

The Three Pillars of Dance

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In a professional ballet company like Singapore Dance Theatre (SDT), there are three main pillars to develop a repertoire of performances. A company's repertoire is the heart of the company; some call it its face. It shows how the company has grown artistically and the direction the company is heading.

The first pillar includes established, well-known 19th century classical ballets such as *Swan Lake* and *Nutcracker*. Ballet adaptations of classic literature such as *Romeo and Juliet* and *Don Quixote* also belong to this pillar. Ballet performances such as these have timeless beauty due to the wonderful combination of choreography, music and spectacle, with a story to link all the elements. It is interesting to note that ballet was first considered to be a narrative art form.

The second pillar is a group of established masterpieces, created for certain companies but now performed worldwide by many dance companies as the international standard of choreography. George Balanchine, the greatest choreographer of the 20th century, is representative of this pillar. Some of his works, including the world famous *Serenade* and *Theme and Variations* have become an essential part of SDT's repertoire. I should also mention that Choo San Goh, Singapore's ballet legend and the first world renowned Asian choreographer, is also included in this pillar. *Romeo and Juliet* was choreographed by Choo San Goh and recently performed by SDT in March 2020. It is his only full-length ballet and the uniqueness of his version is well illustrated by the new character he cleverly invented called Fate. Fate, of course, was responsible to bring *Romeo and Juliet* together (please see the photo in July issue).

The third pillar consists of new works created especially for specific companies. SDT aims to introduce at least one

choreographer new to Singapore each year and so far, SDT has performed 31 world premieres in the last 11 years.

For some people, contemporary works may be difficult to understand. I also did not appreciate it at first. But now I am excited to watch such new works. They give me a different kind of excitement as I do not know what to expect and, once the ballet starts, I often start creating my own story while I watch it. Or I totally let myself be absorbed in what I see, just focusing on amazing movement and dance happening right in front of my eyes.

Some ballet companies have their strength in classical ballet; others may have strength in contemporary works. As SE Asia's premier ballet company, you may ask what is SDT's strength. I am pleased to share that SDT offers 6 seasons carefully curated by our Artistic Director, Janek, from these three pillars.

To fully appreciate the beauty of ballet, I suggest that you watch various ballets including classical and contemporary. These days ballet works can be presented in many combinations and varieties, such as themed productions, art festivals, or combination of short works. You never know what may trigger your emotions! It is a truly blessed moment when you discover a piece of work you never thought you would like.

Note: This text was based upon "The Three Pillars of Dance" by Janek Schergen, Artistic Director of Singapore Dance Theatre, for One@the Ballet

Photos: Singapore Dance Theatre, Takeaki Miura

Profile: Yasuko Yeung

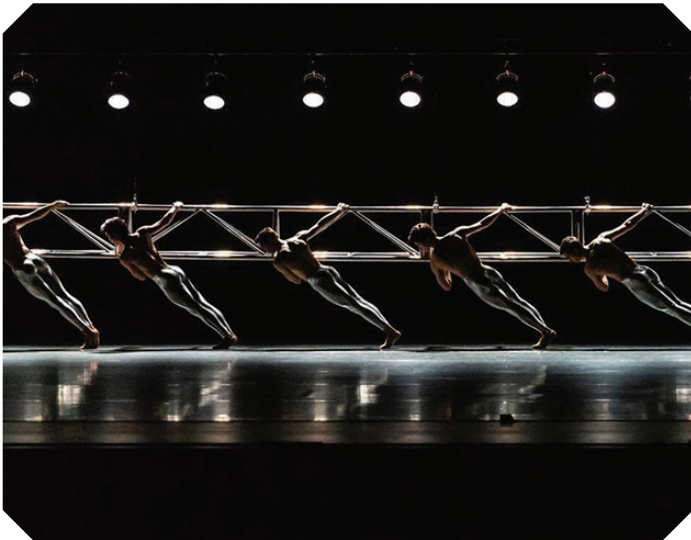
Member of the Japanese Association Ambassadors Council of Singapore Dance Theatre



Nutcracker by Singapore Dance Theatre (SDT)



Serenade, one of George Balanchine's masterpieces (2019 SDT)



SYNC, by Nils Christie, originally created for Washington Ballet (2019 SDT)



Bittersweet, by Natalie Weir, created for SDT (2019 SDT)



Swan Lake (2019 SDT) performed by Kana Minegishi and Kenya Nakamura