

# Review: MILIEU 2019 by Frontier Danceland



BY BAKCHORMEEBOY

NOVEMBER 20, 2019

COMMENTS 0



★★★★☆☆ (Performance attended 15/11/19)

*Double bill exploring contrasting ideas of individualism and the community.*

No man is an island, and no matter who we are or where we're born, there is a truth universally acknowledged that in our lives, we must inevitably deal with a community and our relationship with them at some point. That is an issue that lies at the heart of Frontier Danceland's 2019 edition of their

annual Milieu programme, presenting two brand new works from guest choreographers Marioenrico D'Angelo (Italy) and Sita Ostheimer (Germany).

Opening with Marioenrico D'Angelo's *Skinny Dipping*, dancers Grace Lim, Keigo Nozaki, Ma Yue-Ru, Mark Robles, Sammantha Yue and Tan Xin Yen dealt with the concept of individualism within the community, and what it means to let go and be unafraid of expressing ourselves. The stage begins in a half wash, with a single dancer perched at the edge of the light, peering into it as if it were a pool of water she hesitates to plunge into. Expanding into a cold, atmospheric full wash, the four female dancers come into the light, all dressed identically in blue sleeveless tops and blue shorts. They bend, stretch and elongate themselves along the stage, rolling and navigating their bodies – lightweight, as if they were suspended in water. The two male dancers join them, also dressed in blue, and the movements that emerge from this sees the dancers occasionally performing martial arts like stances before returning to their fluidity along the floor. Often, they dare come within close proximity of each other, almost but never physically touching before breaking off again. When they perform group movements, mirroring each other in a series of precise steps, they seem confident, joyous even, yet manage to differentiate themselves ever so little to show off their individuality.



The music suddenly segues into Angelo Branduardi's 'Il sultano di Babilonia e la prostituta', a fast-paced number that casts the stage into warm lighting as the dancers finally connect, pairing up and showcasing their passion on full display, unbridled and joyous for all to see. It's not long before the light cuts to a spotlight on Sammantha Yue, seemingly hurt as she curls up, foetal. The lights are cold and blue again, and Keigo Nozaki approaches her, offering a helping hand, while the other dancers shirk in the darkness behind. She is limp, collapsing into his arms, before she seems to embark on a process of recovery, the sound of a sea organ adding a sense of mysticism to her movements. She now seems back on track and ready to face the world once again, and the lights return to the warm ones of before, with Schlampeitziger's alien-like, eerie 'Pink Carpet' playing. The dancers are together again, but on occasion, the lights flicker, as if something is not quite the same as before. And then we see it – Sammantha is breaking away from the group and beginning to move to her own rhythm and actions, dancing to the beat of her own drum even as the other dancers walk away, all the way until the lights fade to black, fearless, happy, and completely herself as she allows herself the full range of her expression.

In Sita Ostheimer's *Nowhere But 2.5 Meters*, rather than exploring the value of individualism, the work instead champions interpersonal connections, and the way humans grow from these relationships. With the belief that humans grow and change based on the internal and external influences they experience within a 2.5m radius around them, the group of six dancers from *Skinny Dipping* is now joined by Polish dancer Konrad Plak for this work. The stage now has a white overlay on it, allowing

the light to shine bright upon the dancers. They stand at the sides, dressed in loose, casual wear of various colours to showcase their individuality. We hear instructions to close one's eyes and visualise are heard on the soundtrack.

In the beginning, the dancers enter the space and dance as individuals, each performing their own individual actions with their own styles. They are each beautiful in their own right, leaping and dancing gracefully all across the stage, yet, they do not move as a singular group. But as we watch the dancers, some of them begin to stray, seemingly confused as they leave the safety of each other's space. They seem to know that there is strength in numbers and togetherness, and slowly but surely, learn from each other, mimicking their fellow dancers' moves and learning to perform as a single entity instead.

In this performance, Konrad Plak is particularly impressive, with his long, lithe body serpentine as it courses through incredibly flexible motions. At one point, the other six dancers surround Konrad in a circle, dancing around him as if to represent the 2.5m radius of learning, and Konrad himself seems to get stronger, lighter, more confident still as they come together again. As the music fades, they continue to be one, moving in unison and becoming of one mind, having learnt and exchanged moves and ideas with each other, and exemplifying the true value of mutual trust and unity as one tight-knit group. One imagines that over the tough period of rehearsals, the dancers themselves have developed a similar chemistry with each other, and with art imitating life, results in this skilful, precise and evocative group effort.

**Photo Credit: Justin Koh**

*MILIEU 2019 played on 15th & 16th November 2019 at the SOTA Studio Theatre.*

**TAGS • 2019 • ARTS • CHOREO • DANCE WITH ME • DANCELAND • FRONTIER • NEW • NOVEMBER • PREVIEW • SG • SIDES • SINGAPORE**