

Dimensions of dance by [sharmilla ganesan](#)



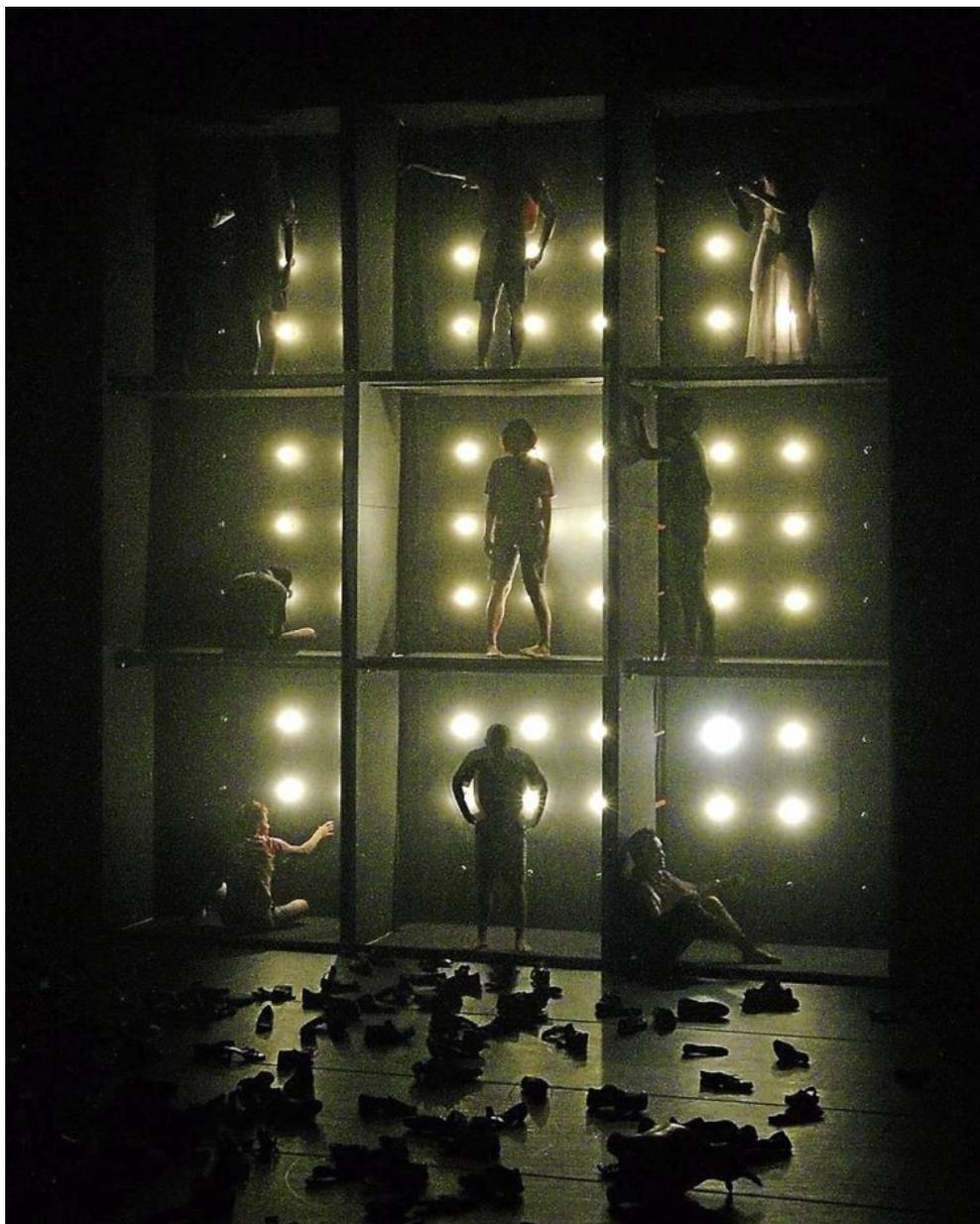
The choreography for 'Flatland' is both inventive and accessible, with a balance between strong dance vocabulary and a playfulness that serves the storyline well.

Dance, visuals and music come together perfectly in this thought-provoking production.

WHEN telling a story, it matters not how one may choose to do it, only that they do it with conviction. And that is precisely why *Flatland: An Adaptation In Dance* works so well. It may be a contemporary dance production, but it is also an extremely deft amalgamation of various elements – lighting, audio-visual and sound design – which all come together in just the right way to tell its story.

Created by performing arts company TerryandTheCuz in collaboration with local dancer/choreographer Suhaili Micheline and Australia-based The Rubix Cube, *Flatland* is adapted from the 1884 satirical novella by Edwin A. Abbott, where inhabitants of a flat two-dimensional world are convinced by the powers-that-be to think their world is all there is.

When the protagonist, a “square”, discovers the existence of different dimensions, issues of class, social hierarchy and control of information come to the forefront.



Dance with depth: *Flatland: An Adaptation In Dance* may be a contemporary dance production, but it is also an extremely deft amalgamation of various elements – lighting, audio-visual and sound design.

The reason this contemporary dance adaptation of *Flatland* works so well is because it uses Abbott's strong narrative as a frame within which various art forms can co-mingle to create something entirely unique. You do not need to know or even fully understand the original story to appreciate this production; thanks to the strength of its visual elements, the ideas resonate with you on a visceral level.

Suhaili's choreography for *Flatland* is both inventive and accessible, with a balance between strong dance vocabulary and a playfulness that serves the storyline well. While some parts are reminiscent of classic video games like Pac-Man or Tron, others allude to anime, and yet others are almost balletic in their tight movements.

Her usage of space and a keen eye for visually-interesting formations are also essential to bringing the concept of the various dimensions to life. Our introduction to *Flatland*, for instance – all angular movements and straight formations – not only displays the choreographic style of the entire show, but also cleverly depicts the class structures and hierarchy inherent in the storyline.

An accomplished dancer in her own right, Suhaili also does an impressive job playing the square, imbuing her movements with the necessary emotions to allow us to connect with the character. This is especially so when the

square is slowly made aware of the existence of other lands; her distress and confusion, and later expanding awareness, are keenly felt by the audience.

Playing various roles within the show are dancers Amandus Paul, Darren Ong, Fahezul Azri, Hariraam Lam, James Kan, Joshua Gui, Lu Wit Chin, Pengiran Qayyum, Syaffiq Hambali and Syafizal-Syazlee, who all put in admirable effort. While the ensemble dancers could occasionally do with more energy, and coordination was slightly lacking in some of the more complex routines, they are particularly impressive when it comes to executing the vastly different movements necessary to evoke each different dimension.

Meanwhile, light, sound and visuals use their own language to simultaneously tell *Flatland's* story. The lighting and visual design by TerryandTheCuz and Rob Stewart showcases some of the best work seen here in recent times, giving both boundaries and dimensions to the stage while using shifts between shadows and stark lighting to either emphasise or de-emphasise the differences between the various dancers onstage. Projections, meanwhile, cleverly capitalise on the geometric concept of the story, adding both visual excitement and depth to the narrative. The sound design by Stewart, too, is excellent, with its mix of dramatic instrumentals, techno beats and video game sounds giving the story an extremely contemporary and even futuristic feel; yet, the music also never fails to hit the right emotional note.

It is, however, in the way that all these elements come together that *Flatland's* beauty lies. In one utterly lovely scene, for instance, the square visits Spaceland, a land of three dimensions. Dancers in flowing white costumes execute ethereal, fluid movements to a throbbing, haunting score, against a hypnotic background of shifting circuit board-like lines, while the square tries in vain to mimic their movements despite its own angles.

It is a scene that doesn't require any explanation or even understanding of contemporary dance – like the best parts of the show, you simply feel it intensely.

**Flatland is currently playing at The Actors Studio @ KuAsh Theatre, Taman Tun Dr Ismail, Kuala Lumpur, at 8.30pm till Dec 14, and at 3pm on Dec 15. Tickets, priced at RM53 (adult) and RM38 (concession) are available at TicketPro (www.ticketpro.com.my), and at The Actors Studio @ KuAsh, Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre (Kuala Lumpur) and PenangPac @ Straits Quay (Penang). For more information, call 03-4047 9000, e-mail info@terryandthecuz.com or visit www.terryandthecuz.com.*