

# Review: LEAP 2019 by Frontier Danceland



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*A medley of new choreographies and dancers to be form LEAP 2019*

With their annual production of graduating dancers from the M1-Frontier Danceland PULSE Programme, Frontier Danceland presented six brand new choreographies as part of the eight edition of LEAP, as choreographed by Artistic Director Low Mei Yoke, company artists Faye Tan, Keigo Nozaki

and Sammantha Yue, and project choreographers Adelene Stanley and Chew Shaw En.



The performance opened with Chew Shaw En's *Ravel*, with a group of dancers moving slowly, gracefully unravelling themselves onstage, utilising and navigating the space as they moved about, displaying strong chemistry with each other. With a sudden tonal shift in the music, set to *Angels* by Dark Sky, their movements became more relaxed, as if enjoying themselves as the lighting brought out their vibrancy, moving past the tedious process of unravelling to truly have fun in the space.



In Faye Tan's *Pottyscore*, a pair of dancers move according to Bach's Concerto for Two Violins, inspired by ballet moves as they embarked in almost playful choreography with each other, exploring and pushing the limits of contemporary ballet as they lights too danced around them. It's evident that choreographer Tan had a lot of fun designing this sequence, and it shows in the joy the emanates from both dancers.



Sammantha Yue's *Click* cleverly used lighting to form several rectangles of light. Dancers took turns crossing over these rectangles, almost as if these were 'roads' while the sounds of the city, cars rushing by on wet, busy roads formed a metropolitan soundscape. Metaphorically, one could even interpret these as the cross roads of their lives, each dancer ensuring they would cross safely, but each with a different style of movement, some dashing, some confidently striding, and others distracted by their phones. The dancers are locked in their mundane lives, day after day of the same routine as they repeat the same movements over and over again. Suddenly, the dancers snap into a trance-like state as the music abruptly shifts to Orchestra Baobab's Pape Ndiaye, transporting both them and us to a resort setting with the decidedly more tropical sound. With the change in mood, the dancers break into a jig, as if their lives have suddenly kicked into motion, the routine broken, and we can't help but embrace this sudden shared daydream as they boogie along to the chill beat in Hawaiian shirts. But as suddenly as it began, the reverie comes to a crashing halt as the music goes back to the noisy roads once again, the dancers snapped out of their holiday dream and returning, sadly, back to Earth and their own mundane lives once again.



Photo Credit: Justin Koh

Keigo Nozaki's *Self-ish* sees a group of dancers entering the space one by one, lit only by a single spotlight as they gather at centrestage. The dancers engage in a form of competition, each one attempting to hog the spotlight and fill the space before being ousted by yet another, all trying to be number one and get ahead in life, every man for himself as their competition became fiercer as time went by. It was clear from the choreography that plenty of pushing and pulling was happening before our eyes, increasingly violent and disruptive as they cross each other's paths and even cover each other's eyes to get ahead. Even when one emerges victorious, their win is momentary, as they're dragged right down again by another competitor in this survival of the fittest style philosophy. Eventually though, only one is left completely alone, embodying the absolute loneliness one ends up finding one's self in if they engage in selfish-ness throughout their life.



In Artistic Director Low Mei Yoke's *Happy Birthday*, six alumni of the PULSE programme gather to perform and 'celebrate' a birthday, with the birthday girl surrounded by her friends as they sing the titular song. Things get strange when their movements slow down and the guests separate, reaching backwards into time to reminisce the origins of their friendship, remembering how it all began, with friendships and smiles, the helping of each other across various trials and tribulations. An emotionally-driven piece, one feels this from the dancers' expressions, both happy that they had these moments yet sad that it is impossible to return to that time, and we end with the birthday girl quietly singing happy birthday to herself, still surrounded by her friends but with the bittersweet knowledge that the good times in the past will always and forever remain there.



In the final performance, Adelene Stanley's *Same Same But Different* features a group of dancers onstage, filling the space of the blackbox. Each one feels calibrated to be in sync with each other, starting with a scene from Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker* as the company found chemistry and perfect camaraderie with each other, cohesive and in harmony with each other. In a sense then, *Same Same But Different* perfectly represents what Frontier Danceland hopes to achieve in each of their works – a common understanding across dancers that keeps each choreographer tight knit and well performed with the togetherness the dancers display, each one putting in their utmost effort to deliver on a good show, and show the world the talents that PULSE and Frontier Danceland themselves have produced year on year.

**Photo Credit: Justin Koh**

**Performance attended 9/3/19 (3pm)**

*LEAP 2019 played at the Goodman Arts Centre Black Box from 8th – 9th March 2019.*

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