your own. You also build up trust, which makes trying out and developing new ideas much easier.

Lastly we catch up with Christina Cunningham, the costume designer.

Tell us about your initial conversations with Hofesh when you first began collaborating on *Sun*?

C: Very early on, over a year ago, Hofesh expressed that he would like to try to do a piece in a white space, and he thought possibly white suits would feature in it. We didn't know yet how many dancers there would be and what else he would want to explore. After their first research period and the set becoming not so 'white' the next time we met we talked about not sticking to a strict period, but maybe spanning a few decades, centuries, and also introducing less formal clothes into the mix.

The costumes I've seen in rehearsal look beautiful – a very baroque feel to them. Can you talk us through this aspect of your design? Did it emerge organically from your collaboration or was it something you suggested to Hofesh?

C: Once Hofesh & Merle had made decisions on the set, they sent me a photo of what the back wall would look like and I think the word 'pastoral' was used. That sent us looking at Watteau paintings.

And the clown costumes– did they emerge in the same way?

C: Yes, they emerged the same way. Hofesh had mentioned maybe having a clown, and then the Watteau images also had 'clowns' or early Pierrot type figures. From that I brought in costumes to rehearsals to try out to see what shapes and fabrics worked with the dancers and choreography.

Can you briefly talk us through the colour palette of the costumes - did this emerge from conversations with Hofesh about making a lighter piece in general?

C: Yes, this came about in the same way. Originally Hofesh had discussed white, but once I saw the colours in the back wall and the rehearsals progressed I thought it would be interesting to bring in clothes in variations on pale.

THE FINISHED PIECE

BREAKDOWN STUDY SECTIONS - A LOOK AT MOVEMENT CONTENT, VISUAL SETTING, & MUSIC



Here we look in-depth at two movement sections in *Sun*.

First we'll explore the duet. Hofesh shares his thoughts here, "This duet for me is an echo moment. In a way these people are trying to tell something to the audience but all the time you are not quite sure what they are trying to say to you. Is that a question they are trying to ask me? In a way these two are casualties of people who have been communicating that way for a long time – not clearly, not with conviction. So they present this kind of confusion. I had a lot of fun making it. I just wanted to keep adding to it – more movement and then more dancers, so it started off as just a duet, but became something much bigger. I imagine them as 2 old people, reliving their memories – the miserable ones as well as the great ones. Just remembering things really..."

Watch clip 1 a few times through

Look at all the different elements of the section.

Consider the following:

Visual setting

- Is there a set?
What can you see on stage at this point in the piece?
- How would you describe the lighting in this section?
Does one lighting state remain throughout or does it change?
- What are the dancers wearing? Does it tell us anything about them?
- How are the dancers spaced in this section?

Aural setting

- Listen to the soundtrack for this section.
Can you identify instruments and sounds in it?
- How might you describe this track – does it fit into a specific musical genre?
- Does the track build in depth or volume?
- Is there a relationship between the movement, the number of dancers on stage, and the soundtrack?

Movement content

- How many dancers are in this section?
- What happens in relation to the space – do the dancers move around the stage?
- How would you describe the movement itself?
- Is there a motif we see a few times in this section?
- Do you feel there is a tone or an emotion in this section?
- Think about Hofesh's image of two old people reliving their memories. What memories/stories do you think they might be remembering, based on their movement in this duet?



Next we look at the 'Sun' section in the work. Hofesh created this towards the end of the rehearsal period and it came together relatively quickly. He says "It's a presentation of something – they're doing it to show something to the audience. They're putting on a spectacle for us. In the very early stages of making this section, when it was in sketch form, I wondered about trying it all in unison, the whole thing. I've been accused of using too much unison in the past... and admittedly it's hard to keep the energy going when everyone is dancing the same thing endlessly..."

Watch clip 2 a few times through

Look at all the different elements in this section.

Consider the following:

Visual setting

- What are the different elements of the set? Discuss texture, size, shape.
- How does the set work in relation to the movement? Does it add a layer of depth or understanding?
- Look at the lighting states within this section – how do they alter?
- What are the dancers wearing? How do their costumes collectively add to the atmosphere of this section?

Aural setting

- Describe the music that accompanies this section. What is it reminiscent of to you?
- How does this track add to the other elements of this section?
- Hofesh says, "*When the music is nice and loud... it feels like there is definitely something happening...*" what do you think he means by this? Do you agree? What exactly is happening?

Movement content

- Discuss the use of unison in this section. How does the section unfold?
- What other choreographic tools does Hofesh use here?
- The very first movement (arms held high, like a double salute) what might this symbolise or signify?
- How would you describe the style of movement in this section?



"EVERYWHERE HIS DANCE LOOKS IT SEES WHAT'S WRONG WITH HUMAN SOCIETY" **THE TIMES**

Sun – the world is perfect. Discuss the themes in *Sun*. For every dark side was there a lighter one?

"It's a pretence. They're putting on a show for us," says Hofesh. Chat about the nature of theatre and performance...the 'them and us' between audience and performers. Were these lines blurred in *Sun*?

Discuss the role of the 'ring master', danced by Erion in the original cast. He is a thread running through the work...sometimes shooing the performers away, other times whipping them up into enthusiasm or mania. Hofesh says *"Erion is presenting to us everything with the utmost importance, with the pretence of meaning, of structure and logic, as if he is about to make sense of the whole thing for us – a hollow promise that is never fulfilled. To me he is a man that will sell anything to the ones that listen, and even though he tries to give a sense he controls the events- he only follows what happens, and 'makes a show' out of it. He is 'wisely' showing us and presenting us with 'important' details – but he is as out of control as the situation around him. He reminds me of some of my teachers in school, who repeat what they know is supposed to be important, but you could feel they didn't quite know why."* What are your own thoughts about this character?

Look at clip 3

What do you think he's trying to tell us?

"Through the brightness, the lightness...we can deal with quite heavy things." What were the heavy things you think Hofesh is referring to?

In an interview shortly before the premiere, Hofesh mentioned the clown in the Royal court who dares to tell the King the truth. Did you notice some of the dancers wearing clown costumes in *Sun*? Research the clown character through the ages – think of Shakespeare, Commedia dell'arte, the circus tradition. (Links in Supporting Information, page 25.) How is the presence of clowns relevant in *Sun*?

"...a pithy vision of civilisation..." writes Chloe Smethurst in the Brisbane Times following the premiere of *Sun* in Australia, 2013. *"Sun in set in the past, in some dying culture perhaps...A lot of lies, truth, hiding..."* says Hofesh about the work. What observations on civilisation or our society in general did you make when watching *Sun*?

Maëva, one of the dancers and original cast of *Sun*, says that for her, the main thing is the place of music in his creations. Discuss the place music has in *Sun*. What genres of music does Hofesh use? Does he sample other composers' work?

Hofesh has spoken about this being a lighter work than some of his previous pieces. Research one of his other pieces and write or discuss the comparison.

"But, although there's compassion here, there's little implied moralising, no rousing message. Rather, the sheep start merrily head banging and the whole lot end up twirling about the stage in demented unison...We're all possible prey, he seems to be saying; all potential wolves: watch your step, face the music, and dance." Mark Monahan, writing in The Telegraph, November 2013

Would you agree? Do you think *Sun* had a message? What did you take away from it? Can you remember all the images on the puppet cut outs? What do you think they signify?

The puppet cut outs. The light of the sun projected onto a sheet. The 'fake' beating scene. How do we read these elements in *Sun*? What design elements did you notice in *Sun*? Discuss the flavour they gave to the piece.

Discuss the costumes in particular – can you see a link to the Renaissance influence Hofesh talks about? Research some of your own images from this period and see if you can discover what he's talking about when he says he and the dancers were influenced by '...the way people held themselves...' back then (see Appendix 3 page 29).

Read through Hofesh's thoughts on his idea for the original sheep opening scene (page 4). Discuss how this initial idea clearly grew to involve puppets that became integral throughout the piece. Chat about how they represent the pretence that Hofesh talks about. Do they represent anything else to you?

"SHECHTER OPENS UP A VORTEX OF STRANGENESS AND PROVOCATION" **THE GUARDIAN**

THINGS TO TRY



"SHECHTER DRAWS YOU INTO THIS WORLD, SEDUCING YOU WITH THE RHYTHMIC HEARTBEAT OF HIS CHOREOGRAPHY" **THE TIMES**

HOFESH INSPIRED WARM UP IDEAS

Before you start, allow some time to warm up and get into the right frame of mind.

Use this [Big Dance clip](#) to see how Hofesh works when he warms up with his company.

Either work with this clip interactively, following his directions alongside his own dancers, or take some of his tasks and work through them at your own speed.

Idea 1: Feet

Standing in parallel, loose and open in the space.

Take a moment to feel a freedom in all the joints, allow the hips and shoulders to 'breathe', the spine to feel soft and fluid, the head to float.

Start to create movement in the feet – trying to create many tiny twists, turns, pushes and pulls in all the small muscles of the feet. Push against the floor as much as you can. The body is relaxed and loose. Let your weight transfer across your feet, everything is quiet.

"This looseness creates stretches in your back, your pelvis, in your legs...it naturally warms you up...it creates more movement..."

Idea 2: Strings

Imagine pieces of string attach your palms to your centre. Stretch the arms apart, feeling tension in the imaginary strings, but looseness in the body. Try to stretch the strings in many different ways and directions.

"Feel that you are stretching this elastic, the further you stretch the more tension there is...the body stays soft, very casual..."

Allow this stretching to affect your body more and more.

Idea 3: Strings development

Continuing with this idea, your imaginary strings are now also attached from each foot to your centre, and for your head to your centre, and from your palms as before. So your body is connected with 5 rubbery strings. Move continuously as you stretch your strings. Start to imagine the strings get thick and hard to stretch, and then loose, light and easy to stretch. Notice how this affects your movement.

"The idea is that the whole of the body is connected, there is a sense of totality..."

Idea 4: Web of strings

Now your strings can be attached between any body parts (head to shoulder, knee to hip etc.) as well as to your centre. You can also imagine external strings pulling you from other parts of the space. Allow this to expand your movement further, pulling your body in different directions. "This inspires you to move in different ways but you also keep a sense of connection between your body parts...it's like you are in a web of strings...like somebody is using you like a puppet."

IMPROVISATION TASK FOR WARMING UP

Using all these ideas, follow this task with Hofesh's directions.



DUET: MOVEMENT & CREATIVE TASKS TO EXPLORE

"In a way these two are casualties of people who have been communicating that way for a long time – not clearly, not with conviction. So they present this kind of confusion." Hofesh

"Try to keep this movement in a stuttering place..."

Hofesh's notes to Fred & Wins – original cast for this duet

Here are Fred's thoughts:

"Creating this duet was like a brainteaser. It is always easier for me to learn a sequence that involves big movements and intense muscular activity, because the body memory is taking over. But this duet is a succession of small, subtle, rhythmically complex movements, so we had to repeat it over and over again to very slowly assimilate it. We use the breath a lot to connect to the rhythm, and to the emotions as well as keeping the connection between us two. I really like this duet because it is almost the opposite of what Hofesh usually does. We usually create material out of feelings and emotions. But for this section we worked on movements quite disconnected emotionally and then built memories around it. I now feel after performing it many times that we are two individuals telling their stories without regrets and without being anxious about the future, but this is a very personal way to look at it."

Now watch clip 1

Notice how well they dance together. Can you imagine how they achieve this almost perfect unison work? (Fred tells us, above)

Watch it again and discuss it with a partner or in a small group afterwards. What does it make you feel to watch it? What kind of atmosphere do you think it creates? Which adjectives would you use to describe the movements in this duet? What do you think this duet is communicating to us?

Now watch it again and note some of your favourite gestures and movements. Put 5 or 6 of them in an order and try them out with a partner, both facing front. Notice how you need to use your peripheral vision to see your partner's movements. Is it easier if your focus is out in front of you, or if you let your gaze fall diagonally to the floor in front of you? Where do Fred and Wins look when they perform it?

Practice your movements in order and explore how your breath patterns can help you to stay in unison with each other. If you have mirrors in your studio/hall, now is the time to turn away from them!

Hofesh and the dancers rarely use mirrors when working; Hofesh's movement language never starts from an aesthetic, it is nearly always about how it feels, what the emotional stimulus is. So for Hofesh and the dancers, mirrors are not part of their working life.

Work through your phrase a few times together, refining it as you go. Hofesh and Bruno tidy and clean movement material constantly as they work. Anything from where the focus is, to what the angle of the wrist is, there is always something to clarify!

Perhaps you find yourselves using some counts to help you set this gestural phrase. Notice what else you can use to help you stay in time with each other – other rhythmic noises, a sharp intake of breath, and so on. When Hofesh and Bruno rehearse the dancers they often softly 'sing' the movement with noises and sounds. Find the song in your movement...

Once you feel you have this phrase comfortably, start to explore your own Hofesh-inspired gestural movements to add to it. Go back to your descriptive words at the beginning of this task, and use them to find the emotional stimulus you need to discover movements. Work collaboratively – make sure you both have an input into this duet, however small. Don't be afraid to discard movements – either it feels right, that it fits with this work, or it doesn't. Hofesh throws away over 50% of movement he makes...he's fairly brutal about this! So try things out, but don't feel they need to be kept. Have fun playing with movement, and don't put any pressure on yourselves. Add as much as you like, being sure to keep rehearsing it from the beginning as you go. When it's ready, share it with the group and ask for constructive feedback.

Watch other duets when they are shared and notice whether they all have the same feel to them, as they came from the same starting point (Hofesh's original duet for Wins and Fred) though the movement material differs.

When you offer feedback to your friends' duets, think about how you can be constructive. Perhaps you can use this simple structure:

- I liked the duet, particularly the part where you...
- If you were to work more on it, I'd suggest trying to.../exploring...
- Aim to use positive reinforcing language, even when suggesting areas to work on.

See NDTA link in Supporting Information page 25 for advice on giving and receiving feedback.



"ONCE AGAIN, SHECHTER HAS COMPOSED HIS OWN MUSIC. HIS STRENGTH IS IN CREATING BEATS THAT PULSE THROUGH THE DANCERS' BODIES WITH INCREDIBLE POTENCY"

THE GUARDIAN

UNISON: MOVEMENT AND CREATIVE TASKS TO TRY

Remember to use Hofesh's warm up on page 17 to get your body into an open and fluid place, ready to explore some of this repertoire.

"When they perform this section, I remind the dancers to have a kind of 'Presentational' energy, to be celebratory, pompous. Like shouting something out, a sense of praising the greatness of something or someone or ourselves. I remind them to find the emotions linked to being assertive, to being very confident."

Hofesh

Look at clip 2

This section is known by Hofesh and the dancers simply as 'Sun'. Notice how the lighting state reflects this. Watch the link through a few times. Look for any motifs you recognise from other parts of the piece. All the dancers are facing front as they often are in the piece. This is unusual for Hofesh's work; he often prefers not to have a 'front'. What does this add to our experience as an audience – having the performers dancing 'at' us?

Choose 3 or 4 movements you really like in this extract. In groups of 4 or 5 play around with them and put them in an order. When Hofesh works with the dancers, each movement has so much information with it. He might use adjectives e.g. 'this is like you're very proud, very regal, a little arrogant here...', or he might use visual images e.g. 'you're stirring something very thick with the arm here, and the hips are open and soft...'. As you work with your group on this short phrase of movements, start to add your own images and adjectives to help you find the flavour of the movement and to find a richness and depth to what you are doing.

Hofesh always uses emotions and improvisation when creating a 'world' for his dancers to explore and experiment in with him. Try not to worry about what your movement looks like, rather how it feels, what the emotions are behind the movements. This is how he works with his dancers...there is always a stream of information underlying every movement or shape. It'll be a new way of working for some of you – try it though, it's so exciting to feel the difference it can make to your dancing.

Share and pool your ideas and say them out loud as you dance your short phrase. For example, the first 4 movements in this *Sun* extract might 'sound' like this... proud – out - soft hips – stab with the hand. Use images and adjectives that you all agree on to help you dance the phrase, then start adding your own movements to join Hofesh's. Stay within this world you are creating with each other. Use it to your benefit to help inspire you with your own movements.

Listen to this *Sun* track to help you

Enjoy the power in this composition, let the music feed the movements you find. When you feel ready, share the phrase you have all built with the rest of your group. Get them to sit opposite you and dance directly towards them, remembering the depth and richness you discovered in the movements by using words and images as you dance. Ask for their response and discuss together.

MUSICALITY & RHYTHM TASK – A CHALLENGE!

Hofesh uses a cinematic device in *Sun* - where the dancers appear to dance 'against' the natural rhythm of the music, much as a film director might use a contrasting piece of music to the on- screen action. Use this idea now. Practice one of the above phrases you have created, along with some music. Rehearse it tightly so you have real clarity and understanding of the precise timing of the phrase. Remember the 'song' of the phrase – use this to keep the movement tight. Now here comes the challenge! Put on a piece of music that directly contradicts the timing of your phrase. Make sure it has a different tempo and speed to your movement. Dance your phrase along to the contrasting piece of music you have chosen, aiming to stay true to the emotion and drive of your phrase, without becoming influenced by the new music.

What happens? How do you need to work in order to dance 'against' the music? What do you rely upon? It's interesting to notice that you need to approach the phrase differently – using your breath, your internal rhythm, and your peripheral vision when dancing in unison with others.

Repeat this task perhaps try using an iPod and earphones whilst you perform, to totally immerse yourself in the original music. What happens? Is it easier if you block out the contrasting rhythm?

Hofesh's dancers are all incredibly musical; indeed his use of music is what drew many of them to his work. Discuss how he uses music within *Sun*. Do you remember specific pieces of music when you watched it?

"TO WATCH A SHECHTER CHOREOGRAPHY IS TO BE AWARE OF THE BEAST WITHIN"

THE TIMES

BEHIND THE SCENES

INSIGHTS FROM SOME OF THE TEAM

Behind every performance and tour date there is a bigger story. Whilst the dancers on stage are more visible, there is also a less visible team that keeps the company in existence. For a full listing please see our website. In the meantime, we meet a few of them here.



Helen Shute, Executive Director of the company, chats here about the new piece.

So, a new piece - exciting! How does this change what you have to do on a day-to-day basis, as opposed to running the company during a touring period?

H: I'm still the producer of Hofesh's work, despite being more hands-off in other areas of the Company's work now we have our amazing team in place. As we get closer to the premiere this does mean I have to spend more of my time in and around the studio and attending meetings with designers, production team etc. as well as with the guys in the office who will take care of invitations, opening nights, marketing, PR and of course preparing for the first tour of the work. I sometimes get very involved in seemingly small details that may not seem important or necessarily part of my job description but after working with Hofesh for over 7 years I've learned to recognise when something small is actually very important. And if I don't recognise it he's very quick to let me know it needs sorting!

How many years has *Sun* been in the planning from your perspective? When for example did you have to start raising the funds in order for it to be possible?

H: We've known since 2010 that Hofesh's next work (after *Political Mother*) would premiere in Autumn 2013. Half way through the *Political Mother* process which took place January to April 2010, he asked me if he could create in the Summer next time...so I moved our planned schedule from a May premiere to an October one...simply by doing that it started the process of searching for funds and partners because the October premiere aligned us with a different set of festivals and venues than a May premiere would have done. It's always the case that one decision sets the next one in motion and so on.

Can you chat a little bit about the company's relationships with key commissioners of *Sun*. How you nurture and continue those relationships from one new creation to the next?

H: We are lucky that we have several amazing partners - both the organisations themselves and the people who lead them, with whom Hofesh and I have what have become personal relationships thanks to their on-going support and enthusiasm for our work. My first call is always to Andrew Comben - who leads the Brighton Dome and Festival where we are resident company. Once I've tested out my plan with him and we've agreed how it will fit into the Brighton Dome or Festival season and how it can be supported I'm ready to start bringing in our other partners. My next call is to Alistair Spalding at Sadler's Wells where Hofesh is Associate Artist and again who has been an incredible supporter and partner from day one. Alistair not only commissions and programmes the work and gives us wonderful opportunities to gain exposure within the London scene, he also spends time with me looking at how international partners can fit into the mix and helps me clarify my thoughts for the shape of our first tour and the partners I might talk to.

In terms of nurturing those two relationships it's all about communication - Alistair was teasing me that he's dreading our Company working at Sadler's Wells over the summer because he knows I'll constantly be up in his office wanting to talk about our programme/test out ideas etc.... at least I think he was teasing!! Andrew and I have a very honest and fun relationship - we can have a laugh about the headache of getting our crazily busy schedules working or how much it's all going to cost - but then we just get down to business and are clear with each other about what we need in order to make the project happen.

I have similar relationships with our international partners – I invite them to see performances, keep them updated by email and lift the phone now and then to make sure they know what's going on. In fact the best promoters are those who are constantly in touch – asking about our next project, talking to other promoters about what they're involved with etc. and all of our commissioners do this... it's like having lots of aunts and uncles who talk to each other about their families – I'm always getting emails saying 'I heard that you're doing a new project with so and so... what about me? Can I be involved?' It's amazing and the key to keeping everyone on board is complete straightforwardness and honesty – all venue directors talk to each other so don't try to play someone off against another. I never do it – never - and I know it's appreciated.

The team and company are now at their biggest yet...does it ever feel daunting heading up an organisation that has grown so big? What aspects of your job are made easier or harder by the size of the HSC employee list?

H: YES, it is daunting but I have Colette (Hansford, General Manager) who's an amazing support – keeping the whole team working together and focussed especially when I'm out of the office for meetings etc. We have a weekly team catch up meeting which allows us to hear what everyone is doing that week- and for us to throw in our priorities if we think that they have slipped down the list... it's also an opportunity for various team members to share exciting news, discuss issues etc. Having people with expertise in different areas makes it much easier for me – for example Katya Evans who is Head of Development brings a wealth of experience in fundraising that has really made a difference to the Company. What is harder is moving things forward as there is much more consultation and discussion than I'm used to... but I'm learning! And in the end if I really want us to do something, everyone knows I'm going to get my way!!

What is the most challenging part of your job when a new piece is being created?

H: Handling the nerves and fear and not letting them affect my judgement, or transmitting them to anyone else on the team – especially Hofesh. I believe totally in his work – but being so close to the process and seeing him wrestle and struggle, combined with my own worries about our ability to fulfil his vision means that my heart rate is constantly up from the start of the process until sometime half way through the first tour!

What is the best part of your job when a new piece is being created?

H: Seeing a new work by Hofesh Shechter... it's cheesy to say this but it's thrilling. I remember sitting in the Brighton Dome Corn Exchange in April 2010 with Lucy, now our Participation Producer, and seeing the first ever run of *Political Mother* – we didn't know that's what we were going to see, Hofesh was playing around with order of sections, talking some options through with the dancers and suddenly said - OK guys let's run it like that – and there it was... I think I cried...

“A POWERFUL, DELIBERATELY UNSTABLE AND WHOLLY ABSORBING WORK.”
ABC ARTS

Katya Evans, Head of Development talks us through her pathway into fundraising work, and how she goes about raising money to keep the company up and running!

What did you study at college/University? In other words what has your pathway to this job been?

K: I studied English and History of Art (BA), following by an MA in Arts Administration and Cultural Policy.

Where did you work before you came to Hofesh Shechter Company? Have you always been a fundraiser?

K: Well my first job in the arts was for a performing /visual art organisation called Motiroti as their project administrator so I haven't always been in fundraising! My next job was at Unicorn Theatre working on a fundraising campaign for the first purpose-designed theatre for children in London. After that my career path was in fundraising – at the Design Museum, followed by the Almeida Theatre.

Had you seen Hofesh's work before you joined the company?

K: I had seen Hofesh's choreography in *Motortown* at the Royal Court and remember being blown away by the impact of the movement on the play – totally unexpected. I then saw *Political Mother* in Brighton, and *Survivor* at the Barbican and in both I knew I was experiencing something special.

What attracted you to this job?

K: It always starts with the art! It's a role that involves speaking to people passionately about the work and encouraging them to get involved too – and I couldn't do that if I didn't believe in it completely. And then it's the people and the ethos of the organisation, as well as the size – I knew that having a full-time fundraiser would make a difference to the Company in a way it wouldn't in a much larger organisation.

What does being Head of Development generally involve?

K: My role is really varied – but generally it is all about relationship building; with the supporters that are already involved and introducing new supporters. I could be doing anything from organising an event for supporters to watch Hofesh and the dancers rehearse, writing a Trust application for funding for our participation programme or researching companies with the potential to sponsor us...and lots of planning and evaluating in between!

How does your job work in relation to this new piece?

K: My job is to identify individuals, trusts or organisations that might be open to supporting the new work and to start speaking to and approaching them. Gathering as much information as we have about the work, how much it will cost to deliver it, the timescales, where we're touring to etc. is crucial to create a 'case for support' i.e. what the funding need is, including how much we need to raise to be able to produce it. After that, it's making sure donors or funders who have committed to supporting the new work are involved in the process throughout, and most importantly, thanked.

How far in advance of *Sun* have you had to plan?

K: Ideally, it would be at least two years ahead in the planning to fundraise. To plan for the events I work about a year ahead.

Did you run any special events around the premiere?

K: We always have a party for supporters around the opening of a new work, and we also had an additional event during the run in London, as well as events in New York when we were performing at Brooklyn Academy of Music.

Do you travel much in this job?

K: So far I've been to New York twice, and I go to Brighton if we're doing anything around the Festival.

What are the three main qualities you think a person needs to be an effective fundraiser?

K: A good communicator, tenacious and patient!

How would you describe Hofesh's work?

K: Challenging / beautiful / complex / intelligent / like nothing I've ever seen before.

How do the themes Hofesh explores in his pieces help you in your job? Or can they make it harder?

K: Getting people in to see the work when they don't know what to expect is hard. Once they see the work, that's the easy part because invariably they love it and want to get involved – I feel very lucky to have Hofesh's work/style/themes to fundraise for!

What is the most challenging part of your job?

K: Meeting my income target each year! Every time you make an approach/send an application/write a proposal you never know if it will be successful. In fact, you have to expect at least 50% won't be – and that's being optimistic!

What has been the highlight of your job so far?

K: Every time I watch the Company perform – I feel so proud to be part of it and to have made a small contribution to making it happen.

“...THE JUMBLE OF SILKY
MOVEMENT AND UNEXPECTED
SIGHTS DRIVES FORWARDS
ON ITS OWN ENERGY”
THE INDEPENDENT

Next, Silvia Maroino, Artist and Tour Manager for the company, explains what her job entails and her pathway into this role.

What did you study at college or university? In other words what has your pathway to this job been?

S: At University I studied Philosophy, specializing in Aesthetics (Italy/France), then I did a Masters degree in Arts Management & Criticism at City University, London.

Where did you work before you came to Hofesh Shechter Company? Have you always worked in the Arts/with artists?

S: I mainly worked freelance in project management and coordination of UK-based international arts festivals (dance, circus, theatre and music) and management of arts/sports related events in Italy, UK and France. For a few years I also worked in other fields, such as the public sector, the film industry...

What attracted you to this job?

S: The challenges it involved. The travelling.

What does being Artist and Tour Manager generally involve before a tour?

S: Researching transport, flights and hotels to finalize itineraries and costs; creating travel plans and rooming lists; getting all the necessary documents such as Visas, ID cards, work permits, new passports or second passports, E101/A1 forms, European Health Insurance Cards for all company's members; liaising with the venues the company will be visiting. Then with the travelling party I have to organize all logistical details; getting petty cash and per diems according to specific contract agreements signed with the venues; overlooking the creation of a Tour Book to be forwarded to the travelling party and the management ahead of departure.

That's quite a list! What about during the tour? How does your responsibility change then?

S: My job then involves ensuring the travelling party gets a day to day schedule well in advance; making sure everyone gets per diems upon arrival; ensuring hotel check-ins go smoothly; sorting flights via online check-ins whenever possible; organizing the transport and check-in of technical equipment when flying outside Europe; managing complimentary tickets list (in liaison with venues and company members) and arranging extra tickets whenever necessary; liaising with theatres' marketing departments issuing the evening programmes; organizing lunch and dinner facilities for both crew and dancers; coordinating local transports; representing the company at any social or PR events and making sure the dancers attend whenever requested; liaising with the venues' directors; managing petty cash; ensuring dancers know how to get to the theatre from the hotel and where the rehearsal studio is; overlooking the dancers' health and wellbeing (booking treatments when necessary); assisting dancers and crew with injuries and liaising with the insurance; and as well as all of that, managing any emergency!

How far in advance of Sun touring do you have to plan?

S: About 4 months.

What are the 3 main qualities you think a person needs in order to be an effective Artist & Tour Manager?

S: An attention to detail, clear organizational ability, and very good communication skills.

How would you describe Hofesh's work?

S: Physical, challenging, energetic, aggressive, emotional, music-focused, visionary, clever, universal, contagious, generous.

What is the most challenging part of your job?

S: It's extremely demanding both physically (long working hours, constant travelling and jet lag, lack of time-off/rest), and mentally (very stressful due to constant unforeseen events, last minute changes, all the responsibilities involved).

What has been the highlight of your job so far?

S: The satisfaction that nothing went wrong during the last 10-month tour! All went smoothly in the end, and all obstacles were overcome...

Now we chat with Ed Trotter, Technical Production Manager with the company, about the logistics of getting *Sun* from the studio and into theatres all over the globe.

How long have you been with Hofesh Shechter Company now? What keeps you coming in to work? (apart from the obvious needing-to-earn-a-living thing...)

E: I think it is nearly 5 years and to be honest this is a question I often ask myself especially during the run up to a new production. Essentially the answer is the people. The ones I work for are great, they set some huge challenges that push me and the team to come up with uncompromised solutions, which at times is almost unbearably hard but when it comes off is exceptionally rewarding. The people I work with are hard working and ingenious to a degree no one has a right to expect and I feel very lucky to be part of that team.

Can you chat a bit about when your *Sun* journey began? In other words when were the first conversations about it with Hofesh, and how long have you been working on the logistics of getting it made?

E: It seems like forever but in fact we started talking about some basic elements when we were making *In Good Company* in 2012. We talked about the feel of a brighter space than previous shows and some curved elements to the set, well actually a set that you could see was the first big change after the invisible platforms of most of the previous work. Once the idea of the concrete floor came up at a meeting in March - that happened in the space of 5 minutes during a meeting between Merle and Hofesh - I had to start thinking about the logistics of moving some pretty bulky and heavy things around the globe in a very tight schedule and even now I am not sure I have solved all the logistical issues, but we are getting there.

Can you talk through who will be on your technical team for *Sun*, and briefly what they will all be responsible for?

E: **Lawrie** - our Chief Technician. During production time Lawrie acts as a research resource for me and is totally invaluable as someone to bounce ideas off and frankly come up with some of the best solutions. Once the show is on the road he is responsible for leading the get ins and fit ups and running things at the sharp end of the tour. He has to know a great deal about every department and spot and solve issues as they come up so that the rest of the team can do their jobs efficiently, safely and to a very high standard.

Sam - our Stage Manager. Sam runs the stage and keeps everything in the wings where it should be, neat and tidy, as well as looking after all the props and costumes, and liaising with the dancers over the myriad little details that help them feel comfortable performing. It is a job that needs a level of attention to detail that is well beyond me and she is brilliant at it. She started with us as a technical intern over a year ago and was able to take on more and more responsibility.

Alan - our Relighter. He is responsible for the lighting of the show, making sure that each lamp is rigged in the correct place and focussed at exactly the right spot as well as recreating Lee's design in all of the very different venues that we tour to. Hofesh has a very detailed eye as does Lee, so Alan has to work to make sure that the relight is as clean and as accurate as possible, balancing the venues' varying equipment with the look of the show.

Mike - our Sound Engineer. He is responsible for building the best sound system for each venue with a mix of the in-house kit and supplementing it with hired bits (to try and keep costs down for the venues) so that he can recreate the sound from Hofesh's mix. Each venue is different and needs a good knowledge of the equipment and a great ear to get each room to respond in the best way. Hofesh's ear is even better than his eye in terms of spotting detail and he has a very specific sound in mind for Mike to try and match.

Our Technical Intern working as Assistant Stage Manager. This person assists Sam, looking after props and costume - this show is quite prop heavy. There is a lot of maintenance to do on a lot of it as well as quite a few stage cues, prepping props for the dancers and making sure they are in the right place so they can concentrate on performing.

Varied job description? I've overheard you on the phone sourcing all sorts of stuff...so, most random *Sun*-related thing so far?

E: Lots and lots of weapons, though most of these have now been cut from the piece now. At one point I thought I might have to find a whole load of unlubricated condoms for something quite technical but luckily it turns out that balloons will do the job fine and are much easier to find. Oh and wooden sheep, just lots and lots of wooden sheep!

What advice would you give anyone interested in getting into the technical side of theatre?

E: Take any opportunity to get involved and most importantly, carefully observe and be aware of what is going on around you. Ask questions by all means, but the best way to learn is to ask yourself the questions first and see if you can figure out the answer. The best technicians that I have worked with, are the ones that have the broadest viewpoint. Lastly don't get preoccupied with the technology, you have to understand how it works but far more important than how it works is how it can help you and the artists around you achieve what you want.

Can you chat about the Technical Internship briefly and what you look for in an intern?

E: The Technical internship is set up so that we can find and train up people that are keen to see what touring theatre in a technical capacity is actually like, with quite a bit of real responsibility but also a safety net of a very experienced and skilful team behind you. We run anything between two and four a year depending on the touring schedule and we advertise and interview to get the best candidates. What I look for in a potential intern is how well I think they can observe and analyse the processes that go into making and touring work. It really isn't about experience (that is what we offer), it's about how interested they are and what they find exciting about theatre. It's also about giving talented and interested people a chance to see and learn for themselves in a supported way. It isn't all unselfish though - I have gone on to employ most of our past interns in some capacity after they have finished the internship, as I know that we can trust them to prioritise the right things and have fun whilst doing it.

"THE INTRICATE CHOREOGRAPHY OF *SUN* ALONE MAKES IT WORTH THE PRICE OF TICKET." THE GUARDIAN

**"EYE-POPPINGLY PACKED
WITH WIT, ENERGY AND
AMBICTION" THE TELEGRAPH**



**Lastly, we meet Lucy Moelwyn-Hughes,
Participation Producer.**

You've worked closely with the Company for years interviewing Hofesh and the Company members, attending rehearsals and putting together the resources packs – what most excites you about joining the Company and taking on the role of Participation Producer?

L: It's a massive buzz! I've always loved my connection with the company, and I'm excited that I get to work with Helen, Hofesh, Colette, Ed and the team on a weekly basis now rather than every so often. It's a cliché but it does feel like a big family all pulling in the same direction to make stuff happen. Also I get to work with (i.e. continuously bother) other amazing members of the team, like our Company Manager Helen Bonner, who manages all the logistics of our participation work – from liaising with bookers, sorting out contracts, getting the dancers' travel booked, checking the floor is suitable for dance, and so much more. She is fabulous and the participation programme just wouldn't happen without her.

Why do you think Hofesh's work is worth studying beyond just seeing a performance?

L: Simple. Because it connects with people...and therefore most often resonates long after a piece has been seen on the stage. At its most basic level I think Hofesh's work is about the human condition – about human beings, how we relate, what makes us tick, how we communicate or fail to, our deep rooted insecurities, our passion, I could go on... He never seems to start his movement from an aesthetic place, it's not about how high the dancers can reach their legs, how much they point their feet, how fast they can turn...it starts from an emotional place instead. So when somebody watches one of his pieces there is an immediate emotional connection. I've seen people coming out of performances over the years experiencing all kinds of things emotionally – laughter, tears... And always chatting chatting about what they have just seen. So...to answer your question, if you are a teacher perhaps bringing your A Level Dance group to see a Hofesh show, and your students come out of the theatre like that - with questions, responses, inspired to create, or interested in what goes on behind the scenes perhaps...what a great stimulus for a whole scheme of work, rather than just a theatre trip! Which is why we always offer a free resource pack with every piece. As a company we really value what teachers tell us about Hofesh's work in relation to their students, and this informs what we offer across the participation programme.

You've worked with many choreographers – what's different or similar about Hofesh's work when it comes to the studio and participation work?

L: Big question! Well in the studio I'd have to say whenever I visit it's always a very positive atmosphere, lots of hard work but always plenty of joking and high spirits even though the subject matter may be heavy, or a premiere may be looming the same week. I'd never wish to gossip about other choreographers (!) but this definitely has been a key observation of mine over the years of contact with Hofesh. I've often asked him about this – whether he needs to keep things light as an antidote to the work perhaps. I don't think it's conscious; it's just how he and the dancers operate at their best. As for the participation work, well every company does it their own way I guess so it's hard to compare. I personally really rate the fact that Hofesh teaches whenever he can, and the only people who currently teach his repertoire are dancers who have performed in it for years. It means that the company can't always meet the demand for workshops, but when you get a HSC workshop, you're getting it from the source. I love that Hofesh and the company are committed to this ethos.

You've had a lot of very long and intimate chats with Hofesh about his process over the years – how do you think he's changed or is he still the same in the way he approaches a creation?

L: I think his process has remained as it always was, in the sense that he knows there is a huge mountain to climb at the beginning of a creation period, and he willingly climbs it with determination and good humour! Even though the size of the machine has grown enormously, he seems to approach every piece with the same passion – perhaps having this bigger team operating behind the scenes helps free up some space in his head? One small shift I've noticed over the years is that he has a short hand with some of the dancers now, many of whom have been dancing with him for a long time. They totally embody his movement style and whilst that might not affect his choreographic process as such, perhaps it has an affect on how quickly he can work. One of the things I find most interesting/endeavouring about him is that even though his work has found huge fame and profile, he's still one of us, just trying to make sense of this life we find ourselves in. He is very straightforward and easy to communicate with. This makes my job easy, after all no one wants to work for a diva!

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

USEFUL LINKS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

View all *Sun* videos here. Password: CLOWNS

www.vimeo.com/album/2751358

www.hofesh.co.uk

For full and in depth information on Hofesh, his work and the company. Includes press, video links and image downloads

www.hofesh.co.uk/productions

For footage of the company in performance, plus interviews with Hofesh for Sky Arts and BBC2

www.hofesh.co.uk/in-good-company

Hofesh Shechter Company dancers making their own work

www.sadlerswells.com

Where Hofesh is an Associate Artist.

www.artscouncil.org.uk

Hofesh Shechter Company is one of the Arts Council's National Portfolio Organisations.

www.leecurran.net

Lighting designer and long term collaborator

www.merlehensel.com

Designer and collaborator on *Sun* and *Political Mother*

www.sadlerswells.com/whats-on/2013/hofesh-shechter-sun

Hofesh discusses *Sun*, plus footage of the dancers in rehearsal

SUN REVIEWS AND INTERVIEWS

www.timeout.com/newyork/dance/hofesh-shechter-talks-about-his-return-to-bam-with-sun

www.theguardian.com/culture/australia-culture-blog/2013/oct/13/hofesh-shechter-sun-melbourne-review

www.theage.com.au/entertainment/dance/dance-review-brsun-20131013-2vgc1.html

www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/theatre-dance/features/cultural-life-hofesh-shechter-choreographer-8901128.html

www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/dance/10417753/Hofesh-Shechters-Sun-Sadlers-Wells-Review.html

www.metro.co.uk/2013/10/29/hofesh-shechters-new-dance-show-sun-gives-cast-time-to-shine-4164321

For The Times review please see Appendix 4 (page 30)

INFORMATION ON COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE

www.commedia-dell-arte.com

www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/comm/hd_comm.htm

www.ntlive.nationaltheatre.org.uk/media/video/behind-the-scenes/h_OTAXWt8hY

MISC

www.ndta.org.uk/resources-publications

National Dance Teachers' Association website - for a free download of *Dance in and Beyond Schools* – An essential guide to teaching and learning dance. Page 36 covers constructive criticism between peers.

COMPANY INFORMATION & CREDITS

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HOFESH SHECHTER'S SUN

Sun is produced by Hofesh Shechter Company with generous support from Bruno Wang and The Columbia Foundation fund of the London Community Foundation.

Sun is co-commissioned by Brighton Dome & Brighton Festival, Sadler's Wells London, Melbourne Festival, Les Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg, Théâtre de la Ville - Paris, Festspielhaus St Pölten (including a working residency), Berliner Festspiele - Foreign Affairs, Roma Europa, with co-production support from Mercat de les Flors and the Theatre Royal Plymouth.

HOFESH SHECHTER COMPANY

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

Hofesh Shechter Company is supported using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England.

The Company also gratefully acknowledges the support of Quercus Trust, the British Council, the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Jerwood Charitable Foundation, The Columbia Foundation fund of the London Community Foundation and Outset.

Registered in England Number: 6737326. VAT Registration: 946 1324 27. Hofesh Shechter Company is a registered charity in England and Wales. Registered No: 1130255.

THANK YOU

Hofesh Shechter Company would like to thank our Patrons and the individuals who form the Choreographer's Circle and the Founders' Circle for making such a difference to Hofesh's work since the formation of the Company.

CHOREOGRAPHER'S CIRCLE

Jules & Cheryl Burns, Michael Cohen & Erin Bell, Cathy Josefowitz, Robin Woodhead

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SUPPORTERS

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CORPORATE SUPPORTERS

Bloomberg

WORKSHOP INFORMATION

The company offers workshops and residencies suitable for young people aged 13 +. These can be developed for a range of ages and experiences.

See here for more information email participate@hofesh.co.uk or visit our website **www.hofesh.co.uk**

HOFESH.CO.UK

🐦 @HOFESHCO #SUN

This pack has been written by Participation Producer Lucy Moelwyn-Hughes in consultation with Hofesh Shechter and Helen Shute.

Thanks go to all the following: the dancers and team at Hofesh Shechter Company and the collaborators who contributed to this pack; Anne Beresford at MJW Productions.

Photography: Gabriele Zucca, Simona Boccedi, Heather Judge, Sam Coren. Design: Stem Design

APPENDIX 1

WHY I COMMISSION HOFESH'S WORK - FRANCESC CASADESUS, DIRECTOR OF MERCAT DE LES FLORS IN BARCELONA:

It is true to say that the creation of *Sun* would not have been possible without the support of a range of passionate commissioners, all of whom wish to invest in Hofesh's work from the outset.

Francesc Casadesus (known as Cesc) is one such commissioner. We were lucky enough to grab 10 minutes of his time to ask him about this relationship between company, choreographer and commissioner.

Can you tell me when you first came across Hofesh's work and what your initial impressions were?

C: Directing a venue dedicated to Dance is a passionate job - to get the chance to see a lot of artists means you are exposed to many different ways of reacting with this art to the world of today. I believe that when you hear that clear voice of someone who is really addressing (consciously or not) the issues that touch the emotions of people, we have to commit to that artist so he can develop it.

How do you feel about your relationship with Hofesh Shechter Company?

C: I believe in long term relationships, especially in the dislocated world of today, I believe in cooperation more than in fashion. I also believe that those deeper relations can bring a different connections between an artist and a city.

L: In 2008 when you presented *Uprising/In your rooms*, I wonder if you thought back then that this would be the start of a long and fruitful partnership between Mercat de les Flors and Hofesh Shechter Company?

C: Not really, it is like love, first you crash into someone but then you have get to know each other, to care for him/her and you have to keep it fresh every day. Often it's a mystery how an artist might connect with you or with your audience.

L: How does Hofesh's work meet the needs of your audience/venue? I presume it is a 2-way street...by which I mean that it's great for us to have your support, but is it also great for your venue too?

C: You could call it a win-win relationship. I really appreciate how in times of economical difficulties we still find ways to collaborate, like for example the long residency that the company had in our space in Barcelona. It was January, cold weather in London but the dancers were soaking up the Spanish sun every day, I am sure this had some good influence on the work! Also by coming here, Hofesh has helped us a lot to give local visibility to our new residency space and our new way of working more on the process and less on results.

L: When you supported the creation of *Sun*, by inviting the company to Barcelona for their Research & Development period earlier this year, how were you able to give this a profile within your organisation? As there was no 'product' yet to perform, was it tricky to highlight the activity going on in your studio? Or were you happy for this part of the process to be slightly invisible in terms of profile within the venue? Did you visit the studio much/see Hofesh & Helen during this time?

C: I am proud to say that more and more our seasonal programme is the result of our relations with artists and less about shopping for the best product in the market. In that way we have to be always creative in how we present the work and very communicative with our different audiences explaining to them what they are going to see. I visited the studio as much as they wanted whilst trying to keep the right distance. The beginning of a creation process is very fragile so I wanted to stay behind the scenes.

L: Helen speaks highly of you, saying "He's an amazing advocate for the Company and a great friend and partner." Do you have such close working relationships with all your commissioning partners, or is the relationship with Helen & Hofesh a little unusual like this?

C: The relation with Helen started when she was at The Place, she is a great professional and has been very important for Hofesh's work. Sometimes it's funny to be part of this big family of dance, you see each other once on a while, you exchange e-mails or Skype, live in different parts of the world, sometimes change jobs, but have the feeling you belong to the something bigger. In the end the important thing is the trust we have developed over these years and, yes, with them especially the relationship goes beyond work. My only complaint is with all this touring there is never time to go out for dinner!!!!

APPENDIX 2

WHY HOFESH INSPIRES US TO MAKE DANCE - KARIM PERRINEAU AND BOTIS SEVA

Karim and Botis are two young choreographers supported by East London Dance. Both are Hofesh Shechter fans. Here they explain why his work influences them.

Why do you like Hofesh's work ... why do you think it engages young people like yourselves?

Botis: I like Hofesh's work because he brings a new energy to the stage that is exciting to watch. The work keeps me engaged as there are so many different influences in his movement which I think are unique and effective. This inspires me to keep watching his work.

Karim: The first time I saw Hofesh's work was part of the Cedar Lake Ballet Company performance at Sadler's Wells. His section was my favourite piece of the whole night and I immediately became a fan and researched his work. The movement was so dynamic and the lighting was so powerful. The string orchestra gripped your attention straight away and added another amazing dynamic to the show. One of the main things that stood out was the way he smoothly transitioned his choreography across the stage. It was incredible! I think whether young or old, beautiful dance and music have the ability to capture your imagination. I do feel (now in particular) the arts have never been more accessible to young people such as myself, therefore exposing me to great work by people such as Hofesh.

Do you feel his work has particular themes or messages?

Botis: I feel Hofesh has a strong message within his work having recently watched his *Political Mother*. Hofesh uses very strong themes and imagery. I feel his work looks into finding inner freedom and has expressive motifs that are very original.

Karim: I definitely feel his work has themes. His *Uprising* had a strong alpha male theme throughout. You could see it explored the different ways men interact with each other. From aggression to play fighting there were even moments of comedy all mixed in with elements of tenderness and brotherly love. By contrast *The Art of Not Looking Back* explored a much darker theme. From the get go it felt in your face, raw and exposed. It was a complete contrast to *Uprising*. The incredible female dancers showed such strength and power mixed in with moments of tragedy.

Do you feel Hofesh's work influences you creatively in any way?

Botis: Hofesh was one of the first contemporary choreographers I watched. He inspired me to create and push my boundaries within the hip hop art form in an abstract way. Hofesh influences me creatively to make my own music.

Karim: It has influenced me massively! Coming from a hip hop background I was never really exposed to contemporary choreographers. As I grew older this changed and I started to dabble with different movement, but Hofesh definitely made me want to work that much harder in contemporary and ballet classes! The seamless transitions as well as clever lighting of his dancers and the stage has made me think a lot deeper about how your work can be shown. Both are elements I would like to eventually incorporate into my own work.

How might you describe his movement style?

Botis: His movement style is dark, experimental, abstract, urban, contemporary.

Karim: You can definitely see the folk dance influence in his work. There are times when you see technical elements (classical ballet) then there are times where the movement flows organically then suddenly changes and goes into sharp, erratic, fast paced and jerky phrases/movement. I wouldn't label his style - to put it under the big umbrella of 'contemporary dance' doesn't quite do it justice.

East London Dance is the leading promoter, provider and producer of dance in east London and beyond. From their base in Stratford they have been producing a range of quality and innovative dance experiences for 25 years: nurturing the next generation of artists; and growing one of the most vibrant dance communities in the country.

APPENDIX 3

EXTRACTS FROM HOFESH'S POST SHOW DISCUSSION AT SADLER'S WELLS, NOV 2013

On light versus darkness in *Sun*

I had a moment of optimism...but it passed very quickly, as you can see....

I was hoping to find something a little more positive, more shiny...happy. I was questioning why I was searching for something comfortable. It made me ask questions about ourselves, our society. Why are we looking for happiness? And what is the price we are willing for others to pay, in order to have that happiness?

There is no conclusion to the piece. Nothing gets fixed. Visually it is pleasant on the eye...but it's always sitting on something quite horrifying.

On influences & inspiration

I found Commedia dell'arte a perfect platform for lies and truth...things that are hidden and buried. In the past, clowns always had the chance to present things that nobody else would dare say...with the pretence of humour.

I try to start the creation being mysterious...because I don't know what the hell I'm doing. As things progressed we had a lot of conversations about the world we were trying to create. The dancers were very generous in trying to inspire me – they would send me images they had found online, send me pieces of music, tell me I should watch a certain film. They were completely part of the conversation. I don't involve them in everything though. The native characters for example, I was very nervous about putting them on stage. I was thinking, is it legal or not? Am I insulting people? But then (with a little fear), I did it anyway...

A big push in the design of the piece happened when we started looking at Renaissance art. Not just learning from the quality and texture of the images, but also the way people held themselves, their bodies. We were certainly inspired by images from this period.

On the use of very loud sound

I like that we use sound like a massive canon. At times it's very quiet, but that makes it all the more unsettling. I enjoy that the sound adds to the unstable reality we create. Nothing is fine for long...

On stealing...

I am a shameless thief. I was working on *Sun* one weekend and I saw the Queens Diamond Jubilee on TV. Lots of marching! I thought it looked great. (And very well choreographed I have to say...) I thought "I'll take that step, yes please." I will take anything, from anywhere if I think it serves the piece.

On the structure of the piece

The end at the beginning? We tried different things...this felt the most appropriate – like we're going to go through some pain, but you know...it'll be worth it. I wanted the audience to think they were about to see something funny, then it turns out not to be the case. I didn't think it was funny when I did it, I was surprised by the audience response at the premiere to be honest. I wasn't aiming for a 'funny' start to the piece, but it works. It's about having a bit of light...a positive promise.

APPENDIX 4

SUN REVIEW IN THE TIMES, NOVEMBER 2013

DEBRA CRAINE



It starts with a joke and it ends with a jolt. Such is the way of Hofesh Shechter. His new piece, *Sun*, is nothing if not predictable. A bit of humour, a lot of indignation, a wash of frustration and fear and a dark world hoping to find solace in the light.

Gradually, Shechter draws you into this world, seducing you with the rhythmic heartbeat of his choreography and of his score (he writes that as well, music filled with the sexy pulse of drumming and the guitar-heavy threat of apocalypse). The question is, what does he do with you once he gets you there?

Shechter, an Israeli now based in London, is an angry choreographer who has a lot he needs to get off his chest. It's why his dance comes dotted with violence and terror (and allusions to strife in the Middle East). To watch a Shechter work is to be aware of the beast within, an image he hammers home in his choreography, which often casts its dancers as ape-like creatures or enraged homo sapiens.

You can read his images in more ways than one. The sheep, for instance — cut-out images of them are carried on boards by the dancers — are they a reference to England's green and pleasant land or a nod to our social behaviour? Everywhere his dance looks it sees what's wrong with human society.

It's strong stuff but often very digestible. The choreography, for 16 dancers, is delivered with a relaxed swing, tapping with ease into the literal demands of the rhythms, skipping lightly or digging deep into the dance. Shechter is a master at melding sophisticated sensuality with raw beats and at powering his ensemble with a charismatic and thrilling dynamic. And one thing you can say for his dancers, they certainly know how to lose themselves in the dance.

Yet the stop-start nature of the piece (running at about 70 minutes) undercuts its impact since instead of providing important moments of reflection the interludes feel as if they are there to kill time. While some of the repetitions — the screams, the wooden boards with images of animals and humans alike — can start to grate. Still, the underlying emotional heft of *Sun* is impossible to deny even if you feel that Shechter is revisiting old ground. And the stage is a work of art, thanks mostly to Lee Curran's extraordinary lighting. It's both utterly refreshing and hauntingly beautiful, adding a velvet sheen to the set that feels almost tangible.