

AUSTRALIA / UK

DANCE

HOFESH IN THE YARD

STRUT DANCE

EDUCATION RESOURCE



Image: Ben Ruddick

**PERTH
FESTIVAL**

Founder



Principal Partner



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CREDITS

Choreographer Hofesh Shechter

Music Uprising Hofesh Shechter/ Vex'
tHE bAD Hofesh Shechter & Various

Lighting Design Uprising Lee Curran

tHE bAD Hofesh Shechter & Lawrie McLennan

Rehearsal Directors Sam Coren & Bruno Guillore

Stage Director Bruno Guillore

Cast Alexander Abbot, Mitchell Aldridge, Scott Galbraith, Celina Hage, Mitchell Harvey, Rhiana Katz, Dean-Ryan Lincoln, Gabriella Mersi, Nikki Tarling, Russell Thorpe, Robert Tinning and Georgia Van Alexander Abbot, Mitchell Aldridge, Scott Galbraith, Celina Hage, Mitchell Harvey, Rhiana Katz, Dean-Ryan Lincoln, Gabriella Mersi, Nikki Tarling, Russell Thorpe, Robert Tinning, Georgia Van Gils

Costume Designer tHE bAD Amanda Barrow

Executive Producer STRUT Dance

Associate Producer & Stage Manager Lewis Major

Costume Manager Nicole Marrington

Marketing STRUT Dance / Alison Welburn (Limelight) / Perth Theatre Trust

Commissioning Organisations STRUT Dance & Perth Festival

BIOGRAPHIES

HOFESH SHECHTER

CHOREOGRAPHER

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

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

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

STRUT DANCE

STRUT Dance is the National Choreographic Centre based in Perth WA. An innovative arts model that provides internationally benchmarked development, collaboration and presentation opportunities for independent dance artists from across the Australia and Asia Pacific region. Some of the most visionary and pertinent artists operating on the contemporary global stage, usually quarantined to major dance organisations, are available to the independent sector exclusively through their programs. Ohad Naharin, William Forsythe, Crystal Pite, Punchdrunk's Maxine Doyle and Antony Hamilton – beacons of excellence and aspiration for artists and audiences alike. This is the company's unique selling point both locally and globally and accounts for its growing national and international brand, reputation, engagement and audience.

For the Perth Festival 2019 STRUT produced *SUNSET* – the inaugural activation of the Sunset Heritage Precinct with a large-scale immersive dance-theatre spectacle from Punchdrunk's Maxine Doyle.

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

Hofesh in the Yard is a double bill from one of the UK's most influential choreographer's Hofesh Schechter, presented by Perth's own STRUT Dance and 12 independent dancers from across the country.

Set in the Courtyard of the State Theatre Centre, *Uprising* (2006) sees seven men emerge from the shadows to bombard the stage with furious energy, bonding and sparring, making up and falling out. The work avoids stereotypes to vividly capture the struggle men face to maintain the balance between the internal warrior and the evolved gentle man.

THE bAD (2015) is a volatile explosion of dub-step grooves that is joyous and trance-like. Created only at night in Germany, the work had "one purpose to the process, which was to let whatever was inside us, out. Without value judgement, without stopping ourselves, without assessment." *THE bAD* takes apart the notion that 'art' has a real value. "What is 'good' art? We have no idea. It's absolutely culturally subjective." (Hofesh Schechter.)

MAJOR THEMES

MASCULINITY, MALE BEHAVIOUR AND MALE RELATIONSHIPS

From the competitive, combative energy and aggression of men at games and war to camaraderie, tenderness and a sense of brotherhood, *Uprising* explores themes of masculinity, male behaviour and male relationships.

FREEDOM

THE bAD explores freedom of movement without judgement. It takes apart the notion that art has a real value due to its cultural subjectivity and presents randomly compiled moments of the dancers 'timeless, spaceless' creative process where 'anything goes'.

RESOURCES

<http://www.strutdance.org.au/opportunities/performances/hofesh-in-the-yard>

<https://www.hofesh.co.uk/productions/repertoire/uprising/>

<http://hofesh.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Uprising-AONLB-resource-pack.pdf>

<http://hofesh.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Hofesh-barbarians-Edu-Pack.pdf>

(warning content contains swearing relevant to the work)

<https://www.thestage.co.uk/features/interviews/2015/hofesh-shechter-may-work-may-not-will-always-surprise/>

Hofesh Schechter – Introduction & Warm Up

<https://vimeo.com/131820606>

Video of Hofesh Schechter Company

<https://vimeo.com/55088966>

Q&A WITH PAUL SELWYN NORTON FROM STRUT DANCE

Why did you want to present the work of Hofesh Shechter in Perth?

It's all about legacy – Hofesh Shechter and I worked together for Batsheva Dance Company in Israel back in the late '90s. Batsheva Dance Company is anchored in a movement training called Gaga, designed by its Artistic Director, Ohad Naharin. STRUT had a Gaga program from 2014 – 16, which resulted in us presenting Naharin's *Decadance* on a cohort of independent dancers – a similar model to the Hofesh Shechter program and *Hofesh in the Yard*. Shechter is the natural successor to Naharin and every young dancer coming out of tertiary training wants to dance for him.

What are the challenges and rewards of presenting re-creations of such renowned works?

Working with this calibre of artist and their repertoire has an enormous impact on STRUT Dance's profile and brand both locally and globally. STRUT Dance and Perth Festival will be the first organisations to present Shechter's work in WA and the first in the world to offer this opportunity to dance artists outside of a major dance company – milestones all the way! The challenges are having to select a cast out of the many independent dancers who have followed the Shechter program from day one. About 70 auditioned from the 250 that took part in the program. That is a really tough call to make. The Hofesh Shechter Company makes that one, as they have the best sense of who is the better equipped.

However, when that curtain opens, those lucky enough to have a role really exude a confidence that only two to three years of engagement in a program can supply. So, we are really seeing massive results from these multi-year partnerships – for dancers really owning and inhabiting the choreography and for audiences having the chance to see world class performance on their own local artists.

What is the experience like for those involved?

The team works intimately with leaders from the Hofesh Shechter Company during the whole period of the rehearsals and the shows. So it is as close as you can get to the real deal. It is a massive development learning curve for these dancers – to study and execute the choreography as Hofesh Shechter himself would demand and then to perform it to a Perth Festival audience. Then add the outside experience – dancing in the Courtyard of the State Theatre of WA and not in the controlled environment of a theatre ... Super fun times for all!

How would you assess the health of the contemporary dance scene in Australia at the moment?

At present, the whole arts sector is under phenomenal pressures at both state and federal levels, with major funding outcomes rolling out over the last three months and the next three to come. It is a challenging environment in which to remain both adaptive and resilient. However, this is the future that we all have to navigate.

Despite these current challenges, contemporary dance is by its nature a niche art form, one that allows us to be nimble and opportunistic. There is really excellent work being made all over Australia and with the new pathways opening up into the Asia-Pacific region, there are now other opportunities to explore for us all.

BEFORE THE SHOW

THE STYLE OF HOFESH SHECHTER

OBJECTIVES

Students will develop their awareness and understanding of:

- Hofesh Shechter's history and influences
- Shechter's improvised warm-up and style of movement
- Warm-up relevant to performance style

Connect the learning between the written task and the practical task.

- Ask students if they can see any connection between their research and the warm-up led by Hofesh.
- Compare this style of warm-up to other types students have done before. Discuss pros and cons of different types of warm-up or different circumstances.
- How is Shechter influenced by popular culture?
- How does his work extend the boundaries of dance?

ACTIVITY

PRACTICAL TASK

WARM-UP

Follow the link below to be guided through a Hofesh Schechter improvised warm-up.

<https://vimeo.com/131820606>

IDEA 1: FEET

Standing in parallel, loosen 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 five 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."

REFLECTION

Compare this style of warm-up with other types.

- How did it feel following an improvised warm-up?
- How does your body feel compared to completing a warm-up when you just copy someone else?
- In what circumstances would this type of warm-up be beneficial?

WRITTEN TASK

Compile historical background information on Hofesh Shechter.

Questions to consider:

- When and where was he born?
- Where did he train?
- What companies has Shechter danced and choreographed for?
- Who and what has influenced him? How do we see that in his work?
- Why did he create Hofesh Shechter company?
- How has his style of choreography been described?
- How has popular culture influenced Shechter?
- How does Shechter extend the boundaries of dance?
- Any other relevant information.

PERFORMANCE PROTOCOLS

MAKING THE MOST OUT OF THE PERFORMANCE

These activities are intended to maximise the theatre experience for all audience members. These activities guide students through a series of engagements intended to get them thinking about how and why they should behave in particular ways and what their behaviour means in this context.

OBJECTIVES

Students will develop their awareness and understanding of:

- Theatre etiquette
- Appropriate behaviour for an audience
- Relationship between performers and the audience

DISCUSSION POINTS

Live performance involves performers acting and interact in real time, before your eyes. The audience is active in the way they view the performance. The performers on stage can hear and see you; your reactions and your behaviour can contribute to, disrupt or disturb their performance. The audience can have a big influence on the energy, pace and vibe of the actors and the performance as a whole.

ACTIVITY

Talk to your students about whether they have been to the theatre before. Use the following questions to guide their discussion:

- What show did you see?
- Who did you go with?
- Where did you see it?
- What was the show about?
- Were the performers professional or amateur?
- What did it make you think about?

Split the class into small groups and ask them to create a list of behaviour they consider appropriate and inappropriate for different settings. Assign the groups the following settings:

- Footy match
- School assembly
- Cinema
- Rock concert
- Theatre

Come back together as a whole group and ask groups to feed their thoughts back to the group. Create a matrix that compares different kinds of behaviour across each setting. For example:

	Footy Match	Assembly	Cinema	Rock Concert	Theatre
Talking	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Eating					
Walking in and out					
Laughing / crying					
Booing / shouting					
Using your mobile phone					

Based on the above, discuss the conclusions students have come to about attending a live performance and compile a series of protocols to guide their behaviour. Ensure elements in the appendix at the end of this document are included.

AFTER THE SHOW

DISCUSSION : CONTACT IMPROVISATION AND CASE STUDIES

OBJECTIVE

Students will develop their awareness and understanding of:

- Contact improvisation to convey an intention
- How using weight and counterbalance with a partner can convey ideas
- How to describe and analyse dance works

DISCUSSION POINTS

In contact improvisation and partnering you need to be responsible for your own body, but as part of a duet you also have responsibility for your partner's body.

- Discuss use of weight in partnering and how to develop trust in the partnership so confident to share weight
- See questions within written task for specific discussion points

ACTIVITY

PRACTICAL TASK

WARM-UP

Repeat Hofesh Shechter's warm-up as per pre-show activity.

DUET TASK

In the opening section of *Uprising*, there is some duet work.

Ask students to recall what was happening in the duet and then use video link below to describe the use of:

- Weight bearing and support
- Counter balancing away and towards each other
- A sense of struggle and play fighting

<https://vimeo.com/55093472>

Use the video and ideas as inspiration for students to explore and play with the idea of fighting – using weight against a partner's body. Get students to find three different moments where they are both giving each other some body weight.

Questions:

- How can you lean against each other?
- Think about not just using your arms – can you lean against each other using your backs? Your sides? Your thighs?
- Did you notice how we knew the dancers were in a struggle, and yet they weren't lashing out at each other?
- How can you create an image of fighting or a tussle without hurting your partner?

Once students have three moments of weight bearing, create transitional movements.

For example:

- Breaking away from each other
- One dancer shaking the other off
- Slowly walking around each other to assume a different place etc.

Get students to decide how they want to resolve their duet:

- Do you make up after all the struggling against each other?
- Do you break away and move in opposite directions?
- Decide what you want to portray

PRACTICAL TASK

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR THE STUDY OF UPRISING:

“The piece is dealing with boys’ energy, with boys’ mentality, with boys’ behaviour ... mainly with the idea of playing and fighting ... of liking to play and to fight ... of how fun it is to be part of a war, you know?” Hofesh Shechter in conversation for *The Culture Show*, 2008.

- What themes emerged for you when you watched *Uprising*?
- How do you think these themes were presented – in a positive or negative light? With humour, or in a serious way?
- Did you have any favourite parts in the piece?
- Why did these particular moments stay with you after the show?
- The opening section of the piece is literally blinding, as a huge bank of lights shines out over the audience. How did this make you feel as a spectator?

“There is a sense of extreme and emergency in the piece, but one of the things we often say before a show is probably the opposite to that ... to be simple. It comes from the simplicity and the honesty of the music and our movement of the relationship with the others on stage, the energy between the dancers.” Bruno Guillore, original *Uprising* cast member.

Discuss these juxtaposing themes within the piece – urgency and the chaos that ensues, versus simplicity.

OPENING SECTION STUDY OF UPRISING

Watch the clip below and complete the following questions.

<https://vimeo.com/55088966>

VISUAL SETTING: THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Is there a set in this piece? How is the stage used in terms of what we see and what is hidden?
- How might you describe the different lighting states in this section?
- What costumes are the men wearing? Does their costume give us any clues as to who they are?
- Lee Curran, the Lighting Designer points out that, “you can see very close correlations between light and sound.” Can you identify some of them?

AURAL SETTING: THINGS TO CONSIDER

- How does the music begin? What adjectives would you use to describe this sound?
- What does the initial pulse develop into?
- Does the tone or speed of the music change through the course of this extract?
- Do you notice how some of the major developments or changes in the movement, follow shifts in the sound score?

MOVEMENT CONTENT: THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Discuss the different combinations of dancers – group, duet, solo, trios
- Are there any motifs in this extract that you recognise as distinctly ‘Hofesh’ style movement?
- The very first balance and melt in the line-up downstage – what might this symbolise?
- Bruno Guillore says the middle of the stage is a no man’s land. Does that come across in this extract?

YEAR 12 STUDENTS

Compare and contrast *Uprising* and *THE bAD*.

- What are the similarities and differences between the works?
- How would you describe the movement style of Shechter?
- How would you describe the style of design Shechter uses?

REVIEWING LIVE PERFORMANCE

There are many different ways to write a review, as reviews express an individual's thoughts and feelings about a show.

Traditional reviews will often:

Give the reader brief background information about a production

- Title of show (mention playwright or choreographer if relevant)
- Is it an adaptation of another text? An original work?
- Identify the company presenting or performing the show
- Where is this show being performed?

Briefly outline plot and themes

- Make sure not to include any spoilers
- Were the themes/issues effectively conveyed to the audience?
- How do the characters and relationships communicate these?
- Does the design (e.g. set, costumes, lighting, sound and filmic elements) contribute to the conveyance of themes/issues? Consider symbols and metaphors.
- How do style and form play a part in communicating these?

Provide an idea of what the design elements are

- Think about set, lighting, costume, filmic elements and sound
- How did the design choices convey place, time and situation (dramatic meaning or context)?
- What atmosphere and mood were the creative team aiming for?
- How successful were they in achieving their goals?

Evaluate the writing, production and performances

- You might consider things like: Were there any stand out performances or design elements? Why? What were the technical aspects of the production that stood out?

Reviews should reflect how you felt about a show, not what you think you should have felt.

In the digital age, the act of reviewing has changed immensely. It has enabled platforms for a broad range of voices to participate in the reviewing process that previously would not have been heard.

Have a go at writing a 140-character Twitter review of the work.

SPECIFIC LINKS TO CURRICULUM

DANCE

Connections to Year 11 Dance Unit 1: Popular Culture

Students use a wide range of creative processes, such as improvisation and the use of choreographic elements and devices, and draw on their own physicality and the interpretation of existing work of others to make dance works. Students understand and value the way dance is subject to different interpretations and appreciate that informed responses should take into account the varying contexts within which dance works are created.

- movement exploration through improvisation
- warm-up and cool-down specific to genre and class needs
- historical background information
- historical, cultural and social context in terms of time and place
- influences of popular culture.

Connection to Year 12 Dance Unit 4: Extending the Boundaries

Students research issues and reflect on events which may influence dance. In their responses, they examine their own values, considering how dance is shaped by society and its values. In the critical analysis and interpretation of their own work and the work of others, they reflect on the relationships between dance works, audiences and contexts, and how these contribute to the development of different perspectives.

- improvisational skills – exploring concept of original movement using improvisational scores
- warm-up appropriate for personal performance

Within the focus of extending the boundaries, students must conduct two case studies, one of which must be Australian and chosen from the following:

- significant dance companies
- significant choreographers.
- historical background information
- related and relevant dance works: significance of the dance work, choreographic intent, choreographic devices, choreographic structures, movement choices and design concepts

contribution to dance: artform, social commentary, trends in dance.



Image: Gabriele Zucca

APPENDIX

Latecomers

The show will start promptly and latecomers will not be admitted until an appropriate break in the show. Be aware that for many shows, you will not be admitted if you arrive late.

Lock out

If you leave your seat during the performance, you may not be allowed back in. Make sure you go to the toilet and have a drink of water before the performance and/or during the intervals.

Noise

Food wrappers and plastic packets make a lot of noise. It is generally accepted that the audience does not eat during a performance. If you absolutely have to have lollies (such as a cough lolly), ensure it is out of the wrapper prior to the performance.

Mobile phones

Please ensure mobile phones are turned off. If your phone rings during a performance, it can be very embarrassing for you and very distracting for the performers. It is inappropriate to receive a text during a performance.

Talking

Allow everyone – performers and the audience – to focus on the performance by not talking. Talking is annoying for other audience members and can be very distracting for performers.

Photographs

Taking photos, videos or audio recordings is not allowed.



Image: Andrew Lang

This Education Resource was prepared in collaboration with Narelle Codalonga.