

BRIGHT NIGHTS

The Night Festival venues were packed on the last day with people taking in the breathtaking acts

Melissa Kok

The Bras Basah area was filled with a vibrant atmosphere last Saturday as thousands came to catch the performances on the last day of the annual Night Festival.

From as early as 6.30pm, hundreds of festival revellers turned up to enjoy the free visits to the museums in the vicinity and waited patiently for the live performances to start.

By 9pm, with more people joining the festivities after dinner, the crowd swelled to the thousands.

The area stretching from Armenian Street to Stamford Road was abuzz with trigger-happy photography enthusiasts, families with toddlers, youths and tourists.

Indeed, the organisers behind the Night Festival, the National Heritage Board, estimated that this year's instalment drew a bigger turn-out compared to last year.

About 220,000 visitors attended the festival back then, spread over two weekends.

In its fifth year, the recent Night Festival was also held over two weekends. It offered a variety of music and dance performances as well as installation artworks spread over various venues in the Bras Basah area, including The Substation, National Museum and Peranakan Museum.

The show-stoppers last Saturday were the three 10-minute performances by Fuerzabruta, the Argentinian performance company famous for its captivating choreography and interactive acts.

Over on the Singapore Management University (SMU) lawn, two dancers elegantly tumbled, rolled and shuttled across a massive silvered curtain in the performance *Corredoras*.

As the curtain shimmered in blue and purple lights, it almost seemed like the dancers were exploring a futuristic landscape.

Another popular act was *Mylar*, where four dancers used their bodies to make rippled patterns and shapes in a 15m pool suspended in mid-air against strobe lights.

Mr Gary Yong, 28, a director of an audio-visual production house, said of *Mylar*: "It's really amazing. The point of view would have been better if you were right under the pool, but seeing this is pretty spectacular."

As the dancers thrashed about in the water, the pool was slowly lowered for curious onlookers to reach out and touch the plastic and translucent base, and to in-



teract with the dancers who made cute expressions with their faces.

Over at Armenian Street, which was closed for the festival, a dancer supported by a giant crane floated in mid-air and was spun around in circles, with bursts of white confetti showering upon the audience below.

Ms Peh Sze Wei, 33, who works in administration for an insurance firm, said: "It's the first time I'm seeing such a performance and it's very good. I also wanted to see the light shows and museums. I will come back again next year."

Home-grown bands such as indie rockers Shelves and The Great Spy Experiment also rocked out on the SMU green, playing to an audience that was big enough to rival gigs at Fort Canning Park.

Those who were not keen in jostling with the packed crowds inside the museums were content to watch the kaleidoscopic visuals projected onto the National Museum and Art Museum's building exterior.

All in, everyone Life! spoke to gave the event a thumbs-up, but some who attended last year's festival had hoped for the road in front of the National Museum - Stamford Road - to be cordoned off this year.

It was closed last year for an aerial performance, but not for this year's festival.

Mr Aaron Ng, 23, a third-year economics student at SMU, said: "It would be better if they had closed it again. Some of my friends say it's very crowded. You need more room for people to move and the road (connecting the museum to SMU) is not that wide."

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In La Argentina, a dancer is suspended by a crane (top) and backed by the beats of Bloco Singapura. Dancers roll across a curtain in *Corredoras* (above left). And in *Mylar* (above right), performers make rippled patterns in a pool suspended in mid-air.
 PHOTOS: JOSEPH NAIR FOR THE STRAITS TIMES