

# SHUT DOWN review

Dance in Devon, 19 March 2019, Jazmine Watts-Moast

'Shut Down' is a dance theatre piece investigating what it means to be living as a man today. In the wake of social media campaigns such as #MeToo and #Timesup which responded to the media's uncovering of decades of sexual harassment and abuse, gender pay gaps and abuses of power, male sexuality is at the forefront of today's society. This piece is incredibly multi-faceted, showing the audience what masculinity means today; from the stereotypical man to the hidden depths of the male persona and the underrepresented version of the male, which closely explores the personal and political. Personal and political, two words that are crucial to this piece of work. Vincent explores within this piece the 'father' and the 'son', something that is relatable to all of us on some level, which of course makes it extremely personal. It would be exceptionally difficult to come out of this piece of dance theatre without thinking of your own circumstances and what this brings up for you personally. Politically, it deals with issues of gender equality with lines and remarks about the 'provider', the 'bread winner' and what it means to be dominant, whilst also presenting societies under representation of the LGBTQ+ community and questioning the 'maleness' of this society and their acceptance from other men.

Along with the darkness and serious tone of this piece, there is also light moments amongst it by using humour and light heartedness. Such as when everyday male behaviour is shown to us on stage, highlighting how ridiculous this over animated 'maleness' is, which is usually trying to prove a point and showcase masculinity. It was sometimes very welcome within the midst of realisations of wrong doings of the society that we now live in, which this piece highlights. Something very refreshing about this piece was its honesty. The men on stage were open about the problems of today's society, and also open about the fact that it is entirely their fault, they didn't shy away from this fact or make excuses. I had my head nodding along with their comments and confessions as I agreed with their every word. Its pieces like this that are becoming more and more crucial in today's society. I think something like 'Shut Down', altered of its explicit content and language, would be great to take into

schools to teach the young men of today, the next generation, that being a man means many different things, and whatever that means to you- is okay.

I would like to applaud the company once again, as their bravery and openness as performers was outstanding. They were vulnerable, exposing parts and sides of themselves that are normally hidden from the public which brought a sense of intimacy to the piece. I really enjoyed the varied mix of forms Vincent brought to the stage with visualisations of what was being said in text as it was written with charcoal onto the stage. Alongside dance there was theatre and spoken word, all of which helped the audience to process what was being said; explicitly outlining themes for the audience's consideration. It was also very welcoming to see a varied age group of performers, some more experienced than others which helped to bring to light other forms of 'maleness'.

It took me at least a day to process 'Shut Down'. I had so many different thoughts and questions, but that's what is so important about this piece. It brings you into realisation, and how this can be changed. If 'Shut Down' says anything, it certainly says that change is needed, and it is needed by all of us, now.