1. **SHORT+SWEET WITH... BRANDON KHOO, DANCE ARTIST**

**WHAT'S YOUR PERSONAL TAKE ON THE THEMES AND MESSAGES IN PHENOUHENON?**

Brandon: “PheNoumenon is basically about looking out in order to look within. So I chose ‘modern technology’ as an avenue to explore looking outward... also, we know modern technology was created by humans to make life easy. At the same time it has also made humans obsess over it, and it gets hard to control.

“There’s a section in the piece that focuses on technology. I have the authority to control and manoeuvre around but slowly it drives me crazy and out of control.”

**WHICH ELEMENT OF THE WORK DO YOU LIKE MOST - OR, WHAT RESONATES WITH YOU?**

“I like the costumes most! Often in T.H.E’s work we don’t get to wear bright and rich colours and what’s more, it’s all skirts.”
“There’s a moment in the last section with Anthea that stays with me. Personally, my take is that the grass is always greener on the other side. So in our relationship (the virtual versus real world) it is as if we’re perpetually trying to cross over but can’t, so we end up meeting at the borderline.”

BIO
Brandon began his training in Chinese dance at Soka Gakkai Malaysia Association at age 13. A graduate of the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts’ (NAFA) Diploma in Dance Programme in 2015 he is a recipient of the NAFA scholarship for 2014 and 2015. As a student he worked with choreographer Viv Phua on a piece that won the Gold Medal at the Asia Youth Dance Festival 2013 in Hong Kong. At the 6th edition of Sprouts, he was awarded Best Dancer. Brandon joined T.H.E in July 2015.
2. A CHAT WITH... KLIEVERT MENDOZA, DANCE ARTIST

DESCRIBE YOUR ROLE / ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE OTHER CHARACTERS / DANCERS:

Klievert: “Antagonist and a creator of chaos.”

WHICH ELEMENT OF THE WORK DO YOU LIKE MOST - OR, WHAT RESONATES WITH YOU?

There is one scene in particular, where I’m just sitting down thinking and everyone else is moving around me. In the beginning it was just a regular scene, but when Kent came up with the music in a demon voice - yes I call it demon voice - it created a whole new atmosphere for me.

I won’t go into detail, but let’s just say I connect with it on a more personal level.

WHAT’S YOUR PERSONAL TAKE ON THE THEMES AND MESSAGES IN PHENOUHENON?

“A theme or message I can think of is that the piece tackles current events in the world. How the current/new generation is becoming slaves to technology (not all, but most), how climate change is rapidly affecting us all and how we rise and fall dramatically with overwhelming power and ranked status in society.”

BIO

A graduate of the Philippines High School for the Arts where he received the Outstanding Student Artist Award in 2015, Klievert joined the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts’ (NAFA) on the NAFA and MOE Discovery Scholarship. Graduating in 2018 with a Diploma in Dance (Distinction), he was named ‘Best Graduate’ and received the NAFA President Award. Klievert was the first Filipino to compete in the Youth America Grand Prix 2018, the world’s largest international student dance competition. At 17 he was awarded the Gold Medal in the pre-professional category of the 2014 Concours International De Danse Classique De Grasse in Paris, France. He was part of NAFA’s dance performance at the Opening Ceremony of the 8th ASEAN Para Games in Singapore. Klievert joined T.H.E in 2018.
3. CRACKING THE HOLLOW BODY CODE (OR, ATTEMPTS AT)

HOLLOW BODY: A WORK-IN-PROGRESS DEFINITION


TO GET YOU BETTER ACQUAINTED WITH IT WE PROVIDE THIS BASIC GUIDE — KNOW THAT LIKE ANY ART FORM, THIS IS AN EVOLVING STUDY AS MORE UNIQUE BODIES COME IN CONTACT WITH OUR TRAINING, AND APPLY IT FOR USE IN DIFFERENT SITUATIONS.

Artistic Statement: The body is the foundation that carries our world; dance is the basic need of life.

“Hollow Body” is the methodology advocated by T.H.E founding artistic director Kuik Swee Boon, seeking an alignment of Mind, Body and Heart. The body is the vessel that carries our thoughts, emotions and energy. At the same time it has its own needs, as well as the ability to transcend language and the logic of communication - in that the body can not deceive.

The artist’s job is to peel back the layers of hypocrisy in society, and reject unnecessary dogmas in order to return to simply being human. Dance the non-judgmental carrier of discussing all that is wonderful and imperfect, good and disheartening, and to bring us as a society closer to the deepest truths of this world. We believe that all individuals have the innate ability and right to access these tools fostering empathy and dialogue.

Based on this thinking the “Hollow Body” movement philosophy and training system was born.

Key tenet of “Hollow Body”:
It is an experiential process, not a dance aesthetic or style to be ‘achieved’, although T.H.E is using this find its physical identity.

In workshops, we emphasise first turning down the volume on your rational thinking mind, and to trust the ‘animal/creature’ or the instinctive, to take over. This means, to allow the subconscious world to appear before making choices. This however, is not done at the expense of other elements. Thus, the methodology also takes time and space to nurture:

- Awareness [of different states of inner needs and external conditions];
- Listening, Choosing and Exploring [between the physical, emotional (heart) and mental (mind) states; a journey];
- Flow [regulated yet free breath in a dialogue];

There are are work-in-progress objectives that practitioners move toward in the process of learning and practising “Hollow Body”.

One misconception that arises from the word “Hollow” is the association of zen-like emptiness. In fact, “Hollow Body” actively discourages neutrality or blankness. The practitioner is meant to arrive at an inner awareness of his or her questions, challenges and limitations that manifest during the process, and learn at their own pace how to address these, especially in demanding situations, such as performance.

All these naturally flow into the Company’s creation and performance style.
Jieying: “I think the toughest part is to merge looking out for the audience and the environment around us, whilst looking inward at our thoughts and emotions. To successfully engage is to have a balance of both - how to not be over-exaggerated, and not self-indulge.”

Anthea: “Rather than a presentation from afar, I try to take the intimacy of the blackbox performance, our usual format, to the next level. Which means *authenticity at an even more microscopic level.*

“Nothing is projected, rather, it emanates from the skin. Emotions live deep within, and when we encounter someone’s gaze, we allow them in to see our current state.”
Zu You: “As corny as it sounds, I try to ‘live in the moment’ or ‘live for the experience’. In any performance there is bound to be choreographed movement and stage directions; with this work Swee Boon has taken into account that some aspects will be an immersive performance. Naturally this leads to unexpected situations, so we have come to an agreement on creating a certain flexibility within the choreography.

“In many moments, the point of the piece is no longer about hitting precise steps, but of being exuberant and drawing people in to the performance space.”

IF YOU ARE A TICKET-HOLDER OR PLAN TO BUY ONE, TAKE NOTE OF THESE POINTS:

- Haze effects will be used during the performance - for patrons with respiratory difficulties
- Extremely loud and high pitched sounds are used - for patrons with auditory sensitivities, or conditions triggered by sudden noise
- Request for a reserved chair - for patrons who are pregnant, have mobility or related issues

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT T.H.E AT INFO@THE-DANCECOMPANY.COM OR CALL 6345-8454. GENERAL ADMISSION RULES APPLY — VISIT OUR SISTIC EVENT PAGE FOR FULL DETAILS.
BRIEF THOUGHTS ON THE PRACTICALITIES OF USE

Anthea: “After a few iterations of works born from ‘Hollow Body’ I can better define the process of translating Swee Boon’s often philosophical concepts into physicality.

“While most choreographers work on a very logical connection between concept and movement, our method involves getting into a specific zone of physical, mental and emotional availability. From there we respond to the theme, and while doing so, observe our selves and thereafter, recall and reflect. Finally through a repetition of this process we continue to refine the section.”

Zu You: “Yeah, everything is always a learning process and that’s what is interesting about the creation [of PheNoumenon]. In the process, it’s normal that we feel different everyday, so we bring different motivations or inspirations into the rehearsals. We remember what we we have worked on in every rehearsal and build upon it.

“Using the ‘Hollow Body’ as a medium of expression, I felt more at ease compared to when we were working on Invisible Habitudes. In terms of progression, we were all more familiar with this movement vocabulary and able to go one step further exploring themes outside of ourselves, not just basing it on personal thoughts and experiences.”
Zu You started dancing at the age of 13, training in classical Chinese and folk dance with the Singapore Hokkien Huay Kuan Dance Troupe (now known as SCDT), under the tutelage of Lim Moi Kim. He holds a Diploma in Dance from LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore, and in 2017 graduated from the Taipei National University of Arts with a Degree in Dance. Zu You joined T.H.E Dance Company in July 2017.

**BIO**

“Pawns of a bigger collective. A collective with its own plans and agendas. This collective can be described as a machine, one that functions solely for the purpose of sustaining and expanding itself.”

“I like the sound design. Plays a crucial role in the world-building of the piece.”
“For me, compared to Invisible Habitudes this time around PheNoumenon has been a lot more challenging, especially the first half because of how it progresses.

“Previously we were tasked to look from the inside, to attach our personal experiences, and that was easier to figure out in terms of how to place my self in the piece.

“With PheNoumenon, we started by searching from the external realm. That was challenging, and there were times I could not relate. Though eventually, I had to find a relationship

Brandon: “With Invisible Habitudes I am still figuring out the connection between my movement and inner world. But with PheNoumenon it has been much easier to connect with my inner world.

“From there, I usually start with finding my own theme or interpretation that I can talk about. And then I start to create movement from it.

“This helps open up a path of communication with my inner world and I begin to see how this connects to movement. Slowly, I let it all flow out.”

Klievert: “Physicality-wise, this piece is new to everyone. Even Swee Boon himself admits that some parts are unexpected — not the company’s usual approach. That being said we have uncovered more potential and possibilities on how to convey the theme and messages intended.”
4. **360°: THE AUDIENCE’S EXPERIENCE**

Phenomenon is T.H.E’s first attempt at an immersive show for audiences using non-conventional seating — this means sitting within the performance area, getting a 360° view, and making choices such as whether to be passive or part of the action!

Of course, this requires the dancers to prepare for different situations, since the choreography retains T.H.E’s

Fiona: “I would say there is no perfect formula for preparing for this show, especially if people are constantly moving and wanting to be part of the immersive experience.

I think the key is to be open and adapt to new situations as they come and go. I’m hoping the audience will be intrigued enough to move around instead of planting themselves in a comfortable zone all the time 😊.”

Klievert: “We have this general expectation of the audience, and how they might possibly react..."
Much lies behind the good-natured demeanour of this toy-loving, bike-riding flip enthusiast

WHAT’S YOUR PERSONAL TAKE ON THE THEMES AND MESSAGES IN PHENOUMENON?

Zu You: “The importance and need for a personal voice. Especially in modern day society, where no individual lives in solitude.

“Everyone’s action or inaction has a consequence affecting someone or something else, no matter the magnitude of the consequence. A word found inside the title is ‘phenomenon’, an event we all experience just by existing in this world.

Brandon: “I prep myself before the show through meditation so that I become open and sensitive to the energy that flows during the show. I hope the reactions and energy from the audience are the same as mine — receptive and open-hearted to whatever messages we are conveying.”

Jieying: “I think being available and aware helps. And that would mean not just with your eyes but with every single inch of you.”

5. GETTING SERIOUS WITH… NG ZU YOU, DANCE ARTIST

6. BEING WOKE WITH… ANTHEA SEAH, DANCE ARTIST; ASSISTANT TO THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
WHAT’S YOUR PERSONAL TAKE ON THE THEMES AND MESSAGES IN PHENOUMENON?

Anthea: “For me Pheneoumenon is mostly about an awakening or call to respond to our living environment. How do we live? What do we fight for and why?”

WHICH ELEMENT OF THE WORK DO YOU LIKE MOST - OR, WHAT RESONATES WITH YOU?

“I connected with the sound immediately. It always serves as my environment — especially in this piece, defining my entire journey — and my voice, my response. The layers in Kent’s music really bring out the many different situations and facets of the human condition we encounter.

“I think this work is a reminder to us all, that we have a responsibility towards these phenomenons. Besides being an observer of these happenings, at times self reflection or even a call to action is necessary.”
"From an alien savannah to commercial dystopia, to organic emotion, Kent’s music has provided so much to the development of the work."

**DESCRIBE YOUR ROLE / ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE OTHER CHARACTERS / DANCERS:**

“In the beginning I feel like part of a herd, living with unspoken instincts of behaving alike. As the piece progresses the complications move into politics. By the end, [fellow dancer] Brandon is a variation of a creature far different from mine, but I can recognise and connect to something sentient in him.”

7. **THE QUIET DYNAMO… NAH JIEYING, APPRENTICE DANCER**

**WHAT’S YOUR PERSONAL TAKE ON THE THEMES AND MESSAGES IN PHENOMENON?**

“I think PheNoumenon questions and primarily addresses the issue of complex humans coexisting in contemporary society. Increasingly we live in a convoluted world where the living, the non-living and the technological collide not just in an external environment but within our bodies and minds.

“Paring all of that down, the piece talks about a basic strength in humans, the undying attitude present in us regardless of how dire the complexity and mess becomes.

It is this ability to live strongly and with tenacity that is how Man will continue to survive amid our self-made chaos.”


“The process of creation has been very exciting and interesting. The last Swee Boon work (I danced in) was As It Fades and that was more about learning existing repertoire.

This is different, and to me, a more honest process. The themes evolve out of what we see. It is naturally a more difficult experience, but this challenge is what helps us grow. The ‘Hollow Body’ method allows for personal interests to develop since each step is interpreted by different bodies. It’s definitely been fun, and more importantly apt for PheNoumenon since the work is about Man’s view of the current state of our world!”
8. **4½ QUESTIONS WITH... FIONA THNG, APPRENTICE DANCER**

We kick things off with the newest member of our family.

**WHAT’S YOUR PERSONAL TAKE ON THE THEMES AND MESSAGES IN PHENOUHENON?**

Fiona: “Personally, *PheNoumenon* has provided me with a lot of food for thought, thinking and reflecting on the world we live in. I think all the themes that *PheNoumenon* touches on resonates with me and has helped me think about my lifestyle choices, the things we take for granted and much more.

“Particularly the message on the major environmental crisis we face today, how as artists we can use our work to make a strong statement.”

**DESCRIBE YOUR ROLE / ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE OTHER CHARACTERS / DANCERS:**

“Special, evolving, strength.”

**WHICH ELEMENT OF THE WORK DO YOU LIKE MOST - OR, WHAT RESONATES WITH YOU?**

“I really love the music Kent made for *PheNoumenon*. The music is composed specially for this work and is customised to different themes and sections of the performance. It constantly inspires me, as a dancer, to make our intentions clearer and stronger.”
THIS IS YOUR DEBUT PERFORMANCE WITH T.H.E!
IT’S ALSO YOUR FIRST TIME WORKING WITH SWEE BOON, THE DANCERS AND THE “HOLLOW BODY” METHODOLOGY. HOW HAS THE PROCESS BEEN SO FAR?

“The experience has been nothing short of amazing. It’s really inspiring to have such hardworking, driven and amazing dancers and the artistic director guide me through each day of rehearsal. Joining this company has really challenged me in terms of changing my old methods of dancing, but Swee Boon and the company have been really patient and I’m super thankful for that. Counting my blessings everyday!”

WAS IT A MAJOR TRANSITION FOR YOU TO JOIN T.H.E?

“It was a huge change in dance style. With the previous work I’ve done and had gotten used to, it’s been about completely changing and rethinking how my body should be utilised — how to approach movement, how I can change an internalised perception of the way I should express myself (through dance).

“I decided to join the company because I really respect the work it puts up. Their movement quality inspired me to want to achieve that level of high standards. Also, I wanted to take a leap of faith and become a full-time company dancer while I’m still mobile and young, hehe.”

HOW WOULD YOU ADVISE YOUNGER DANCERS ASPIRING TO TAKE THE SAME PATH?

“Have an open mind and heart. Being a company dancer may seem ideal but in reality there is a lot of hard work put in behind the scenes. Be mentally strong when accepting criticism and comments as these are all constructive at the end of the day 😊”

**Bio**

Born 1995, Fiona Thng is a dancer, instructor and choreographer who has been exposed to various styles such as locking, hip hop, street jazz, contemporary, jazz. With her group Scarlett, she joined numerous competitions with significant results, including The Dance Floor Season 2, TRDO Dance competitions, and All-Babes Cineleisure Dance Battle. Over the years she has worked with choreographers such as Ryan Tan, Jeffrey Tan, Zaki Ahmad, and Lisa Keegan. Fiona loves exploring movements and infusing different styles and genres into her work.

9. INTERVIEW WITH... COSTUME DESIGNER, LOO AN NI

“In response to the question, what is your reading of how these garments are used to mask people, create mounds that look like landfills or get sort of strewn around, like discarded pieces.

“In one discussion with Swee Boon, the dancers were imagined to be a human-beast hybrid with technological elements. I thought about what kind of world would give rise to these creatures, and imagined a post-apocalyptic dystopia.

“A world where every single item had to be used and reused to death, regardless of what it started life as.”
“I’ve had an interest in up-cycling for some time; sourcing costume parts from thrift shops is a more logical conclusion for reducing material use. (and it’s cheaper! Big plus!!)

“Firstly, colour. Hue and saturation cannot be too far off from the skirt. (note: the skirt was the first item An Ni crafted, and anchored the rest of the looks to.)

“Secondly, material. It shouldn’t cling to the body and/or float dreamily through the air. It was more of an elimination process than — \ WOW SO MANY OPTIONS HELP \ 

“PheNoumenon’s costumes were designed as (each) dancer’s own portable climate: weather becomes their second skin. On its own it’s a functional object; applied through the dancers’ use it becomes a story.”
Lastly: what is your favourite item or look and why.

“The colour scheme!!! I just really love unreasonably saturated colours.”

Not just an excuse to shop, okay?: An early draft of An Ni’s design ideation. From creating a mood board of colour, construction and mood references to testing the drape, cut and layers with paper cut-outs. All this work before sketching, realising and tweaking the final 6 looks, down to sourcing for shoes!

P/S: An Ni is also the artistic hand behind the dancers’ body art, incorporating skin as another layer of meaning in the visual language of PheNoumenon.

BIO
Loo An Ni is fascinated with the tactility of objects and spaces. This brought her into theatre where possibilities are limitless. She has taken various roles in costuming, from design and construction to wardrobe management. Her costume design credits include Nine Songs (Siong Leng Musical Association), Returning (assistant design, SIFA 2015 commission), The Mazu Chronicle (assistant design, The Arts Fission Company), Teochew Festival 2014 Gala Dinner Performance (Teochew Poit Ip Huay Kwan), and Huayi – Chinese Festival of Arts 2018 commission, Cut Kafka! by T.H.E Dance Company and Nine Years Theatre.
APPENDIX

ABOUT PHENOUMENON

Look out, look carefully; what do you see?

PheNoumenon is the latest creation by founding artistic director Kuik Swee Boon, this time examining the relationship between Man and the phenomena that surrounds him.

The free spirit tears away from hegemonic thinking. Habits, cultures and systems hide under the illusory cover of a prosperous modern society. Look around, what lessons can be learnt from the socio-political, technological and climate chaos threatening to upend our entire lives?

T.H.E’s finale performance of 2019 is created in collaboration with Singaporean lighting designer Adrian Tan, costume designer Loo An Ni, Malaysian sound artist Kent Lee and six extraordinary dancers from T.H.E Dance Company. If you liked da:ns festival 2018 commission Invisible Habitudes and followed its successful European tour, then you must not miss PheNoumenon!

Look in, look closely; what have we become?

Watch the trailer for PheNoumenon at https://vimeo.com/373373846

For updates on PheNoumenon, follow or visit T.H.E Dance Company at: www.the-dancecompany.com

Facebook /THEDanceCo

Instagram /TheHumanExpression

KEY EVENT DETAILS

PheNoumenon by Kuik Swee Boon & T.H.E Dance Company
Thu 12 - Sat 14 December (post-show talk on Fri)
Venue: Esplanade Theatre Studio, 1 Esplanade Drive, Singapore 038981

*Important: Patron Notes

- PheNoumenon will not utilise conventional theatre seating. Patrons with mobility issues or other physical concerns should seek advance assistance from T.H.E via email (info@the-dancecompany.com) or phone (6345-8454).
- Some haze effects will be used during the performance. If you have an existing condition that causes breathing difficulties, let our front-of-house or venue ushers know on that day.
- PheNoumenon has a General rating from the IMDA.
- No admission for infant in arms and children aged below 6 years old
  - Children 6 years old and above must purchase ticket for admission
  - Admission is subject to tickets produced at the entrance
- No Photography, Video recording and Audio recording is allowed for this event
Ticketing info

Tickets to PheNoumenon by T.H.E Dance Company are now on sale through all SISTIC authorised agents, website (www.sistic.com.sg), mobile app or call 6348-5555.

Discounts for Standard Tickets | $38*

20% Discount for Friends of T.H.E Dance Company [ongoing till show date]
Verification: Quote valid password upon purchase


20% Black Friday Sale [29 Nov 2019 - 2 Dec 2019]

15% Discount for PAssion Card Holders [from 26 Oct 2019 onwards]
Verification: Present PAssion Card at the ticketing counter or quote the first 4 digits of your PAssion Card Number as the promotion code for purchases through website or hotline to enjoy the privilege.

15% Discount for OCBC Arts Platinum Card Holders [from 26 Oct 2019 onwards]

10% Discount for OCBC Credit Card Holders [from 26 Oct 2019 onwards]

Concession Tickets | $20*

Limited tickets available for purchase by Senior Citizens (55 years old & above) / Students (Local & Foreign) / NSFs / Children (6 to 12 years old)
No further discounts or sales apply.

Verification: Present valid ID / Student Pass / SAF 11B (Military IC).
Please note that random checks on concession tickets may be conducted at the point of entry. Patrons unable to present proof of eligibility are required to upgrade their concession tickets to full price tickets.

School Bookings

This programme is eligible under the Tote Board Arts Grant subsidy. The letter of eligibility is available for download here.

School bookings are entitled to 1 complimentary ticket for an accompanying teacher for every 10 students. Please email info@the-dancecompany.com to arrange for the complimentary ticket
T.H.E Dance Company presents

Esplanade Theatre Studio

12-14 December 2019,
8pm
14 December 2019,
3pm

PheNoumenon

By Kuik Swee Boon

Tickets on sale now!

Standard: $38
Concession: $20*

All prices shown exclude SISTIC booking fee.

* Limited concession tickets available for students, NSF and senior citizens. Concession tickets are not eligible for any further discount.

WHAT DO YOU SEE?