



Letter

The Dance Society of Malaysia

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From The President



Honorary Patron, President, Vice President and Adjudicators with winners of
1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, Consolation and Special Award prizes. Photo by James Quah

Dear Members,

Just more than a year ago, we had hopes and joy to look forward to the events planned for 2021 as mentioned in our TDS Letter, Issue 01/20, but as we all know, only two (2) events mentioned had taken place. Even so, the 23rd Solo Classical Ballet Competition which was originally planned for May 2020 was postponed four (4) times and finally held with adjustment from its usual presentation, commencing with a "live-stream" enchainement on 4th Nov 2021 conducted by Cyn Dee Too at Fonteyn Theatre, Wisma FAB, Petaling Jaya and Layna Chan in Sarawak, and Elimination conducted on 8th Nov 2021 selecting finalist from recorded videos submitted and judged by adjudicators, namely Ellie Lai, Lynn Wong and Zhou Guixin.

Finally, the finalists from the three (3) categories competed on stage at the Damansara Performing Arts Centre on 7th Dec 2021 while finalists for Category 4 competed in the DPAC Studio, in compliance to SOP, as majority of the contestants were of the age yet to be vaccinated.

It was indeed a pleasure to have our 2nd event in 2021 with a technique ballet workshop via zoom conducted by Fifi Sijangga of Malupi Dance Academy (MDA) in place of Claresta Alim from Indonesia. To me, it was an adventure seeing good attendance and attentiveness shown by all the participants. But I am still of an opinion that physical tutoring is very important in teaching ballet, with its unique correction and demonstration by a tutor to that particular student.

The positive side of this 23rd Solo Classical Ballet Competition is not peculiar, but has convinced me that perhaps we could proceed with future competitions in a similar manner, with recorded video submissions at Elimination stage, which would indeed benefit ballet students who lived faraway from Kuala Lumpur within Malaysia. This would save much cost to parents for those living in East Malaysia and in the North, East and South of Peninsular Malaysia.

Due to no awards given this year to attend foreign workshops and competition for our winners, we are pleased to have received many other kind of awards in cash and voucher from ballet material suppliers and numerous donors and, in particular, to Ballet Theatre Malaysia for their workshop awards, which I am indeed grateful for all their support.

I am also pleased that at the 33rd AGM held virtually on 25th June 2021, there were many outstation attendees and some are now representing their areas in the Committee with Koh Wen Yee from Melaka, Jolvyi Lim Jeng Bing from Pahang, Datin Rosalina Ooi from Perak, Wong Yit Fook from Negeri Sembilan, Galvin Foo from Penang, Chua Meei Sien from Terengganu, Ong Li Ling from Johor, Nora Ridzwan from Sabah, and Layna Chan from Sarawak. Perhaps for our future competitions, these committee members could help to coordinate candidates from their respective areas with video recording or perhaps outstation TDS committee members could be present physically to attend local competitions, selecting them for the finals in Kuala Lumpur.

I am indeed happy that we finally have a professional ballet company, Ballet Theatre Malaysia which is based in the Klang Valley, established jointly by Datin Jane Lew, Rachel Chew and Choong Wan Chin as Artistic Director, with its mission to make available a professional career for local ballet students in Malaysia and also to achieve international recognition in the classical scene through quality productions.

For 2022 we would not be honest by promising events in these uncertain days. However, we would like to proceed what we had proposed in 2020, like a Festival of Dance later in the year. For this, we much appreciate that TDS members come forward to our support as volunteers to help in this event. We would also like to continue conducting workshops under the umbrella of TDS.

In this TDS Letter, we are pleased to present the 23rd Solo Classical Ballet Competition and write-up from two (2) adjudicators, including an article on the Fifi Sijangga's workshop, and its contents of the 33rd AGM, plus a write-up by Bilqis Hijjas on Ballet Theatre Malaysia's "Spectrum".

On behalf of our Honorary Patron, Members of the Committee and Sub-Committee of The Dance Society, I wish you all a Blessed Happy and Healthy Prosperous 2022. Keep well, be healthy and stay safe!

God Bless
~Sunny Chan~
16th Feb 2022

Prize Winners



Category 1



Category 2



Category 3



Category 4

23rd Solo Classical Ballet Competition

4th November 2021: Enchainement “live stream” at Fonteyn Theatre, Federal Academy of Ballet, Petaling Jaya and Kuching, Sarawak.

8th November 2021: Elimination video at Fonteyn Theatre, Federal Academy of Ballet, Petaling Jaya

7th & 8th December 2021: Finals at Theatre & Studio, DPAC, Empire Damansara, Damansara Perdana, Petaling Jaya.

109 contestants qualified for entry as at 30 Sept 2021 with withdrawals since registered for May 2020 competition:

Category 1 (19 years and above) : 9 (participated) , 8 (withdrawal)

Category 2 (16-18 years) : 13 (participated), 26 (withdrawal)

Category 3 (13-15 years) : 35 (participated), 29 (withdrawal)

Category 4 (10-12 years) : 52 (participated), 32 (withdrawal)

The adjudicators for both Elimination and Finals were Ellie Lai, Lynn Wong, and Zhou Guixin. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 23rd Solo Classical Ballet Competition has been postponed 4 times.

Enchainement class for Category 1 and Category 4 was conducted virtually via “Zoom” video-conferencing by Cyn Dee Too at Fonteyn Theatre, Wisma FAB, Petaling Jaya, while Layna Chan conducted for Category 2 and Category 3 in Sarawak, all in one day.

Elimination was also conducted within one day through video submissions at the Fonteyn Theatre.

Finals were conducted on 2 days, 7th Dec 2021 for Category 1, 2 & 3 at Theatre, DPAC, while Finals for Category 4 was held on 8th Dec 2021 at the Studio of DPAC due to restrictions for unvaccinated individuals. As no audience was allowed, the Finals were held live stream for parents, teachers and members only.

Selection of Finalists in Category 1, 2, 3 & 4 were assessed on their first solo Compulsory Variation, i.e 6 finalists for Category 1; 8 for Category 2, 15 for Category 3 and 15 for Category 4. In the Finals, contestants of Category 1 & 2 have to perform a 2nd Variation which was selected from the choreographed works with Malaysian dance elements by Malaysians.

We were privileged to watch performances by Dominic Lor An Zhen, Rino Fujihashi, Yui Kyotani and Ben Cook of Ballet Theatre Malaysia, between and before announcement of the results for the Finals on 7 th Dec 2021.

In addition to the Awards and Cash Prizes sponsored by kind donors and TDS supporters, the Sunny Chan Special Awards were also presented. Winners for the Sunny Chan Special Awards were won by Leong Xu Xin in Category 1, Tan Kah Him Daniel in Category 2, Tan Jun Hee in Category 3, and Cassandra Mok Yi Xuan in Category 4.

A record of thanks again to all the Prize and Award sponsors, donors and helpers for the competitions; the adjudicators, namely Ellie Lai, Lynn Wong, and Zhou Guixin; James Quah for photography; Soon King for video recording assisted by Reyes Tan in live streaming; Chua Meei Tyng for music and video coordination; Tan Yee Min for coordinating the scores of competitors; Kathryn Chew our emcee, Priscilla Yong, Kong Ke Xin, Nora Ridzwan, Ong Li Ling, and Wong Yit Fook at front house and backstage; Irene Low with membership; Katy Cheong and especially Ho Kah Yeng, the chairperson of the 23rd Solo Classical Ballet Competition Organizing Committee. Last but not least, heartfelt thanks to our Honorary Patron, YAM Tunku Dara Tunku Tan Sri Naquiah for honouring us with her presence at the Finals and prize presentation.

We specially thank Ballet Theatre Malaysia, Xin Basic Wear, Janell Dance Shop, Luv Ballet Sdn Bhd, Sonata Dancewear and Formdance Marketing Sdn Bhd for supporting the aims of The Dance Society of Malaysia by sponsoring local minor awards and gifts. These have made up as substitution as there were no overseas workshops awarded and no foreign judges were invited due to the pandemic restrictions.

Prizes and Awards 2022

Category 1

Age 19 & above (en pointe)

1st	RM1,200.00
	Sponsor : In Memory of William Chan Poh Ann, Dec'd
2nd	RM 800.00
	Sponsor : In Memory of William Chan Poh Ann, Dec'd
3rd	RM 500.00
	Sponsor : Sonata Dancewear Malaysia
4th	RM 200.00

Special Awards

Dancesnap - Sansha Award (Modern)

Prize value worth RM 300.00. (Sponsor: Dancenap Production Sdn Bhd).

Sunny Chan Award

Prize value worth RM 200.00.

Ballet Theatre Malaysia Award

1 week company class for 1 winner

JaneL Dance Shop Award

1 no. RM100.00 cash voucher + 2 nos. tights

Sonata Dancewear Malaysia Award

2 nos. of RM50.00 cash voucher

Xin Basic Wear Award

1 no. of RM100.00 cash voucher

Luv Ballet Sdn Bhd Award

1st RM100.00 product voucher

2nd RM80.00 product voucher

3rd RM50.00 product voucher

4th RM40.00 product voucher

Xin Basic Wear Encouragement Award

15% discount vouchers on all items to all Finalists.

Category 2

Age 16 to 18 (en pointe)

1st	RM1,000.00
	Sponsor : In Memory of William Chan Poh Ann, Dec'd
2nd	RM 800.00
3rd	RM 500.00
	Sponsor : Sonata Dancewear Malaysia
4th	RM200.00
	Sponsor : Sandra Ong
5th	Book from Sunny Chan
6th	Book from Sunny Chan

Special Awards

Sunny Chan Award

Prize value worth RM 200.00.

Ballet Theatre Malaysia Award

1 week company class for 1 winner

2 nos. ticket for performance on 25th Dec 2021

JaneL Dance Shop Award

1 no. RM100.00 cash voucher + 2 nos. tights

Sonata Dancewear Malaysia Award

2 nos. of RM50.00 cash voucher

Xin Basic Wear Award

1 no. RM100.00 cash voucher

Luv Ballet Sdn Bhd Award

1st RM100.00 product voucher

2nd RM80.00 product voucher

3rd RM50.00 product voucher

4th RM40.00 product voucher

5th RM30.00 product voucher

6th RM 30.00 product voucher

Formdance Marketing Sdn Bhd

2nd 1 no. RM50.00 product voucher

Xin Basic Wear Encouragement Award

15% discount vouchers on all items to all Finalists.

Category 3

Age 13 to 15 (en pointe)

1st	RM1,000.00
	Sponsor : In Memory of William Chan Poh Ann, Dec'd
2nd	RM 800.00
3rd	RM 500.00
	Sponsor : Ms Ong Hooi Koon
4th	RM200.00
5th	Book from Sunny Chan
6th	Book from Sunny Chan
7th	DVD from Sunny Chan's collection

Special Awards

Sunny Chan Award

Prize value worth RM 200.00.

Ballet Theatre Malaysia Award

2 nos. ticket for performance on 25th Dec 2021

JaneL Dance Shop Award

1 no. RM100.00 cash voucher

Sonata Dancewear Malaysia Award

3 nos. of RM50.00 cash voucher

Xin Basic Wear Award

1 no. of RM100.00 cash voucher

Luv Ballet Sdn Bhd Award

1st RM100.00 product voucher

2nd RM80.00 product voucher

3rd RM50.00 product voucher

4th RM40.00 product voucher

5th RM30.00 product voucher

6th RM 30.00 product voucher

Formdance Marketing Sdn Bhd

2nd 1 no. RM50.00 product voucher

Xin Basic Wear Encouragement Award

15% discount vouchers on all items to all Finalists.

Category 4

Age 10 to 12 (en demi pointe)

1st	RM 800.00
	Sponsor : In Memory of William Chan Poh Ann, Dec'd
2nd	RM 600.00
3rd	RM 300.00
	Sponsor : Ms Alicia Lim
4th	RM200.00
	Sponsor : In Memory of William Chan Poh Ann, Dec'd
5th	Book from Sunny Chan
6th	Book from Sunny Chan
7th	DVD from Sunny Chan's collection

Special Awards

Sunny Chan Award

Prize value worth RM 200.00.

Ballet Theatre Malaysia Award

2 nos. ticket for performance on 25th Dec 2021

JaneL Dance Shop Award

1 no. RM100.00 cash voucher

Sonata Dancewear Malaysia Award

3 nos. of RM50.00 cash voucher

Xin Basic Wear Award

1 no. of RM100.00 cash voucher

Luv Ballet Sdn Bhd Award

1st RM100.00 product voucher

2nd RM80.00 product voucher

3rd RM50.00 product voucher

4th RM40.00 product voucher

5th RM30.00 product voucher

6th RM 30.00 product voucher

Formdance Marketing Sdn Bhd

2nd 1 no. RM50.00 product voucher

Xin Basic Wear Encouragement Award

15% discount vouchers on all items to all Finalists.

Judges



Lynn Wong, Zhou Guixin, Ellie Lai, Sunny Chan
Photo by Kong Ke Xin



Ellie Lai, Sunny Chan, Patron YAM Tunku Dara Naquiah,
Katy Cheong, Lynn Wong, Zhou Guixin.
Photo by James Quah



Patron YAM Tunku Dara Naquiah and Sunny Chan.
Photo by James Quah

CATEGORY 1



1st Prize
Sonata Dancewear Malaysia Award
Ballet Theatre Malaysia Award
Luv Ballet Sdn Bhd Award
 Neo Kharsyn (20)
La Bayadere Act 2
(Gamzatti Variation)
Raga Moves
 Teacher: Yap Lee Ya

2nd Prize
Dancenap-Sansha Award (Modern Dance)
JaneL Dance Shop Award
Sonata Dancewear Malaysia Award
Luv Ballet Sdn Bhd Award
 Emer Leyla bt Ridzuan (18)
Coppelia Act 3
(Swanhilda Variation)
Algrid
 Teacher: Choong Wan Chin

3rd Prize
JaneL Dance Shop Award
Luv Ballet Sdn Bhd Award
 Lim Jing Xuan (22)
Don Quixote Act 1
(Quiteria Variation)
Incalescene
 Teacher: Violet Hong, Alfren Salgado

4th prize
Xin Basic Wear Award
Luv Ballet Sdn Bhd Award
 Esther Feng (19)
Paquita Pas De Trois
(1st Girl Variation)
Incalescene
 Teacher: Violet Hong, Alfren Salgado

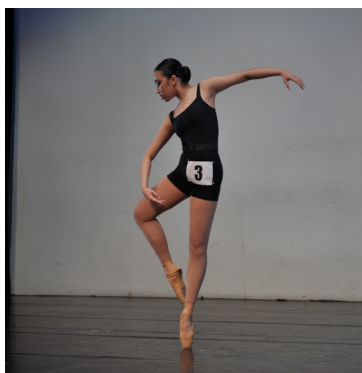


Sunny Chan Award
 Leong Xu Xin (18)
La Bayadere Act 3
(3rd Shade Variation)
Home
 Teacher: Choong Wan Chin



Finalist
JaneL Dance Shop Award
 Ban Elsa (18)
Don Quixote Act 1
(Quiteria Variation)
Incalescene
 Teacher: Priscilla Yong Chui Leng

CATEGORY 2



1st prize
Ballet Theatre Malaysia Award
Luv Ballet Sdn Bhd Award
 Alisha Anya Indran (16)
Don Quixote Act 3
(Kitri Variation)
Raga Moves
 Teacher: Sandra Christian

2nd prize
Sonata Dancewear Malaysia Award
Luv Ballet Sdn Bhd Award
Formdance Marketing Sdn Bhd Award
 Seow Sze Yung Keith (16)
Swan Lake Act 3
(Siegfried Variation)
Voyage
 Teacher: Ang Swee Peng

3rd prize
Sonata Dancewear Malaysia Award
Xin Basic Wear Award
Luv Ballet Sdn Bhd Award
 Ashley Kook Shin You (15)
Swan Lake Act 3
(Odile Variation)
Incalescene
 Teacher: Yap Pui Mun

4th prize
Ballet Theatre Malaysia Award
Luv Ballet Sdn Bhd Award
 Yap Pei Ying (16)
La Esmeralda
(Esmeralda Variation)
Algrid
 Teacher: Ooi Mee Kean



5th Prize
JaneL Dance Shop Award
Luv Ballet Sdn Bhd Award
 Tan Yu Xin (16)
Don Quixote Act 2
(Dulcinea Variation)
Home
 Teacher: Janice Khoo Liew Kee

6th Prize
JaneL Dance Shop Award
Luv Ballet Sdn Bhd Award
 Jaime Teoh Jia Qi (16)
Coppelia Act 3
(Swanhilda Variation)
Raga Moves
 Teacher: Ivy Chung Win Yin

Finalist
Sunny Chan Award
 Tan Kah Him Daniel (16)
Swan Lake Act 3
(Siegfried Variation)
Voyage
 Teacher: Ooi Mee Kean

Finalist
JaneL Dance Shop Award
 Alene Tan E-Thong (16)
La Bayadere Act 3
(3rd Shade Variation)
Incalescene
 Teacher: Ong Li Ling

CATEGORY 3



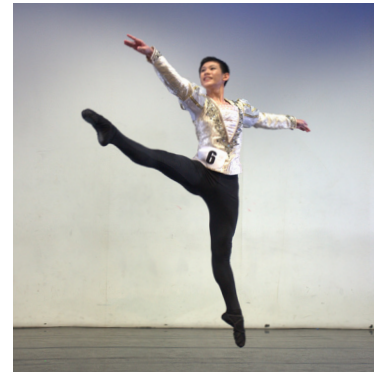
1st Prize
Xin Basic Wear Award
Luv Ballet Sdn Bhd Award
 Kyra Wong Xun Yue (14)
Diana and Acteon
 (Female Variation)
 Teacher: Ivy Chung Win Yin



2nd Prize
JaneL Dance Shop Award
Luv Ballet Sdn Bhd Award
Formdance Marketing Sdn Bhd Award
 Kok Jia Wei (13)
Grand Pas Classique
 (Female Variation)
 Teacher: Fion Too Wei Qin



3rd Prize
Luv Ballet Sdn Bhd Award
 Oswin Tan Jun Hang (13)
Raymonda Act 3
 (Brienne Variation)
 Teacher: Ooi Mee Kean



4th Prize
Luv Ballet Sdn Bhd Award
 Andy Hang Wen Bin (13)
Raymonda Act 3
 (Brienne Variation)
 Teacher: Yap Pui Mun



5th Prize
Sonata Dancewear Malaysia Award
Luv Ballet Sdn Bhd Award
 Ryan Chai Zhi Xuen (14)
Genzano
 (Male Variation)
 Teacher: Choong Wan Chin



6th Prize
Sunny Chan Award
Sonata Dancewear Award
Luv Ballet Sdn Bhd Award
 Tan Jun Hee (15)
Giselle Act 1
 (3rd Peasant Variation)
 Teacher: Choong Wan Chin



7th Prize
Consolation Winner
Sonata Dancewear Malaysia Award
 Lim Ern Qi (14)
Grand Pas Classique
 (Female Variation)
 Teacher: Ivy Chung Wan Yin



Finalist
Ballet Theatre Malaysia Award
 Orianne San Jing Eu (13)
The Talisman
 (Female Variation)
 Teacher: Sia Yee Woon, Sri Wahyuni Bok, Lew Siew Ting

CATEGORY 4



1st Prize
Luv Ballet Sdn Bhd Award
 Lim Jong Yi (11)
The Talisman
 (Female Variation)
 Teacher: Choong Wan Chin



2nd Prize
Luv Ballet Sdn Bhd Award
Formdance Marketing Sdn Bhd Award
 Chan Jia Xin (12)
Fairy Doll Variation
 (Female Variation)
 Teacher: Chok Li Teng, Chok Li Mun



3rd Prize
Luv Ballet Sdn Bhd Award
 Hazeefa Hawa (12)
Giselle Act 2
 (1st Peasant Variation)
 Teacher: Heidi Hiew



4th Prize
Luv Ballet Sdn Bhd Award
 Yap Yi Ki (11)
Diana and Acteon
 (Female Variation)
 Teacher: Ivy Chung Wing Yin

CATEGORY 4



5th Prize
Luv Ballet Sdn Bhd Award
 Ariel Foong Jia Yee (11)
Giselle Act 2
 (1st Peasant Variation)
 Teacher: Yap Pui Mun



6th Prize
Luv Ballet Sdn Bhd Award
 Khoo Gene Xy (10)
Fairy Doll Variation
 (Female Variation)
 Teacher: Nisha Lor



7th Prize
Ballet Theatre Malaysia Award
 Woo Yi Sum (12)
Diana and Acteon
 (Female Variation)
 Teacher: Doris Chong



Sunny Chan Award
Janel Dance Shop Award
 Cassandra Mok Yi Xuan (10)
The Talisman
 (Female Variation)
 Teacher: Chan Sook Heng



Sonata Dancewear Malaysia Award
 Chia Izelle (10)
Grand Pas Classique Variation
 (Female Variation)
 Teacher: Ivy Chung Wing Yin



Sonata Dancewear Malaysia Award
 Yeoh Kah Ling (12)
Fairy Doll Variation
 (Female Variation)
 Teacher: Hanaa Tan, Sri Wahyuni Bok,
 Lew Siew Ting



Xin Basic Wear Award
 Kok Zi Xin (12)
Swan Lake Act 1
 (2nd Pas De Trois Variation)
 Teacher: Yap Pui Mun



Sonata Dancewear Malaysia Award
 Gaby Chong Yue Hui (12)
Giselle Act 2
 (1st Peasant Variation)
 Teacher: Hanaa Tan, Sri Wahyuni Bok,
 Lew Siew Ting

Finalists CATEGORY 4



Jenevie Lee Sue Mae



Sophia Ong Li-Mei



Annabelle Wong Jia Qi

Finalists CATEGORY 3



Lee Jia Ern



Lim Zi Yu



Low Jia Swenn



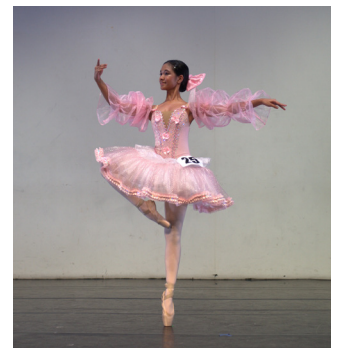
Natania Nasran Leng



Ng Jia Ru



Christina Ong Li Anne



Dhanika Sunthar



Kathryn Chew, Too Cyn Dee, Lynn Wong, Zhou Guixin, Sunny Chan, Ellie Lai, Ho Kah Yeng, Tan Yee Min, Priscilla Yong



Too Cyn Dee, Sunny Chan, Ellie Lai, Zhou Gui Xin, Lynn Wong



Chua Meei Tyng and Ho Kah Yeng

Photos by courtesy of James Quah, Kathryn Chew, Tan Yee Min & Kong Ke Xin.

Special Performance by Ballet Theatre Malaysia



Yui Kyotani and Ben Cook performing
Don Quixote Act 3 Grand Pas De Deux. Photos by James Quah

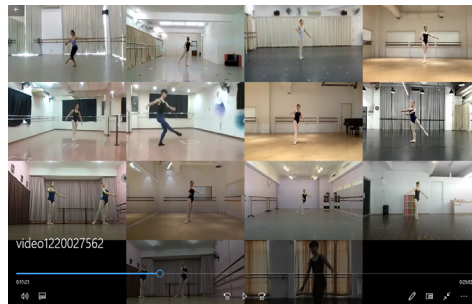


Rino Fujihashi and Dominic Lor performing
Talisman Grand Pas De Deux. Photos by James Quah

Virtual Enchainment Class by Ms Layna Chan & Ms Too Cyn Dee



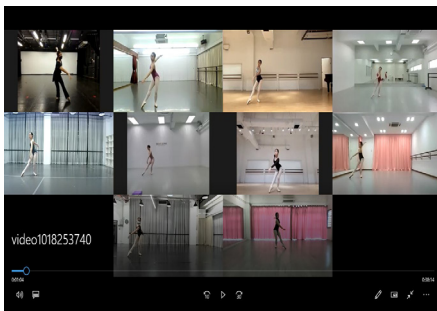
Ms Layna Chan conducting virtual enchainment
class via Zoom for Category 2 and 3



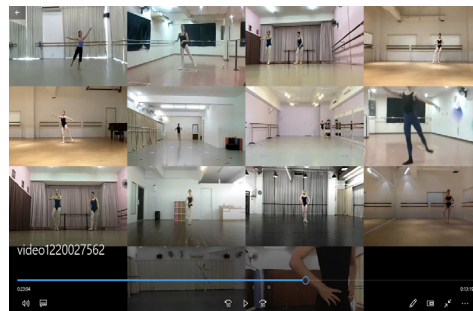
Category 2 participants



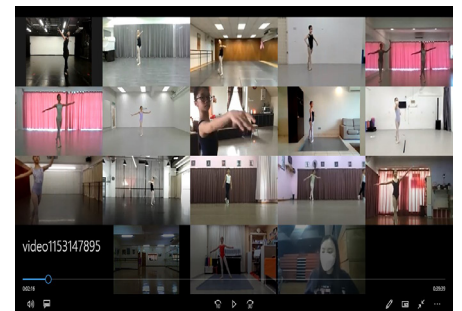
Ms Too Cyn Dee conducting virtual
enchainment class via Zoom for Category 4



Ms Too Cyn Dee conducting virtual
enchainment class via Zoom for Category 1



Category 2 participants



Ms Too Cyn Dee conducting virtual
enchainment class via Zoom for Category 4

When Ballet Meets Contemporary

“Wild Flower” Choreographed by Mr Alfren Salgado performed at Petaling Jaya Performing Arts Theatre (PJPAC) on 26th December 2021



Full Cast of “Wild Flower” dancers

From an experienced professional dancer of over 12 years to a recent artistic director and choreographer, Mr Alfren Salgado hailing all the way from Manila (Philippines) unfailingly brings forward his passion for dance and unlock many new roles along the way of becoming a ballet educator in Malaysia. Below are Mr Salgado’s reflections and appreciation regarding participating in “When Ballet Meets Contemporary Dance”.

“First of all, thanks to Ms. Hoh May Yee, the producer of La Danza Theatre, for inviting Dancelink Performing Arts to participate in the performance “ When Ballet meets contemporary dance”.

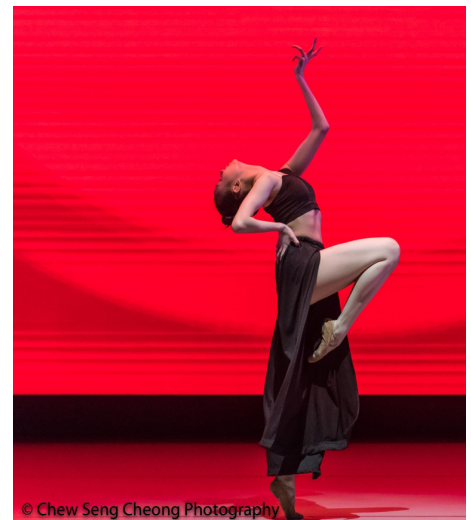
By receiving the invitation, Dancelink has decided to grab this valuable opportunity to showcase how passionate our students are, especially after a long period of lockdown due to the covid-19. They are desirous to get back to the studio immediately and crave to perform on stage again.

Behind the meaning of the dance “Wild Flower”, is inspired by the strength, power and confidence that lies within women. The students who represent as flowers are wild but charming in a sense. The choreography of this dance has its own zest of enthusiasm, but at the same time has its quality of elegant appearance. Adding on, this dance is my own interpretation of the immeasurable potential in women when the students executed the demanding dance steps that are usually danced by men.

After a few rehearsals, and 2 shows, we were so impressed with the power of calling where choreographers and dancers gathered together to make the performance “When Ballet Meets Contemporary Dance” successful. Regardless of country, religion, age and language, or different types of dance or base we are, we all share the same goal - which is to dance where it links us all together.”



“Wild Flower” dancers performing in the theatre of Petaling Jaya Performing Arts Center (PJPAC).



Dancer Ashlyn Lim.
Photo by Chew Seng Cheong

Ballet Theatre Malaysia: A Triumphant Debut in a Dangerous Time

Article written by Bilqis Hijjas in Critics Republic on 5th February 2022

To get a ballet company on stage in this era so many things must go right, and so few may go wrong.

For its maiden performance, the fledgling Ballet Theatre Malaysia (BTM) not only had to contend with the chronic challenges of starting a professional dance company in Malaysia — lack of support from the government, small audiences, downward pressure on ticket prices, widespread social disapproval of dance as a professional career — it also had to combat the immediate challenges of Covid. 24 dancers trained and rehearsed under strict distanced and masked measures, coming together on stage without masks only at the last minute, and then undertook 5 performances over 10 days without a single person testing positive for Covid.

BTM achieved this herculean task with great luck and a propitious combination of the right format, experience, skills and resources. BTM artistic director Choong Wan Chin had previously trialled the combination of international ballet stars in lead roles with locally-trained dancers in supporting roles via her pickup company KL Danceworks and its many glittering galas at Istana Budaya. Datin Jane Lew, BTM chair, brings decades of experience as a ballet teacher and studio owner, as well as the crown jewel of Damansara Performing Arts Centre, which she owns and which has been a favourite venue for dance since its opening in 2013. Together they attracted international professional dancers Yui Kyotani and Ben Cook to provide some duet dazzle and to raise the barre in terms of technique. And finally they managed to garner the finest dancers from Malaysia's current crop of ballet hopefuls.



Yui Kyotani as Kitri in Don Quixote. Photo by Chew Seng Cheong

With all the accompanying risks and unknowns, BTM rightly stuck to safe programming choices for its premiere season. It opened with Act 1 of Don Quixote, a colourful story ballet with plenty of scope for the corps de ballet as happy villagers and for Kyotani and Cook to perform some technical fireworks. For added audience satisfaction, local ballet veterans James Quah hammed it up as Sancho Panza, and Choo Tee Kuang featured as the innkeeper Lorenzo. James Kan was magnificent as the moustache-twirling villain Gamache — the casting felt so perfect, he should never dance anything else.

But Yui Kyotani stole the show as the coquette Kitri, as Kitri always should. With her beautiful leg extensions, and charming epaulement — batting her eyelashes over her shoulder, shrugging nonchalantly when her lover ignores her — you can't help having fun when Kyotani's working so hard to make sure that you do.



Emer Leyla Ridzuan in Impromptu. *Photo by Joie Koo*

The second work in the show — Impromptu, a contemporary ballet choreographed by Choong Wan Chin — was delicately designed to highlight the strengths of its featured dancers. Four women in soft shoes and dove grey shifts spun, rolled, wafted and receded like waves across the shadowy stage. Guest artist Chang Huey Sze, a local ballet competition star in the mid 2000s, brought gravitas and dramatic sensitivity to the work, and provided a good model for young Ashley Kook, who has the technique (including some neat batterie) but doesn't quite grasp the soul of the dance yet.

One of the great joys of watching a new ballet company is encountering talented dancers for the first time. Perhaps more than in any other dance form, a ballet company sinks or swims on the strength of its soloists.

I admit I had great expectations for Emer Leyla Ridzuan, one of BTM's three apprentices and the only Malay dancer in the entire show. For a Muslim woman to excel in ballet in Malaysia — to have the drive and the fortitude to withstand the negative peer pressure, and the good fortune to have a family that supports her emotionally and financially in this most expensive of hobbies — is akin to how difficult it is for men to excel in ballet in the West. It is a cause for celebration in itself.

Leyla did not disappoint. She has strong technique and neat feet, secure on her pointes and in total control. While she shows maturity and steadiness, she also has surprising speed and a spunky energy. In Impromptu, her legs proved beautifully expressive instruments of accent and attack.

But apprentice Chen Jia Yin was one of the greatest discoveries of the show. Wonderfully musical, she understands exactly what each beat of the music is for. She knows how to use her head, quite spectacularly on renversé turns in Don Quixote, and she simply radiates energy. Also a convincing actress who is not afraid to use her face, her natural comic chemistry with James Kan almost stole Kyotani's thunder in Don Q.



James Kan, Yui Kyotani and Choo Tee Kuang in Don Quixote.
Photo by Joie Koo



Chen Jia Yin and Ben Cook in Don Quixote. *Photo by Joie Koo*

The final work, choreographed by Wan Chin to a Bruch violin concerto, opted for a grand pas classique: a suite of dances often showcasing standard academic moves in solos, duets, and group dances, and concluding with a triumphal group coda. Artistically this is a safe preference, but technically it can be risky. In short tutus and without storyline characters, there is nowhere for dancers to hide in a grand pas, and certain limitations of technique and rehearsal became evident (a synchronous dance for three couples was particularly precarious). But there were many moments of pure pleasure too, including Leyla making the most of a musical climax with a series of huge jeté leaps, and some trusting and attuned partnering between Ben Cook and Yui Kyotani.



Yui Kyotani and Ben Cook in Bruch Violin Concerto. *Photo by Joie Koo*

With Spectrum, BTM has made a brave start, and in the context of the pandemic their debut is nothing short of a triumph. But the road to starting a professional ballet company in Malaysia is littered with the fallen. Many have tried, none have succeeded. For the sake of ballet in Malaysia, I pray that BTM has indeed hit upon the perfect formula, that they will provide a platform for the best ballet talent in Malaysia for years to come, and that Malaysian audiences will continue to be enchanted and delighted by its judicious mix of ballet favourites and new works.



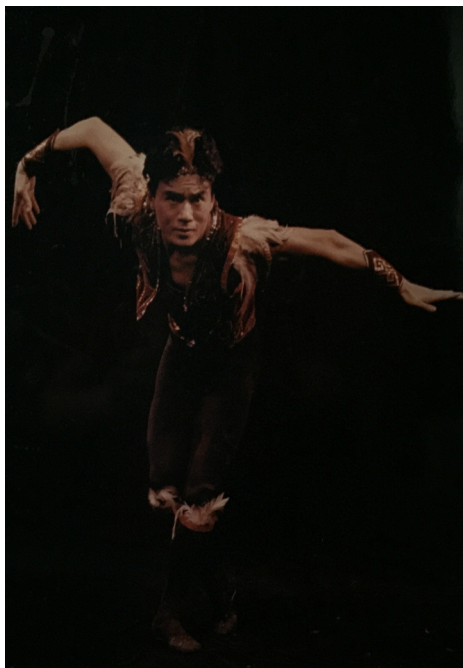
Stage Rehearsal of Bruch Violin Concerto with company artist Dominic Lor, apprentice Leong Xu Xin and scholars. *Photo by Joie Koo*

Personally, I can't wait to see Jia Yin and Leyla spur each other on to greater heights in future BTM productions.

The highlight of Spectrum for me was a moment during the grand pas when a group of corps girls ran around in a circle like swans, their pointe shoes going clack-clack-clack on the stage floor. In ballet, this is an unwanted effect — it reminds the audience that they are watching flesh and blood creatures wearing canvas shoes stiffened with glue, not ethereal spirits slippered with moonlight. It's generally the first thing to get edited out in any video version of a ballet, creating the friction-free version of dance that we view on our screens. So to be able to hear it live and unmediated, while sitting in a darkened theatre surrounded by friends of the dance, made me feel like the luckiest person alive. And if this is the only time I ever get to see Ballet Theatre Malaysia perform, I am still truly grateful.

Meet our Judges

Diving into our panel of judges' sophisticated personal experience and revisiting nostalgic history



Mr Zhou on stage

ZHOU GUIXIN

Dance has been the essence of Zhou's life, his career has brought him from the rural of Qingdao, a beautiful seaside town, to the elite Beijing Dance Company. A far-fetched dream for many but he turned that dream to reality at the age of 17. Through sheer hard work, determination and persistence with evidence of a dented floorboard in his house caused by his relentless hours of practicing pirouettes!

Being the youngest member and in the lower rank of the company, he made a pact with himself that he would not return home to see his family until he becomes the Principal Dancer in the company. Inevitably, this came with sacrifices amongst which were instances where after some evening performances, he would return to the studio to do more practices into the wee hours of the nights. Once, his room-mate found him asleep in the studio, soaked in sweat.

During Chinese New Year holidays, when everyone was home celebrating, he was alone practicing in the studio. After 3 years, his hard work paid off and was promoted to Principal. Among his colleagues, he had earned the reputation of executing 25 turns in a pirouette!

It is almost impossible to talk about a dance career without talking of injuries. During one of his solos, as he made a leap onto the stage, he heard a popping sound in his knee and a piercing pain swept through his body. The only thought in his mind was, "I cannot let the audience down". So, he continued dancing with a broken knee for the next 4 minutes. When the curtain closed, he crashed to the ground. That was the first time. When the second and third time happened to the other knee, he was told by surgeons that he would not be able to dance again. He was absolutely devastated but defied all odds, with iron rods in each knee caps, he rose and danced again! He had one more dream to fulfil and that was to stage the first ever solo male performance. In 1990, he achieved this glorious dream and the performance was televised throughout the country. The audience was moved to tears not only by his excellent performance but also by his spirit and love for the pursuit of dance.



Mr Zhou and Ms Ellie performing
Sleeping Beauty Act 3 Grand Pas De Deux together on stage

Zhou was not only a dancer of a high calibre but also a poet who has published 100 poems in his anthology. Here, he would like to share a short verse from one of his poems: -

Up on the stage I call upon
Life through dance
Spirit through spins
Emotions through moves
To uphold the true, the good and the beautiful.



Ms Ellie and students in ballet class

ELLIE LAI

When I was 9 years old my Mum brought me to ballet classes as a way of exercising and in hope to strengthen me, as I was a sickly child. Those weekly classes soon turned into a hobby where I had classes 3 times a week. Before I knew it, I was having private lessons every day in my own house with a Polish teacher. By the time I turned 13, I knew I wanted ballet to be my career and not just a hobby.

Fortunately, my parents were very supportive and at that tender age they sent me to Tring Park School of the Performing Arts, a boarding school in the U.K. where extensive dance training as well as a strong academic education were provided. I truly enjoyed my 4 years there!

My next dream was to be accepted into The Royal Ballet School. On the actual day of my audition, I got to know that out of thousands of students, they only wanted 30 students that year. As I was doing the barre, I thought to myself, "How am I, this little Asian girl, going to make myself stand out amongst the many beautiful talented long-legged girls?!" Then, I remembered this quote from one of my teachers, "You have to feed the audience, you have to touch their hearts with expressive dance quality!" From then on, I just danced my heart out and did not think much of technique, it was secondary. Somehow, I just trusted my body to do what it was required to do after all the years of training. The 2 years there were extremely intense yet fulfilling.



Ms Ellie on stage

Getting into a professional company was the dream come true. My first was in Europe where I danced for 3 years. Then I had the privilege of being one of the founder members with the Singapore Dance Theatre, the newly-named Singapore Ballet. Some wonderful years of dancing professionally and touring around Asia and Australia. It came with obstacles; I had a virus infection that numbed my spine and legs. The doctors were baffled and could not tell when or whether I would recover from it. The most terrifying time of my life but I continued to work out in my hospital bed and believed that one day I could walk again. My prayers were answered when I recovered after a month. The other ordeal was when I fractured my ankle during class. This injury healed in time and I was able to dance again.

So, to all young dancers out there, with a strong mind over matters, there is nothing that you cannot overcome. Pursue your dreams with your hearts and minds, and you can and will achieve what you want in life!

TDS Master Class

Zoom Virtual Master Class by Ms Fifi Sijangga of Marlupi Dance Academy on 19th October 2021



Ms Fifi Sijangga

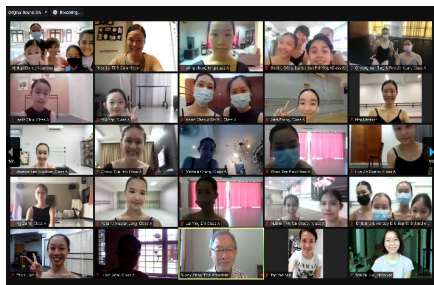
TDS organized a Virtual Master Class originally conducted by Ms Claresta Alim from Marlupi Dance Academy on the 19th of October 2021. However, she wasn't feeling at her best on that day, Ms Fifi Sijangga had gladly stepped in to teach the Master Class for two classes of participants of different age groups.

Class A that consisted of 33 participants from RAD Intermediate Foundation to Advance 2 Level began their 1 hour and 30 minutes of technique class and 30 minutes of pointe work class from 11am to 12.45pm with 6 observers paying attention to the structure and knowledge that has been shared in class.



Ms Fifi Sijangga leading Body Conditioning Class assisted by Marlupi Dance Academy students.

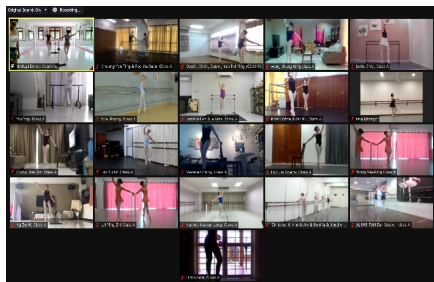
After an hour of break, Class B that consisted of 13 participants from RAD Grade 3-5 started with 30 minutes of body conditioning class followed by 1 hour of technique class. There were also with 6 teachers from various ballet schools observing the class.



Class A participants (RAD Intermediate Foundation to Advanced 2 equivalent Level)

Participants:

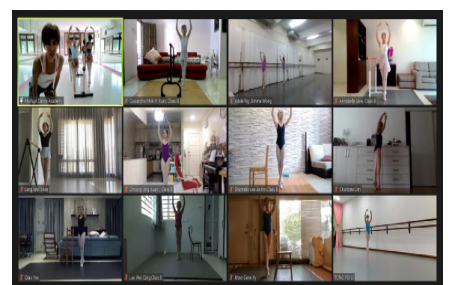
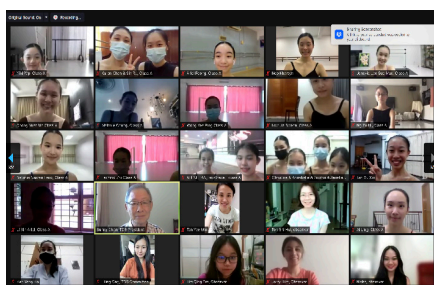
Natania Nasran Leng, Christina Ong Li Anne, Ng Zu Ni, Sophia Ong Li- Mei, Annabelle Wong Jia Qi, Chia Izelle, Ariel Foong Jia Yee, Melanie Chong Hue Sim, Chong Yuet Xin, Neo Kharsyn, Cheong Yan Ting, Foo Jia Xuan, Tan Yu Xin, Chan Jia Xin, Lee Sin Ru, Nicole Tan, Yap Pei Ying, Yap Yi Ki, Li Xin Ariel, Jenelle Ho Yi Tzuen, Tan Kah Him, Wong Yee Ping, Hafeezah Hawa, Os-win Tan Jun Hang, Olivia Tan Xuan Thun, Lai Ying Zhi, Jenevie Lee Sue Mae, Adeline Liew Ern Qi, Alene Tan E-Thong, Wong Chung Teng, Grace Tan Yoke Hui, Low Jia Swenn, Goh Ai-Ling



Class B participants (RAD Grade 3 to Grade 5 equivalent Level)

Participants:

Choong Jing Xuan, Tong Pei Ci, Marissa Ling Deying, Leng Wei Shan, Adele Ng Syuen En, Lee Wei Qing, Khoo Gene Xy, Annabelle Liew Ern Yi, Yu Qiao Yee, Emma Wong, Shantelle Lee, Cassandra Mok Yi Xuan, Charlotte Lim



33rd Annual General Meeting

**25th June 2021 @ 10.30am
Virtual Meeting via “Zoom”**

In light of the Covid-19 pandemic and in compliance with the SOP, this AGM was delayed and allowed to be held on a virtual platform only.

Members who wish to join the meeting were invited to register via the links: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7552365828?pwd=dFRlcmJdd1RUTmVJaW1nNlBJMkdEQT09>.

A quorum was achieved by 10:30am with attendance of a total 26 registered members

Office bearers elected :

President : Sunny Chan Hean Kee (Kuala Lumpur)
Vice President : Katy Cheong Thing Kin (Selangor)
Hon. Secretary : Priscilla Yong Chui Leng (Kuala Lumpur)
Hon. Treasurer : Kathryn Chew Yee Hsuen (Selangor)
Publication Officer : Kong Ke Xin (Kuala Lumpur)
Membership : Irene Low Soo Mei (Kuala Lumpur)

Committee Member :

Ho Kah Yeng (Kuala Lumpur), Tan Yee Min (Selangor), Lim Jeng Bing (Pahang), Koh Wen Yee (Melaka), Rosalina Ooi Poh Gaik (Perak), Chua Meei Sien (Terengganu), Galvin Foo Chwan Lee (Penang) and Wong Yit Fook (Negeri Sembilan), Ong Li Ling (Johor), Layna Chan (Sarawak) and Nora Ridzwan (Sabah).

The President wishes to thank all members of the previous Committee and all others not in the Committee for their contribution and commitment to The Dance Society of Malaysia as in the past year.

He also thanked all members of the previous Committee who have offered themselves to serve the Society for another year, and welcome additional Committee Members. He proposed acceptance and seconded by Tan Yee Min that the new Sub-Committee Members who shall assist those who head respective committees, as follows:

1. For Competition head by Ho Kah Yeng: Nora Ridzwan (Sabah), Layna Chan (Sarawak), Ong Li Ling (Southern region – Johor Bharu), Koh Wen Yee (Southern region – Melaka), Lim Jeng Bing (Eastern region – Pahang), Galvin Foo (Northern region – Penang), Chua Meei Sien (Northern region – Penang) and Loh Khai Sin (Northern region – Penang)
2. Workshop head by Tan Yee Min: Steve Goh (Kuala Lumpur) and Dominic Lor (Kuala Lumpur).

In view of no activities allowed since August 2020 to October 2021 due to the FMCO lockdown, TDS competition had to be postponed 4 times. Members who have registered for TDS competition in 2020 were allowed for their membership to be extended to 2021. Read more on the competition at TDS' 23 rd Solo Classical Ballet Competition write-up.

Meeting adjourned at 12:15pm.

Upcoming Events

<p>8th - 10th April 2022 Dance Appreciation Series 2022: Introduction to Coppélia Singapore Ballet Esplanade Theatre Studio, Singapore</p>	<p>22nd April - 1st May 2022 Raymonda Grand Pas Classique & CARMEN Ballet Theatre Malaysia Damansara Performing Arts Centre, Theatre</p>	<p>7th - 8th May 2022 Black and White City Ballet Academy Nero Event Space, PJPAC, 1 Utama E</p>
<p>September 2022 Ballet Theatre Malaysia GALA 2022 Ballet Theatre Malaysia Damansara Performing Arts Centre, Theatre</p>	<p>December 2022 Alice in the Wonderland Ballet Theatre Malaysia Damansara Performing Arts Centre, Theatre</p>	<p>23rd - 25th December 2022 Nutcracker and Clara's Dream City Ballet Academy and Pointe & Music Dance Academy Stage 1 Theatre, PJPAC</p>



Sunny Chan presenting contestants of Category 4.
Photo by James Quah



Sunny Chan presenting contestants of Category 4.
Photo by James Quah



Panel of Judges and Committee Members sorting out the score sheets behind the scenes.
Photo by Kong Ke Xin



Kathryn Chew as an emcee during Category 4 Awards Ceremony on 8th Dec 2021.
Photo by James Quah

TDS Membership

TDS LETTER is strictly for members only.
 Registration or renewal of membership is now online. Please visit our website: www.tdsmalaysia.com.my.
 For any queries on membership, kindly email to thedancesocietymalaysia@gmail.com.

The Dance Society of Malaysia

Registered Address:

No. 487, Jalan 17 / 17, 46400 Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia

Email: tdsmalaysia@gmail.com

MEMBERSHIP FORM

NAME (As in I/C or B/C): _____
(Please underline surname)

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SEX: ☐ (M or F) RELIGION: _____ MARITAL STATUS: _____

DATE OF BIRTH: (DD/MM/YY) PLACE OF BIRTH: _____

RESIDENT ADDRESS: _____ MAILING ADDRESS (if different from resident address): _____

POSTCODE: POSTCODE:

STATE: _____ STATE: _____

COUNTRY: _____ COUNTRY: _____

Tel.(House): Fax:

Tel.(Office): Mobile:

Email: _____

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- ☐ ADULT ORDINARY MEMBER - RM 60 per year
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2. **Cheque or Money Order** payable to THE DANCE SOCIETY OF MALAYSIA
Write your name and I/C No. on the reverse side.
3. **Cash** is acceptable when delivered by hand to the Membership Coordinator with issuance of receipt. Please DO NOT send cash through the post.

Submission of Application Form with cheque OR copy of bank-in receipt

By Post: _____ OR By Email Attachment: thedancesocietymalaysia@gmail.com
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