

Art Zine Singapore

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The Nutcracker Review
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How about some good old-fashioned Christmas? Less of the price tags and catering menus, and more of the excitement and wonder in the eyes of a child.

SDT's The Nutcracker by Jeffrey Tan is one of those magical productions – a fantastic sleigh ride for children and grown-up kids alike, the dance woven together with convincing character acting and a brisk storyline that makes the two-hour ballet go by surprisingly quickly.

The engaging charm of little Clara (Chihiro Uchida) is the anchor that draws the audience through this production. Her enchantment is tangible right from the start, when toymaker Drosselmeyer presents an amazing mechanical flirtation of a Columbine (Natalie Clarke) and a soldier doll (Chen Peng), and when Clara creeps out to look for her nutcracker in the village square, only to find the Balanchinien Christmas tree growing eight metres tall, and embark on a journey with the benevolent Snow Queen (Sakura Shimizu).

There's wonderful drama and energy too, when Clara and her brother lead the village children in the rambunctious girls vs boys scuffle, and best of all the delightful action tableau of the Nutcracker prince (Robert Mills) and the toy soldiers' battle against the giant rats. The classic elegance of the around-the-world showcase in the Kingdom of Sweets was carried notably by the dramatic and sensuous Xia Hai Ying in the Arabian dance, Liu Xiao Mi's Spanish flair, as well as the endearing novelty of the Chinese Dance's bicycle bells and water sleeves, and the team of "Russian" acrobats who turn out to be all chinese... Park Na-Ri as the Sugar Plum Fairy in this cast was refined but outdone by her prince, Toru Okada, who sailed gallantly through jumps and turns as if he had quite mastered the forces of gravity.

In a ballet about children, great credit must go to the 200 student extras of this production. They were impressive in the challenging technical and dramatic parts, and made up for the small glitches of the company corps. It was wonderful to see that like Clara, these young dancers know that they have a dream worth dreaming.