

Nuts over this Nutcracker

review dance

THE NUTCRACKER

Singapore Dance Theatre
Esplanade Theatre
Last Friday

tara tan

Resplendent with snowy forests, cotton-candied tutus and dashing princes, the Singapore Dance Theatre's Christmas ballet was a jaunty affair.

Staged by the dance company's resident choreographer Jeffrey Tan, the story centred on Little Clara who dreamt that she rescued the nutcracker prince from the King of Mice.

With scampering little children as baby mice, shuffling angels and delicate Chinese tea girls, this Nutcracker was served with dollops of cuteness.

The Snowflake scene, with smoke gently billowing across the stage floor and white particles cascading onto the dancers, was particularly enchanting.

While Chihiro Uchida was charmingly girlish as Clara, the sure-footed and strong Natalie Clarke stole the show as the Sugar Plum Fairy. Executing precise pir-

ouettes, she glided with a regal and graceful air across the stage in a mesmerising performance.

The strength of the female leads showed up the relative inexperience of the younger male dancers. Clarke's partner, Chen Peng, looked wobbly next to her.

More theatrical than purely balletic, this Nutcracker leaned heavily on emotive gestures and drama. Ballet aficionados might yearn for more intricate choreography but

it was an enjoyable and easygoing production.

At the start, a scrolling projection fed audiences the entire storyline. It went on a little longer than necessary, but might be appreciated by audiences unfamiliar with the fairy tale.

The second half entertained with the cultural catwalk in the Land of Sweets. In celebration of Clara's bravery, there were little showcases by Spanish, Chinese and Russian dancers. The curving graces and stunts by the Arabian dancers delighted.

Watching this Christmas favourite with a 200-strong cast was like being tucked into bed after a warm glass of milk. There is some comfort in familiarity after all.

book it

THE NUTCRACKER

Who: Singapore Dance Theatre

Where: Esplanade Theatre

When: Dec 17 to 20, 8pm

Tickets: \$48 to \$138 from

Sistic (Call 6348-5555 or log

on to www.sistic.com.sg)



Gently billowing smoke and cascading white particles made the Snowflake scene particularly enchanting. PHOTO: DENNIS NG