

# THIS WEEK IN NEW YORK

## THE INSIDER'S GUIDE TO THE CITY SINCE 2001

### SHEN WEI DANCE ARTS AT THE PARK AVENUE ARMORY

*November 27, 2011*

*Update:* As he did with *Behind Resonance* two years ago, New York City-based dancer-choreographer Shen Wei again turns the Park Avenue Armory's massive Wade Thompson Drill Hall into an intimate gathering that celebrates his unique movement language, presenting two repertory works and a new site-specific piece as part of Shen Wei Dance Arts' tenth anniversary.



Photo by: Stephanie Berger

The evening begins with a restaging of 2003's *Rite of Spring*, set to Fazil Say's version of Stravinsky's 1913 ballet, in which as many as sixteen dancers make their way in and around a crooked chalked grid, running to the edges, moving in formation, pausing for long moments of inactivity, and rolling on the floor, their black and gray costumes streaked with white. That is followed by 2000's *Folding*, in which the dancers first appear in long red skirts and odd head extensions (evoking Robert Wilson and Matthew Barney), gliding slowly across a white reflective surface, soon evolving into duets with the performers in black, their powdered bodies folding into each other, leading to a finale that recalls, of all things, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*.

After a thirty-minute intermission in which the audience must leave the drill hall, everyone returns for the grand finale, the specially commissioned *Undivided Divided*, a whirlwind tour-de-force featuring thirty topless male and female dancers situated throughout the space, rolling around in paint on a long canvas, throwing themselves against the walls of a plexiglass box, climbing atop and inside a set of plastic cubes, performing intimate duets confined to a small rectangular area, amid other unique and unusual set-ups enhanced by visual projections on the floor. The audience can remain in their seats but are encouraged to remove their shoes and walk up and down pathways that allow them to come face-to-face with the dancers as they writhe about, some making eye contact, others lost in fantasy, like living sculptures in a museum. *Undivided Divided* is an exhilarating experience, seemingly for the dancers as much as for the crowd, an exuberant display of physicality that goes beyond mere sexuality and voyeurism, offering an energizing and thrillingly different relationship between audience and performer.