

Barefoot ballet with a message



Cerroni's dance troupe free from set ballet 'mould'

MODERN ballet for Patrizia Cerroni and her Danzatori Scalzi troupe from Rome has meant dancing barefoot.

It is an expression of liberating themselves from the clutches of the old and set mould of classical ballet.

"Our interpretation of modern ballet means moving away from certain traditional elements of the dance," Ms Cerroni said.

"But we do not only free ourselves psychologically, we free ourselves physically."

They do so by discarding their ballet shoes, the very act being symbolic of breaking away from the grasp of a time-honoured art.

The barefoot dancers' music too, has a very contemporary ring to it — with heavy jazz undertones.

And what else, when this brings together a bassist, percussionist and electronic music maestro who are all jazz artistes of calibre.

Ms Cerroni's choreography has been described as energetic and liberating and the performances have been lauded by critics worldwide as "abstract, modern, original and symbolic".

Six female dancers, with Ms Cerroni, performed *Divertissement* at Hotel Shangri-la on Sunday and yesterday night.

Malaysians who caught the show should deem themselves fortunate for the troupe flies off to Seoul today to perform *Divertissement* at the Olympics.

The dancers were invited to represent Italy at the Torch Greeting Festival, the ceremony that welcomes the sacred Olympic flame and promises to be a showcase for world-class performances from all over the globe.

Divertissement is a seven-part dance ritual in which Ms Cerroni has chosen to reflect fragments of everyday life.

"I try to portray human thoughts, feelings and emotions in my dance," she said.

"The body is the soul of a person's being but in dance, the soul succeeds in leaving the body. Every movement, every gesture expresses a symbolic meaning."

Ms Cerroni does not profess to tell stories or put across messages in her dance. Choreography to her is mainly a vigorous personal celebration of dance and of life.

Ms Cerroni, 37, was born in Rome and began learning classical ballet at the National Dance Academy under Jean Ce-

bron of the German school. She considers him a great influence on her dance career.

"He stimulated me to develop a language of my own and my own technique of movement," she said.

In New York, she learnt under the *avant garde* Americans Merce Cunningham and Pearl Lang, who contributed to enriching her technique and language.

At 21, she formed her first dance company, Danzatori Scalzi (The Barefoot Dancers of Rome), which has grown in number to 70 dancers.

After 14 years on the dance scene, she is still very much in her prime.

However, in *Divertissement*, she leaves all the dancing to her six young dancers and merely does vocal presentations in the form of scats.

This is not Ms Cerroni's first visit to Malaysia. She was here last November with her troupe for a two-day presentation of her dance 'Ladies and Gentlemen'.

"We were well-received and I liked the mood and feel of the place, which explains why I accepted the invitation to return for another performance," she said.



Patrizia Cerroni: Own philosophy of dance

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