

## *Tis the Season of Giving!*

Time flies so fast, doesn't it? Especially this year. When I look at the photo of Christmas lights on the cover of this December issue, I can hardly believe that it is the end of this year. For many of us, it will be our first Christmas in Singapore as we are not able to return to our hometowns. Of course, I am one of them.

This year, our "daily life" has become quite surreal as a result of Covid-19. For example, I enjoyed several first time experiences this year. Being interviewed by the Straits Times was one of them. The article was titled "The Show Must Go On" and explained how the art scene in Singapore embraced the support of many art loving donors at this difficult time. The interview was done on the phone and I found it rather amusing that we could talk so passionately about supporting the arts with a stranger without meeting face to face. We were half disappointed and half relieved to see our almost unstoppable chatter distilled into a few short sentences!

"Commercial art" includes professional ballet companies like Singapore Dance Theatre (SDT), musical institutions such as Metropolitan Festival Orchestra, SSO, theatrical companies, and art galleries. Usually many of them would throw lavish fundraising galas once a year that are part of the social scene. Inevitably, such fundraising activities were impossible this year and the closure of theatres and concert halls meant no revenue from ticket sales. The lack of income soon became a serious headache for everyone.

However, the art scene did not die. In fact, it survived in many unique ways. There were concerts and plays held over Zoom with dinner prepared by Michelin star restaurants and delivered to one's home. Artists, both famous and local, donated their work for auction. Some even offered lessons by them to raise money.

Yasuko Yeung

Singapore Dance Theatre organized its own Virtual Gala in July. A day before the event, attendees received a programme and a handwritten thank you card from one of the dancers, accompanied by a bottle of champagne and chocolates, all packed tastefully and tied with a SDT ribbon.



Celebration by Janek Schergen was presented at SDT's Virtual Fundraiser (photo: Jacky Ho)

On the day itself, we joined through Zoom to be greeted by our hosts for the evening (Chairperson, Artistic Director, Patron Dr. Tony Tan) and Guest of Honour Ms. Grace Fu (Minister of Ecology and Sustainability). With a smile on her face, Ms. Fu joked that she insisted on joining this event although she was no longer Minister of Culture. And then, after the violin live performance, with much anticipation, came the long-awaited ballet performance by SDT's dancers. Although socially distancing was strictly enforced, the original choreography ensured that every movement was beautiful and elegant. And after the all too short performance, guests enjoyed mingling virtually with each other on the screen, searching out the familiar faces we would normally meet at the theatre. And finally, we shared a toast to wish everyone at SDT the very best.



Schubert Symphony by Choo San Goh (2018 SDT photo: Bernie Ng)



World Ballet Day on 29th October



Interview of Akira and Satoru for Japanese Association  
Artistic Director Janek (2nd from right) kept us company

Why do we support the arts at this time? Everyone has his/her own individual reason, and our answer is that it is our way of saying “we are with you”. Art gives us joy and inspiration and we want to give back. As a foreigner in Singapore, it was also my way of thanking this country and helping our friends.

This year, SDT’s Artistic Director Janek received an award called “Friend of Art” from the National Arts Council. Janek concluded his interview saying:

“Support is an emotional thing. Most people think of support as financial. But if you care about something, you attend. If you can, you donate. It’s always good to recommend (these performances to others). Any of those things is important. Not any one of them is more important than the other. And all of together would be wonderful.”

According to the Strait Times, many art organizations received more support than they expected. The close

relationship between artists and their supporters shows arts in Singapore is still young and growing. This year we were deprived of most art performances because they were labeled as non-essential. However, many of us realize now how much we miss them and they are in fact essential.

I imagine the year of 2020 was a tough year for many of the Japan Association members, away from our home country, facing all sorts of challenges. Coming to the end of the year, I would like to thank all of you who supported and cheered SDT (and read this column).

May the peace of Christmas be with you all. May the new year be a happy one for all of us!

Photographs and information: Singapore Dance Theatre

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Reconciliation. The ending scene of Romeo x Juliet (2020 SDT)