

2019 Competition II: Comments of Judges

This year's Competition II included works that question how to grasp, in one's own way, the contemporary dance of today, to create works, and to dance. It also included works whose theme, consciously or unconsciously, is how to deviate from existing contemporary dance. I pose the question of whether those actions were unconscious because I think that is typical of the contemporary dance world today. One example is Omori Yoko, who won the Outstanding New Artist Prize.

Should we even categorize something as contemporary dance? What matters is that the person was prodigiously present, every gesture a source of joy, and the style in which the work attempts to express something was beautiful, interesting, delightful.

It comes down to a blunt statement like, 'Well, it's a human being, isn't it.' Yet in recent years that important component has been, I think, lacking.

If I can speak from the one-sided perspective of the artist, dance 'Takes senses (feelings), which are abstract, makes them concrete, using the physical body, and communicates their expression, live, to the audience.' Doing so requires technique, but many dance pieces are too taken up with forms and technique, and their balance is poor. The artist should give much, much more importance to the senses (feelings) of each person involved in a work, and should play closer attention to the audience members and others. Only when the senses (feelings) of the artist and audience engage with each other three-dimensionally can we proceed to the next step. I look forward to the new works and dancers we will meet beyond this point.

Ito Chieko

This year I did not see any outstandingly unique works.

The judging was held in two stages. First, we judged all the entries on the basis of their videos and documents they submitted. Then twelve artists passed that stage and were chosen to go on to the finals. Of course, the initial judging was based on videos, and videos are only videos. In the finals, a great many of the works considerably violated the impression conveyed by the videos. I would like contestants to present, in a good sense, things utterly different from the videos.

Each human being has an ego, an aspect of the self that unconsciously understands ethics, rules, social norms. Each also has an id, an aspect under the surface associated with human's instinctual desires. The superego is said to act as the coordinator between the ego and id.

When choreography that is standardized or determined in advance is presented on stage, the superego, trying to do everything properly, is overly strong. The id, the desires generated by instinct, is weak. Basically, I want to see more expression born of a distinctive body and spirit and experience, more 'I want to express this no matter what

courage.' In Competition II, what we value is not works that are well developed or highly technical works. I value the libido, rising in the body and spirit, no matter what.

Vivian Sato

Last year, all the finalists confronted, for the first time, the black box that is The venue, the small hall of Yokohama Nigiwaiza; they could hardly conceal their confusion. This year, however, it was good to see that each addressed that space with their own ideas.

Omori Yoko's "stars fall in sink-corner strainer" won the Outstanding New Artist Prize and Touchpoint Art Foundation Prize. Above all, the sharpness of her dancing was charming, and the feeling generated by her movements enthralled the audience. Her choice of music was also interesting. I look forward to her presenting new work next year. Shawn K. Farrell's, "Did you forget something" and Yokoyama Yaeko's "silence" were also impressive. Aoyagi Machiko's "foam" was still rather rough as a work of art but her conversation with her body was fascinating; I was filled with hope for future work from her.

In this year's competition, following what has become a fixed form for contemporary dance, I saw an overall tendency to settle on works that are pretty and safe. I hope to see works that are unafraid of failure, that follow the call of the body and plunge ahead.

Hamano Fumio

This is my third year as a member of the Yokohama Dance Collection jury. What I have been saying since the first year is that dance for the sake of dance is weak. Dance for the sake of dancers is weak. Dance: when, where, why, towards what? I want works that have thought all that out. I keep saying that. This year's performances were all works that suited the theater and were conscious of the audience. I sensed all their abilities as choreographers. But for some reason I am not satisfied. While I have been seeking works since my first year, as a member of the audience, I don't feel a thrill. I've thought deeply about that contradiction. A work that suits the theater perhaps is synonymous with a work that is constrained by it. Choreography and dancers that are just enough perhaps simply lock each other up. What I was seeing in the dances was an antagonism between the choreography that had been decided on and the dancer before my eyes, cycling between collapse and convergence, or perhaps the simple drive that the body possesses. This year, I was made to think again about dance and choreographic works. Omori Yoko's cool powers of composition in turning choreography into a work of art and her destructive energy as a dancer, letting her body go free, were, I felt, in good balance. I would appreciate her both as a choreographer and as a superb dancer who destroys and reconstructs choreography.

Shiba Yukio