

Joyous movements amid a floral wonderland

DANCE

WHEN THE FLOWERS BLOOM

Singapore Chinese Dance Theatre
Black Box, Goodman Arts Centre
Last Friday

Melissa Quek

Stepping into the Black Box at Goodman Arts Centre for the performance *When The Flowers Bloom* felt like walking into a beautifully designed and intimate wedding venue.

This floral wonderland by the duo *HellofromFlour*, who first collaborated with the Singapore Chinese Dance Theatre (SCDT) last year for *If It's Now* at the Esplanade Annexe Theatre, had white chiffon hanging from above, giving a lightness to the dark space.

Flowers lining the edge of the stage and suspended above the audience wafted a faint scent of lilies in the cool air.

The peaceful scene, joyous dancing and melodious music conveyed an ethereal vibe and serenity throughout the triple bill.

The opening dance, *Chasing Winds: When Dandelions Fly* by creative director Benedict Soh, had a subtle lightness, a slight deviation from Soh's often more explosive choreography.

The dancers included artistic director Jenny Neo's son Chong Zhen Xu, a member of the school's performance troupe.

The 10-year-old's presence brought a gentle vulnerability to the work as he performed with a truthful expressivity and calm that surpassed his young age.

Dance must run in this family's blood as the next work, *Fragrance In Bloom*, was choreographed by founding artistic director Lim Moi Kim, who is also Neo's mother.

This was a vibrant and playful work filled with curving lines and swirling skirts.

It lacked the crisp precision that was usual of Lim's dances, but brought a sweet childlike feel to the evening.

A black curtain was pulled back, revealing yet another floral scene against a mirrored wall.

Company dancer Gabriella Gleichenia Gautama, reflected in the



Chasing Winds: When Dandelions Fly, which was part of the *When The Flowers Bloom* triple bill, was choreographed by Benedict Soh. PHOTO: STANLEY CHEE

mirror, responded to the myriad flowers with supple grace as she arched and bent her body.

Floral Symphony: An Inimitable Beauty choreographed by Neo was the final performance of the evening.

From this elegant solo, it developed into an energetic all-male segment with bodies slashing through the air in shooting jumps, lifts and suspended turns.

While the cast of the SCDT still came across as mostly unseasoned,

there was evidence of a growing maturity in its assurance on stage and performance quality.

If the dancers continue to train and perform with the company, audiences may finally see their artistry in full bloom.