

APRIL 2009

REVIEW

ballet.*magazine**T.H.E. Dance Company**Variance: 'Water Bloom',
'Where Does the Wind Go?'**February 2009**Singapore, University Cultural Centre Hall**by Celine Tan*

Variance 麥
by T.H.E Dance Company 舞人
Choreography by Kuik Swee
Boon 郭瑞文 (Singapore) & Zhang
Xiao-Xiong 張曉雄 (Taiwan)
27 Feb 09, UCC Hall, 8pm
\$16 & \$21

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T.H.E, the acronym for The Human Expression, is the newest kid on the block. This fresh and electrifying dance company is raging with innovation. Founded by ex-principal dancer of Singapore Dance Theatre and Nacho Duato's Compañia Nacional de Danza de Espana, Kuik Swee Boon, leads the company of seven as their Artistic Director, leading choreographer and dancer.

Barely a year, the company has presented 3 major modern works, beginning with Old Sounds, a piece about the modern Man in touch with endangered dialects and old tradition and architecture. Followed by Within.Without, an experimental choreographic piece that challenges 4 choreographers to collaborate in an hour-long piece. This piece falls within the boundary of the context of family and relationships. This four-way collaboration tackled with family friction, tempers, dynamic

and personal idiosyncrasies. The production was well received and left one craving for more.

The National University of Singapore's Art Festival 2009 opens with a one-night only double-bill, Variance. Sharing the context of Man and the Environment, T.H.E presents the first item, Water Bloom, choreographed by Kuik, and another work, Where Does the Wind Go?, by Taiwan's notable choreographer, Zhang Xiao Xiong.

Water Bloom arose with a long pole, vertically suspended from the top. A



dancer moved across lithely with a smaller piece of the wood, eventually, fitting the missing jigsaw under the pole. White light bulbs under black lampshade were suspended from the top, they descend slowly at random point in time, just like slow motion raindrops, with some of the lights arrived at just an inch off the floor. In the latter part of the piece, the lighting created an aquatic atmosphere; the musky green light filled the stage, giving an ethereal aura. Thematic sound designer, Darren Ng tempered with the sound of rain, crackling sounds and the sound of coins dropping into a glass bowl, overlaying the minimalistic notes of the music.

At one point of the piece, three male dancers, dressed in unbuttoned black shirt and trousers, spreads around the floor insouciantly, building up to a climatic change when they leaped and became more animalistic in their movements. Beastlike, they scabbled across the stage like a wild beast attacking its prey. Contrastingly, the female dancers, in cool grey tunics, were graceful and submissive.

In the final moments of the piece, dancers, Silvia Yong and Lee Mun Wai, indulged in a captivating duet. Yong completely surrendered herself to Lee as he maneuvers her around, he too, have some moments of vulnerability. The movements were fluid, silk-like and especially sensual. The piece ends with Yong dancing in a trance, strong green lights illuminate the wooden pole, creating a beautiful and impressionable final scene.

Zhang Xiao Xiong's piece, Where Does the Wind Go?, looked at the concept of Wind and Man and the different texture of the wind, gentle or strong, directional or frivolously; the wind comes and goes... as mentioned in the program. During the piece, a recorded Zhang's voiceover reciting in mandarin about the wind, rain and the expression of the Man in relation to the wind.

This piece has many different segments, in most segments; the voiceover recites a short phrase as the dancers take on the stage. Green lights radiate the bare naked stage in the first segment. All dancers came on full force with various lifts and partnering works, notably, Lee Mun Wai and Charlyn Lin, whom demonstrated good chemistry. Kuik, whose physique shared the beauty of a Greek god, accentuates his movement with clarity and elegance. He partnered Silvia Yong (also his life-partner) in the first segment; it was absolutely poetry in motion.

Thematic sound design, also by Darren Ng, experimented with noise, in which Man may take them for granted for; the sound of road drilling, train door closing, and a few others. These 'noise' proved to be very efficient rhythm, adding a very contemporary colour to the second segment of the piece, here, the male dancers danced with more abandonment, and the females approached theirs with empowerment. The next segment unfolds a different mood and atmosphere. The light cast from the top left corner of the stage, shadows the exposed backstage as if sunlight entering from a high window, the tinkling sound of the wind chimes surrounds dancer, Lin Yu-Ju, in her melancholic solo.

The following segment transported the audience to a different dimension, literally. Lighted gridlines projected on the stage, outlining the contours and structure of the space made the stage three-dimensional. Both dancers, Gao Yu Wen and Andy Chua performed a dynamic duet, sharing mixed moments of softness and abruptness of tension. Both dancers stare at the audience with immense intensity, as he supports and cradles her around effortlessly. This duet, just like the background, was dimensional with dynamism and utterly flavorful.



In the final segment, Kuik returned to partner Lin Yu-Ju, their duet complemented of various acrobatic lifts and partnering. Kuik was like the wind, encompassing the dancer, manipulating her in the final movements. The concluding scene narrows the attention to him overshadowing her, menacingly as she lay helplessly on the floor.

The sell-out production of Variance was commendable for a young budding local dance company. Their choreographic voice is strong and could easily be placed on the international level. One could only wish the rest of the world could experience their creativity and their expression.

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