

# Preview: Dancers' Locker 2022 by Frontier Danceland



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(<https://bakchormeeboy.files.wordpress.com/2022/06/screenshot-2022-06-19-at-2.35.10-pm.png>).

Dancers' Locker, an annual programme by Frontier Danceland that spotlights its company artists returns with a triple bill live performance that will take place from 7 to 9 July 2022, at Goodman Arts Centre Amphitheatre and Frontier Danceland Studio.

Dancers' Locker 2022 features company artists, Sammantha Yue (Singapore), Mark Robles (Philippines) and Chia Poh Hian (Singapore) at the helm of distinctive choreographic explorations. The spirit of inquiry perpetuates different editions of Dancers' Locker. At the heart of this year's three

creations connects “The Self” and its unique expressions of sensibilities to change, the embodiment of culture and curiosities that feed the soul. Together with local lighting designer, Darren Lee, unique spaces are crafted to shape the lived experiences of forty audiences for each of the five performances.



Rehearsal of *Sunlight Rhythm*, a solo work by choreographer / performer, Sammantha Yue

The impetus of solo creation, *Sunlight Rhythm*, stems from Yue’s taking stock of her six years as a full-time company artist at Frontier Danceland. She shares, “I find myself reminiscing the times when my body hurt less and was able to physically fulfil the intense demands of my practice. This brought me frustrations and led me to question my longevity as a dance artist. While managing this conundrum, the experience of caring for plants has provided me a space of contemplation and another form of moving meditation”. The development of the new creation draws parallel to a plant’s growth stages. For the work, Yue has specially started growing an orchid in the studio, which has since “sprouted new leaves, flowered twice and grown twelve more buds.” The crafted choreographic premise allowed the creative process and Yue’s physical practice to mirror the orchid’s evolution as she simultaneously imagines a first-person plant perspective and observes as a third person. Yue muses that it has been “a steady, mindful and trusting journey of recalibrating and rediscovering my body thus far”.

Robles draws influences from Filipino culture in Bahayana (meaning woman in Bisaya as spoken in southern Philippines) to mull on gender roles within a contemporary patriarchal society. Working with a female cast of three company artists, connections are made with the mythology about the three daughters of Bathala (God of the Tagalogs), namely the demigods Mayari, Hanan and Tala, who are also known as the Deity of Moon, Dawn and Star respectively. The creative process evolves around exploring the characteristics of each performer, as well as the relationships between them.

Integrating elements of Philippine folk dance, Robles hopes to share aspects of his Filipino culture through movement, and shares that “It’s mostly something new for the performers to embody, so the discovery is there. I have also witnessed the forming and development of relationships, which is vital

in shaping the work's narrative". Bahayana will perform in the outdoor space of Goodman Arts Centre Amphitheatre, where Robles values the spatial juxtaposition of the disparate elements within the arts centre premise in layering potential meaning-making for the work.



(Left to Right) Chia Poh Hian, Tan Xin Yen and Sammantha Yue in rehearsal of Bayhana by choreographer, Mark Robles

Chia's *Counting to a Million. Will I make it to a billion?* inquiries the meaning behind being a billionaire. The themes of poverty and inequality are explored through the medium of rice, a common Asian staple. Working with 250 kilograms of rice in the studio, Chia reflects, "I consider myself privileged – a working middle class Singaporean. I will never be able to fully experience what it is like to be a crazy rich Singaporean, and have not experienced living below the poverty line. This work asks of me to imagine, empathise and consider perspectives as to what one might experience. It has led me to recognise that it is difficult to be in another person's shoes or experience someone else's reality, but we have to try". The primary motivation behind the work is Chia's wonder of what a billion of anything look like, which leads her to frame the act of counting as part of the work's ritual. "I identify a billion as a number and a word. So the only way to find out is to start counting, rice", says Chia. In the counting process, "I noticed my energy and body shift between states of excitement, concentration, flow, boredom, fatigue and fight. After counting, I sat with empathy. I was just beginning to understand the scale of things".





Sammantha Yue responding to a task-based exploration using rice in choreographer, Chia Poh Hian's Counting to a Million. Will I make it to a billion?

The creative platform of Dancers' Locker was initiated by artistic director and mentor, Low Mei Yoke, in 2009 to encourage performers to embark on choreographic explorations. "Dancers' Locker" potentially translates as a personal space, cabinet, box or vault where the dancer-choreographer is encouraged to find freedom in the expression of curiosities, memories, emotions and experiences. Originally an informal platform to support early artistic experimentation in choreography, it has since developed to become one of Frontier Danceland's annual core programmes. Low shares, "I hope to allow the dancers a creative space for the engagement of "play" and for them to experience liberation and growth through the creative process. The dancers being emboldened to take risks and challenge the boundaries of innovation within framed parameters makes me hopeful from deep within".

**Photo Credit: Frontier Danceland**

*Dancers' Locker 2022 runs from 7th to 9th July 2022 at Goodman Arts Centre Amphitheatre and Frontier Danceland Studio. Tickets available from [Peatix](https://dancerslocker2022.peatix.com/) (<https://dancerslocker2022.peatix.com/>)*

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