Yael Flexer
The Living Room
The Place, London

Some years ago I characterised Yael Flexer’s choreography as ‘unaffectcd,
charming and smart’. Those qualities are still in evidence in her newest production
created under the banner of Dance & Digital Works, the company she now runs
with Nic Sandilands. Comissioned by Woking

Dance Festival, Flexer’s hour-long show

The Living Room is an innately playful
yet thoughtful package of post-modern
concepts realised through spots of live
text and, above all, loads of fast, fluid,
full-bodied, multi-level and occasionally
even sexy movement delivered by her and
fellow dancers Luke Birch, Aya Kobayashi,
Hannah Martin, Lyndsey McConville and
Aneta Szylak.

The tone is set by the pre-show activity
as this sextet follows the kinetic lead of
a rambunctious tot who turns out to be
Flexer’s daughter. (The kid, unsurprisingly,
has presence.) The dance proper
commences when the adult performers
take turns declaring themselves to be
various pieces of furniture, from armchair to
reading lamp to television set, each object
accompanied by particular moves that
the entire cast already knows. Roles get
swapped with a shove and a curt exchange
of ‘Thank you’ and ‘Don’t mention it’. The
watchwords here are conflict, masked by a
veneer of politeness, and co-operation.

Befitting her directorial authority, Flexer
sometimes sits on the sidelines watching
the action. She also joins in a few of the
swift, slippery ensemble sections as well
as allowing herself one peppy solo. Her
other major duties include reciting an
arch manifesto near the top of the show
and, towards the end, reciting a list of
statements relating to politics, religion,
economics, sexuality and the like to which
she and the cast respond with raised (or
unraised, depending on where they stand
on each issue) hands. Clearly her point,
expressed with alert, unforced wit, is that
dancers and dance-makers are complex
and contradictory beings just like me, you
or the people next door. Making do with
an imaginatively embodied setting, the
performance is lit with dynamic skill by
Michael Mannion. The soundtrack is a mix
of pre-recorded and live music credited
to Nye Parry, Dougie Evans and onstage
cellist Karni Postel, whose scraping, sawing
and reverberating rhythms engender
corision rather than irritation.

Donald Hutera