



# FiveLines

A Contemporary Dance Initiative

---

[ABOUT](#)

[DANCE CLASSES](#)

[CHOREOGRAPHER'S SPOTLIGHT](#)

[CONTEMPORARY DANCE SINGAPORE](#)

---

[Home](#) > [5L Latest News](#) > [SIDES 2017 witty and droll – Review](#)

## SIDES 2017 witty and droll – Review

*written by* [Bernice Lee](#) | May 13, 2017



SIDES 2017 is a flurry of movement, full of detail and dynamism. It may be a good way to be introduced to the potentialities of contemporary dance, with playfulness and endless movement invention taking centre stage. The dancers are frequently witty and droll as they present perspectives of an action. They scurry, full of purpose, from one location to the next, with the ridiculous discipline of urbanites. (Full disclosure: I used to work here.)

The show opens with the evening's most fully-realised work, *Focus* by Gabrielle Nankivell and Luke Smiles. I have previously seen this work performed in the studio and prefer the perspective provided by the stage. The duo borrows thinking from film-making to influence choreographic decisions for maximum visual impact. The piece is clinical in tone, with video of a chalk-drawn camera mechanism. A mix of analogue and digital, a comment on technological advancement affecting the dancing body? The video sits in the background, and mostly I ignore it, drawn in instead by the falling and tumbling actions of the dancers, and the overall rhythm and spatial flow.

*Character Game* by Tung I-Fen and *Babel* by Adele Goh follow. Continuing on a similar trajectory of visual detail, though more a result of movement vocabulary. The works are more raw, allowing for the spontaneous responses of the dancers to arise and playfulness to surface more overtly.



Character Game is a simple, smart proposition for dance; A series of tasks and action possibilities announced by dancers. Sometimes the words describe what will happen, and it is tremendously satisfying when what I heard is shown in movement. Then the words become commands, at times oppressive and sometimes joyful. I lose some patience when the game ceases to surprise, but it ends with dramatic effect (Lights! Sound! Action!) and clearly takes delight in its non-dramatic nature.

Babel is enigmatic. It leaves plenty of room for my imagination to play. A microphone disappears and reappears; an object for the powerful, sometimes mysteriously handled. It feels like things are always on the brink of disaster. Within this dramatic tension, there is levity. The music of Taiko drums create an air of suspense and primal power; the costumes suggest East Asian martial artists (but of the weekend warrior, corporate slave variety). The dancers are grounded and swift but have probably never been in real fights. In the opening scene, lighting by Gabriel Chan creates a sense of horror. But what is going on is a goofy game. In the end, a lone wolf character Hwa Wei-An performs an emotionally vulnerable solo, barely holding his own against the currents of the group. Babel is a work I would love to see future developments off.

Time spent on process reaps real rewards. The focus is a testimony to that and when the company presents its own work there is a level of detail and human story, possible only when the artists know each other well, culled from hours spent working together.

**SIDES 2017 by Frontier Danceland at SOTA 12 -13 of May.**