

This year we saw ten groups from Japan, Korea, and the Philippines, with styles incorporating diverse elements from Neoclassical Ballet and Modern Dance, advance to the finals. Particularly worthy of acclaim were choreographers who used powerful physical gestures to convey clear concepts that question our understanding of the history of dance and contemporary society. Jury Prize winning duo Choi Min Sun and Kang Jin An skillfully employed video in a smart, humorous fusion of virtual and real that explored synchrony and separation through past, present and future. Tamura Koichiro won the French Embassy Prize for Young Choreographer using the explosive energy of eight male dancers to examine the inhumanity of Japan's labor market, equating human beings with concrete blocks. Lee Kyung Gu was awarded the Encouragement Prize for her use of unique motions in a finely crafted depiction of an intensely personal story of an individual buried in society. In all of these cases, choreography and theme were tightly integrated in powerfully persuasive performances. Best Dancer Prize went to Kitao Wataru and Kim Seo Youn. Both depicted the struggles of individuals caught between dreams and social realities, using their own distinctive gestural languages. Many other works also left deep impressions. The Yokohama Dance Collection has become a space for a wide range of experiments, a place where young talent displays new possibilities.

Okami Sae

In terms of live performance, the works presented at this year's Competition I were more interesting than last year's. There were more works in which emotional ups and downs not clearly discernible in the videos were clearly expressed. Personally speaking I was happy to see the works from the Philippines being performed as though that were perfectly to be expected. (15 years ago, there were fewer than ten contemporary dancers in that country.) The Korean team's technique of completely erasing facial expressions from the video could be said to mark the beginning of a new phase. The work from Japan using concrete blocks was the first time in a long time that we have seen men sweating on stage, and I thoroughly enjoyed the powerful impact of this troupe's performance. When I review the competition as a whole and think about what ought to be done, a few things cross my mind. I would like to see more attention paid to the ability displayed by the dancers themselves, the choreographer's potential for continuing to create new works, and what message the dances intend to convey. These questions are closely connected to the future viability of this type of dance.

Kondo Ryohei

At this year's competition I noticed, starting from the stage of evaluating the videos, changes in Korea. Instead of follow-the-teacher and direct links to Europe, I saw a fresh, young identity and feeling of locality. The three units that reached the finals were all outstanding. That goes without saying for Choi Min Sun and Kang Jin An, who won the Jury Prize. I was stunned by the actuality of the way in which they addressed their bodies, their audience (and the cameraman). I felt the potential of Asia in the originality of Encouragement Prize winner Lee Kyung Gu's choreography, the contemporaneity of her use of her own experience as her theme, and the strong local flavour of her work. Best Dancer Kim Seo Yuon's performance was outstanding. I want to see her do more to push back the limits of dance. I was also delighted at the young talent from Japan. I point in particular to Tamura Koichiro and Suich-megane∞ have taken him from Competition II to finalist in Competition I. I want to see them do more to increase the potential of the Yokohama Dance Collection and make it more than just another contest. Best Dancer Prize winner Kitao Wataru has been known as a choreographer. The superb technique and brilliant finish displayed in his solo demonstrate his high potential as a dancer as well. In the performances from other Asian countries, I detected a strong sense of locality. I look forward to the emergence of young Japanese choreographers with an equally strong sense of locality instead of tradition.

Tada Junnosuke

This year's program included a rich variety of work, but the highlight was young choreographer Tamura Koichiro's "F/Bridge", which won the French Embassy Prize for Young Choreographer. In this work, Tamura Koichiro who presented "Yard" for the Performance by Winner of the Outstanding New Artist Prize at Competition II last year, has made great progress. In contrast to "Yard", in which stillness was wrapped in madness, "F/Bridge" is full of movement in madness.

The depiction of the dangers confronted by men working side-by-side is powerful. The work is conceptual, but the concept is perfectly translated into physical gesture. The fine sensitivity to the music is brilliant.

In Choi Min Sun and Kang Jin An's "Complement", the winner of the Jury Prize, this duo, man and woman, both choreographers and dancers, present a thoroughly conceptual work whose execution is also fascinating. The surliness displayed by the woman is presented with unforgettable humor. In Lee KyungGu's "A broom stuck in a corner", the winner of the Encouragement Prize, both choreography and dancing were powerful.

All of the works presented this year employed a variety of devices. I found myself longing for a work in which the dancer's body alone dominates the stage. Perhaps next year.

Hamano Fumio

Over the last ten or fifteen years, the amount of information coursing through society has grown explosively. The fluidization of society has accelerated to, dare we say, an excessive degree. The stage, however, has remained analog. Its conventional role and the schemes that support it are becoming exhausted. How to avoid being swept away in the whirlpool of information and what to do to communicate effectively have become difficult problems. To solve them, we must let go of existing approaches, and start over again from zero in our continuing search for new techniques. We have to keep considering what techniques those would be, but during the final judging of this year's Yokohama Dance Collection, I encountered individuals rising to that challenge. When the way is unclear, they trust their bodies. Their choice to dance, rather than doing nothing, remaining still, and offering excuses, is a good one. Dance is indeed something one can do only because one is alive. Thus they do not waver in their faith that 'Doing it my own way is right'. They taught us through this competition that even with no rescue in sight, while we know not when, the future will arrive.

Yanaihara Mikuni

First of all, I would like to sincerely thank the jury members and the Yokohama Dance Collection team for the intense work demanded for the preselection.

The competition is more international than ever, that is obviously a very important and successful point, but that also means that the preselection is even more demanding. And then the discussions with the jury during the two days were interesting and nourishing. Coming from Europe, and knowing the European dance and performance scene, the Yokohama Dance Collection is a truly important occasion to see what's happening in dance in Japan, South Korea, Singapore and other countries.

I'm so overwhelmed to see these young artists commit to dance, knowing that it's much harder to be a dancer here than in France.

I must admit that sometimes the 'story telling' is far too important in some of the propositions. It sometimes may be lack of conceptualisation. But the technic level in general is very good.

I'm very happy, thanks to the French Embassy in Tokyo, to be able to welcome a young artist next year for three months in the Centre national de la danse. He will be able to work in studio, see a very large variety of performances during these months, and participate at the international choreographic platform called Camping (participating in workshops, and showing his work in France) that we organise every year in June.

Aymar Crosnier