



Fast and furious: Winifred Burnet-Smith (foreground) performs 'In Your Rooms' LAURIE LEWIS

Neuroses have never been so uplifting



Dance
Jenny
Gilbert

**Hofesh
Shechter**
Sadler's Wells
LONDON



Artists need to struggle, don't they? At least, that used to be the argument trotted out against cushy, European-style state subsidy. But here's evidence to the contrary: a fledgling choreographer who's gone from nought to 60 in six short months, all thanks to the faith, and funds, invested in him by a trio of major dance venues.

In a unique experiment, The Place, Southbank Centre and Sadler's Wells joined ranks earlier this year to give 32-year-old Hofesh Shechter – a graduate of the London Contemporary Dance School – his first step up. More than that, it promised the ride of his life: to create, in three stages, a major dance production, beginning in embryo at the 300-seat Place, and ending up with all guns blazing at the 1,500-seat Sadler's Wells. Would he be up to the challenge?

The end result – viewed by a palpably fired-up crowd last week – more than justified the risk of the venture. As investments go, Shechter has brought massive returns.

The original plan was that *In Your Rooms*, an essentially bleak view of modern neuroses – would build steadily in scale at each of the venues. In the event the final version has come in shorter, tighter and barely recognisable. Not only has it acquired high-impact lighting, extra dancers and a phenomenally good live band, but the final version

Eleven bodies lurch and twist like troglodytes toiling in a mine

has weighted its dramatic clout to create a profound sense of communal uplift. Intimate moments which struggled to register at the Queen Elizabeth Hall back in June have given way to galvanising massed effects. The sight of 11 dancers, on their knees, all lurching and twisting and twitching in synch, like troglodytes toiling in a mine, stirs up almost tribal feelings of recognition. Shechter may be presenting life as an emotional

straitjacket, but he makes us feel we're all in it together.

Light and dark are powerful tools in his armoury, as carefully ordered groupings blast into view from a black void only to be swallowed up and replaced by others. The effect is of far bigger forces than actually exist, of figures multiplying to infinity either side of the wings – a great disordered army thinking and reacting and struggling as one, galvanised by the unifying force of rhythm.

It's always hard to make a convincing claim that something you've just seen is quite unlike anything seen before. But Shechter's distinctiveness tempts you to make that claim. Powerful, relentless, even obsessive in its rhythmic hunkering and wrenching, it's driven by the eight-piece band perched in a box high on the back wall. Impressively, the score, for low strings and punch-you-in-the-sternum drums, was written by Shechter himself. At some performances he features as a drummer, though at Sadler's Wells he joined his dancers on stage. Remember the name. Ho-fesh. Shechter. He's more than up and coming; he's arrived.

Patrick Centre, Birmingham (0121 689 3170) 11 Oct; then on tour nationwide