

Ballet Passages

Yasuko Yeung

How would you describe Singapore? The financial hub of SE Asia, the busiest port in the world, top-class education, a clean tourist destination perhaps. Now Singapore, boasting the highest GDP, rated as one of the most developed countries in the world, has been focusing on the development of the arts.

I am a member of the Ambassadors Council of Singapore Dance Theatre, the only professional ballet company in Singapore. It was founded 32 years ago to give a chance to those who studied ballet overseas and wanted to pursue their dance career in their home country. Now we stage various productions both home and abroad, a series of mini lectures for the public, adult dance classes, events for schools. Through these activities, we are closely connected with society. I have often been asked if this is a company only for Singaporeans and the answer is no. We have dancers from all over the world, 11 countries to be precise, from Norway to Australia. We also have 13 Japanese dancers including 2 of the principals. These dancers made their dreams come true and have quite unique backgrounds. FYI, Ms. Megumi Sugita, the new ballet teacher at the Japanese Association used to belong to SDT too.

Now, the theatres are closed in most countries in the midst of the pandemic. Thinking back, why do we want to go to the theatre? For me, I go to experience moments of inspiration, arising from the dreamy music or perfect movement of the dancers. I go to the theatre to be moved, thrilled and inspired. Which reminds me of the night we had in Laos a year ago. We were invited by the Singapore Embassy to celebrate the 45th anniversary of Singapore-Laos bilateral relationship. We were to perform for just one night, and the public could attend for free. Despite some technical challenges, we received

a wonderful reception from the audience. To many of them, it was probably their first time to watch ballet. We were equally inspired by their excitement.

Many of you may think that as part of the audience, you are passive spectators at the theatre. But actually, the dancers can feel your vibe during the performance. So in a way, dancers and audience are inspiring each other during any performance. Dancers, musicians and the audience all create the special atmosphere in the theatre together. Regardless of age or sex, it is liberating to be wrapped up in something so beautiful. I always feel happy when I see children excitedly looking at the tuning of the orchestra, or friends happily chatting after show.

Since the start of the pandemic, we have been told not to go out unless it is absolutely necessary. It is ironic that what keeps me most calm and positive is the memory of concerts or ballet performances in the theatre, which is now labeled as non-essential.

There are some beautiful theatres and concert halls in this country where you can enjoy world-class music and dance. While we wait for them to reopen, I am delighted to share my magical experiences at SDT with you.

Photos:SDT, Nanase Tanaka, Takeaki Miura

Profile:Yasuko Yeung
Member of the Japanese Association
Ambassadors Council of Singapore
Dance Theatre



SDT Season 2020
“Dare to Dance” Video



Romeo and Juliet (2020), SDT with Metropolitan Festival Orchestra



Romeo and Juliet (2020), SDT



Don Quixote (2019), SDT



Evening Voices (2019), SDT from the 45th anniversary of Singapore Laos bilateral relationship



Midnight Waltzes (2018), SDT from Ballet Under the Stars



Rehearsal from SDT's 30th Anniversary Gala (2018)