

OF PAELLA AND PIROUETTES

The Spanish dish was an inspiration for a dance piece in this year's *Ballet Under the Stars*

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WHEN Jeffrey Tan tasted his first piquant plate of paella at "a small stone-built shop in Madrid" in November last year, he was beyond words.

Even now, when prompted on just how delicious the dish was, the 38-year-old assistant ballet master and resident choreographer at the Singapore Dance Theatre (SDT) can only sigh and offer: "It's very hard to describe."

The culinary critique may be cryptic, but audiences will certainly get a clearer impression of Tan's Spanish experience — he was there for a month-long training stint with the National Dance Company of Spain — at *Ballet Under The Stars* (Buts).

Presented by the SDT, it opens at Fort Canning Green this Friday.

Tan's latest work, *Breath Of Love*, debuts at the event, and will comprise seven



LORD OF THE DANCE: Choreographer Jeffrey Tan leads dancers from the Singapore Dance Theatre in a rehearsal for their performance in Friday's *Ballet Under the Stars*.

segments using five pairs of dancers.

He said the 20-minute "short, romantic dance piece representing different moods" is a more accessible spin on classical ballet — a sentiment that stays true to the event's breezy, picnic-friendly feel.

Breath of Love uses music by Juan del Enzina, which Tan says he first heard in May this year after receiving a few of the Span-

ish composer's CDs from a friend in Spain.

For dance aficionados, there is more to whet the appetite.

Also premiering at Buts is Edmund Stripe's *Piano Concerto In F Major*, another 20-minute piece that will feature seven female and nine male dancers on stage in what Stripe, the ballet master at Canadian ballet school Alberta Ballet, de-

scribed as a "fast-paced and exciting work".

"This choreography is the latest in an ongoing series of dance pieces I'm doing that's created to particular genres of music, from different composers throughout the ages," said Stripe.

If the Dimitri Shostakovich-composed music it's matched to sounds familiar, that's because the score was last featured in the Disney movie, *Fantasia 2000*.

Also new is a first-ever collaboration between SDT and local ethnic dance companies. The 30-minute event opener, *Roots Of Asia's Rhythm*, will feature traditional Indian, Chinese and Malay dances by Bhaskar's Arts Academy, Dance Ensemble Singapore, and Sri Warisan Som Said Performing Arts, respectively.

SDT hopes to attract 6,000 people this year — a number that is comparable to 2006's turnout.

WHAT: BALLET UNDER THE STARS

WHEN: JULY 20 TO 22

WHERE: FORT CANNING GREEN, TICKETS PRICED FROM \$16 TO \$21, AVAILABLE AT SISTIC, SDT'S OFFICE AT FORT CANNING OR AT THE DOOR