

# SHUT DOWN: MANKIND

Fjord Review, 7 December 2017, Rachel Elderkin

*The Place, London, UK, Tuesday 28 & 29 November, 2017*

There's something that performer Robert Clark is struggling to articulate. As he muddles through his opening speech in Charlotte Vincent's first all-male work for Vincent Dance Theatre, "Shut Down," the enormity of the topic he is trying to comprehend becomes apparent. There's a problem with the image of masculinity—that of the strong, unemotional, alpha male.

"Shut Down" is the brother piece to Vincent's 2016 work, "Virgin Territory," a black-humoured take on experiences of women and girls living in an over-sexualised, digitally captured world. Over the next 90 minutes, the company of both adult and young men sketches out the issues surrounding masculine norms, and asserts the responsibility that men have to address them. Speech, rap and spoken word offer a direct expression of their thoughts. When words run out, they fall into movement. A fusion of hip hop and contemporary, their actions have an underlying aggression reinforced through scenarios—like mock fights and gun battles—that play up to the stereotypical masculine image.

Gradually, each member of this company reveals the impact of these stereotypes on their emotions, their sexuality or their interaction with others. One frustrated performer finds his peace in the act of cross dressing, another makes a poignant admittance to his difficult relationship with sex. Such moments are the essence of this work.

Among this puzzle of thoughts, confessions and scenarios "Shut Down" offers a glimpse of the bigger picture, but it is perhaps too large an issue to present a focused outcome. For that reason the thread of the work is not always coherent and a false end hints that the piece could benefit from a more succinct expression of its ideas. Yet here are a group of men

talking about change, expressing their emotions and attempting to do so with both sincerity and humour.