



FiveLines

A Contemporary Dance Initiative

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SIDES 2018 soft, elegant and risky – review

written by Ezekiel Oliveira | May 16, 2018



SIDES 2018 sees Frontier Danceland working on a broad spectrum of dance, on a triple bill of smooth and sophisticated choreography. Opening the evening choreographers **Richard Chappel** and **Faye Tan** make a point of working with softness in dance in 'The colour of there seen from here' six dancers measure their bodies, tracing the skin in the arms and around the neck, sliding seamlessly on the floor. The costumes are dark grey, against a dark backdrop and remind me of Soviet Union factory workers uniforms: the costumes want to be understated, but the mix of obscure colours and dusky light make it difficult to understand the lines of the body. A mirrored duet sparks interest with upbeat music with Adele Goh and Joy Wang shaping each others body with angular and fast movement, only to dull afterwards again in a universe of dark softness with the dancers sliding on stage. The speed is often similar, with exception of the beginning where the movement is nuanced with intricate rhythms, but the piece ends up morphing into a collection of dance material that isn't distinguishable throughout it's run. Despite the group lifts and single runs on the floor, we are left pondering on the idea of soft movement.

PARADISO sees the return of Israeli choreographer **Shahar Binyamini** to Singapore, exploring the subject of elegance in machines. This piece contrasts the opening with incredible detail, colour and a bold vision with the dancers transforming into humanoids. The setting looks like a white lab, divided with LED lights. Adele Goh reveals a calculated smile; her lips widen only 30% while she walks downstage, but everything changes in a blink of an eye and the entire cast metamorphoses into a group machine, mimicking helices of a helicopter at different speeds. Every dancer is a vital piece of this puzzle that morphs from machine-like to humanoid. It's beautiful to see the dancers transforming into something other than themselves. Dressed in white polka dots, they brush past each other but never interfere or enter on each others' space. They insist on keeping emotions in the periphery, thus offering us a vision of the future where machines can execute, dance even but never portray an emotional state.

There are seven elevated white platforms on the floor in the foyer outside the theatre. Each one has a dancer ready to start dancing. Choreographers Annie Vigier and Franck Apertet take an extract from X-Event protocol Les Corps morts (2006) for the final piece, 'Dead Bodies'. It's a storm of a piece where the cast perpetually falls on their elbows, knees and backs, but it's painful to watch. Across from me, a group of onlooking dancers in the audience hold their knees close to their hearts in what it looks like a moment of distress. The cast dances to exhaustion, to a point where it seems difficult to even breath. The audience cheers loudly, but the claps go out to the dancers, for surviving, for standing at the end and slowly walking out of the performance space.

If we see a cat running on a treadmill to exhaustion, we see animal cruelty, but on the other hand, if we see a group of dancers performing in a near danger zone risking their bodies we call it art. Where do we draw the line?

SIDES 2018 by Frontier Danceland at SOTA, 11 and 12 of May.

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