

SCOTTISH DANCE THEATRE

Tenderhook/Dog

The Place

Scottish Dance Theatre pays homage to the wild-haired Celtic goddesses in its latest double bill at The Place with choreography from Liv Lorent and Hofesh Shechter.

The dark-tressed girls in Lorent's *Tenderhook* become woodland spirits dressed in flora as they frolic with equally limber boys during what is best described as a free-flowing religious rite. In pairs scattered about the stage and along corridors of light, dancers wobble and stumble en pointe as if drunk on some pious wine, all the while maintaining the speedy revolutions of sets of glowing hand-operated satellites.

The precarious responsibility of synchronising the circus-style props as they are passed between dancers without losing momentum means choreography is limited to a more weighty, earth-bound allegro. This does not prevent the work from feeling airy. On the contrary, *Tenderhook's* muted leaps matched with sturdy acrobatic grapples during the latter scenes create a satisfying and unyielding sense of wild abandon.

Hofesh Shechter's *Dog* is similarly untamed in its dealings with devolution and obedience. Opening with a lone male poised predictably on his hands and knees, the work cuts quickly

to an ensemble samba that is all spirit fingers and hard feet. Throughout the work this opening samba is dissected, its motifs splashed across subsequent group patterns that traverse and disperse.

At times Shechter cuts too abruptly between ideas. He is more effective when transmitting energies gradually between scenes and performers such as when, one by one, members of a growing group recoil and shudder as if punched in the face by an invisible assailant.

A reverberative score is coloured by sound effects played in reverse to create an eerie sense of backward movement that complements *Dog's* defiance of order.

Malcolm Rock

COMPañIA MARÍA PAGÉS

Sevilla

Sadler's Wells, London

María Pagés is like water. Her arms are seemingly affected by the slightest change in the breeze and flow first in one direction then another with need of only the gentlest suggestion.

Her feet on the other hand are fiercely defined and Pagés proudly puts them to work on the Sadler's Wells stage while fronting an imported company of 16 dancers and six musicians with matriarchal authority and exotic fabulousness.

Framed by painted allusions of Seville, Pagés aims to embody her culture as well as its rhythm. The result is *Sevilla*: 90 uninterrupted



Compagnia María Pagés

minutes of robust flamenco performed in front of Moorish designs with the addition of some cheeky embellishments for international audiences.

Pagés has taken a leaf out of the books of Cher and Madonna, emerging for every new scene in a different, increasingly outlandish frock. A basic black skirt with white spots is traded in for a red velvet number transforming Pagés into a dancing rose. An orange dress with black tassels and shawl recalls a sunset before it is shelved in favour of a red and gold design that is half toreador, half wounded bull.

By sprinkling Spanish clichés onto her affection for the dance-form as pure art Pagés succeeds in creating a showcase that is intensely insular while remaining palatable. A scene that remains black except for the dancers' fluorescent footwear, for instance, was always going to win a grin. Harmony is further achieved through the selection of music, which ranges from Bizet's *Carmen* to tango and a flamenco-ized version of Italian classic *Volare*.

But it is Pagés who is uncompromisingly

in the spotlight and her solo before a dimly-lit but glittering effigy of the Dark Virgin is the highlight of the evening. Her castanets scene comes in close second because it brings out Pagés' most animalistic qualities ... and hair-clips, which fly from her head with each savage shift of her bold arching shoulders.

Malcolm Rock