

YDC 2020 Competition 2 New Choreographer Division : Comments of Judges

There was a lot of diversity in the works, compared to previous years. I think this is the result of each artist's expressive method and the passion they bring being reflected directly in their work. I feel like everyone confronted dance and the creation of their work, as well as society and the self, with such honesty and sincerity.

"What is dance?" The competition seemed to set this profound question right back down in front of me. "Dance" is the one tool available to them, but it's fascinating to see how it is interpreted and employed in completely different ways. I was made aware once again of the diversity of dance.

Hashimoto Roma's "Cyclone Chronicle," which won the Outstanding New Artist Prize, was loaded with signs that something interesting was about to happen. I could tell she put a lot of work into achieving the unique quality of the composition, scenes, lighting, and so on. It was impressive. It made me want to fully immerse myself in her world. Maybe I'm getting ahead of myself, but I can't help expecting that her presence will shake up the dance world in the future. I look forward to her performance next year at Yokohama Dance Collection.

I was also surprised by Yamashita Megumi's "Some Things, Do Not Cross," which won the Encouragement Prize. Although the creative approach did not necessarily involve new techniques, the experience could be described as resembling the origin of the performing arts. The work was impressive. It raised questions about the nature of dance as a form of expression. Once again, I was struck by the diversity of dance.

There was an energy to Yamaguchi Rio and Nishimura Kaiya—who both won the Best Dancer Prize—that conveyed the message that dance is something to be felt.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all of the artists who participated this year for putting their all, both physically and mentally, into their creativity and performances, and for being able to be with them and experience their work. More than ever, I look forward to the future of dance.

Ito Chieko

Sometimes when I have gone to see any of the performing arts, not only dance, I hear people saying, "I didn't really understand." They don't seem to mean this as any kind of praise. A work being "easy to understand" might be interpreted as good, or interesting. But personally I have a strong attraction to things that I don't understand. Of course, there's no point to work that isn't directed at the audience and doesn't make an effort to convey something, but there is a real charm to works that one doesn't really understand, but which are nevertheless overflowing with energy. The creations of this year's prize-winning choreographers feel like they were brimming with passion for dance, to create work, and to face others. And that must have been conveyed directly to the audience.

The ability to put together a work—the skill to dance and choose music, and an elevated capacity for composition—is important, but that will come with experience. Because Competition II is about celebrating young choreographers, I want to encounter something that is powerful, even if rough around the edges.

I want to be struck by something that came from a yearning to dance, to create, to engage with an audience, rather than work put together simply for the sake of a competition. These young choreographers still have plenty of time to refine their output.

Kato Yumina

The finalists for this year's Competition II were perhaps just a little too respectful of convention. The Best Dancer Prizes went to the two dancers who have an insuppressible, overflowing libido for dance. The Encouragement Prize went to Yamashita Megumi, whose work gave rise to a living space in which various elements coexisted: gestures associated with language and the body in everyday conversations, the relationship between men and women, one world and another. Here, various dimensions that would otherwise never converge came together for presentation in visual form—Yamashita showed a materialization of the impossible, or the impossibility within materialization, so to speak.

The Outstanding New Artist Prize went to Hashimoto Roma. Her work employs a contemporary, modernist approach, meticulously deconstructing the stage, and examining it from various contexts in order to reconstruct it. Her performance language appears superficial in its use of pop culture, such as the club scene and fashion, yet the work itself is self-critical and self-reflexive.

The style of her work takes on the form of an intellectual mind game: Hashimoto considers the literary experiences and visual memories that form her, deconstructing herself at the same time as deconstructing the stage, so as to display the fragments. Deconstruction and reconstruction takes place simultaneously on different scales. The work is pop in its style, but Hashimoto seems to be extremely conscious of her position of responsibility. I would like to go right ahead and give the "Vivienne Sato Award," if there were such a thing, to Hashimoto. I very much look forward to what she has in store for the future.

Vivienne Sato

There seemed to be more variety among the work than in recent years. Even in the midst of such variety, Hashimoto Roma's "Cyclone Chronicle" was of outstanding interest. A unique sense of aesthetics penetrated everything, even the spatial composition and costumes, and made the viewer desperate to see more. Bengolea and Chaignaud were mentioned during the jury discussions, and the work was full of that kind of bizarre charm. Yamashita Megumi's "Some Things, Do Not Cross" took a theatrical approach. It was also striking how much this work had deepened since the video selection stage. I hope she takes her investigation of the relationship between language and the body even further. Yamaguchi Rio's "Little Love" and Nishimura Kaiya's "NO ONE KNOWS ME" were responses from street dance. The former was impressive for its explosion of energy, and latter for its precise and austere expression. Kimura Motoko's "MATE" shone with the compositional skill of a true artisan.

There were some works this year that seemed to have been constructed with movements and compositions emerging from an idea that "if we do this, it will look like contemporary dance." I would like for creators to grow into the confidence to break the mold fearlessly, rather than by bound by it.

Hamano Fumio