Frontier Danceland stages Improv-tu, a performance set in the warehouse/showroom of vintage furniture company Mobler

In a site-specific performance at the warehouse/ showroom of vintage furniture company Mobler, Frontier Danceland dancers challenge themselves by using furniture pieces in new ways. PHOTO: COURTESY OF FRONTIER DANCELAND

Nabilah Said

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Dancers from Frontier Danceland do not fully know what to expect when they perform their upcoming work Improv-tu on July 29.

The 45-minute site-specific performance takes place in the warehouse/showroom of vintage furniture company Mobler in Jalan Ampas.

"It's going to be an improvised piece because we don't know what's going to be in the space. The shop is constantly selling stuff and moving things around. So we'll know what furniture will be around only leading up to the show," says dancer-choreographer Joy Wang, 24.

The title of the piece is derived from the words "improvised" and "impromptu". It will be performed by seven dancers.

Improv-tu is part of the dance company's annual Dancers' Locker showcase, which comes in two parts this year.

The earlier segment on July 21 and 22 is a choreographic showcase by four of the company's artists. This will be held in Frontier Danceland's studio in Goodman Arts Centre.

BOOK IT / DANCERS' LOCKER 2017

WHERE: Choreographic show: Frontier Danceland Studio, 02-52, Block M Goodman Arts Studio, 90 Goodman Road; Improv-tu: Mobler Furniture Showroom Warehouse, 10C Jalan Ampas

WHEN: Choreographic show: July 21, 8pm, July 22, 3 and 8pm; Improv-tu: July 29, 3 and 5pm

ADMISSION: $15 a ticket or $25 for both shows

INFO: E-mail info@frontierdanceland.com

The tickets for each segment are $15, and a bundle deal for both shows costs $25.

Frontier Danceland's artistic director, Low Mei Yoke, 62, says that she wanted to include sitespecific work Improv-tu this year to challenge their artists.

"I wanted the dancers to explore a different space, which gives them new challenges. It also helps to attract and promote dance to a new audience," she says.

One such challenge is handling Mobler's Scandinavian vintage furniture.

"During one of the rehearsals, we tried to stand on a table. We were told not to do that for too long because it was vintage and it could break," says Wang.

Ms Emelie Heden, 34, founder of Mobler, says that dance and furniture are "a match made in heaven" because a dancer can emphasise how, for example, a chair can look different when you see it from different angles.

"When seeing the dancers practise, using the pieces in new ways, the way they reflect and put the pieces in a new light is beautiful. I love to see my pieces with a redefined purpose," she adds.

Frontier Danceland's collaboration with Mobler came about through Singapore musician sullen, who will be playing live music during the performance, including using electronic effects, such as live looping, to respond to the dancers' movements.

The independent musician had linked both parties up after discovering that the dancers were looking for a unique performance space.

For the choreographic showcase, Low gave the dancers the freedom to express themselves.

The four pieces are All That Glitters by Faye Tan, 20, a satire that explores the dichotomy between bureaucracy and freedom; Dust, a duet by Adelene Stanley, 22, which portrays a conversation between a woman and her inner voice; the female-powered Womxn by Sammantha Yue, 23; and The Cliff, a piece inspired by nature and the sea, by Daniel Navarro Lorenzo, 29.

Low hopes that through platforms such as Dancers' Locker, artists will learn to communicate better with audiences through their work.

"People say contemporary dance is very abstract. Some artists only want to do what they want and forget about connecting with the audience," she says.

"For me, the most important thing is for the choreographers to create a bridge with the audience. Will people know what you're trying to do? That is the most difficult part."

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