

Yokohama Dance Collection 2021 Competition I Jury Comments

In Competition I, performances by three choreographers residing in South Korea, Malaysia and Indonesia were screened, alongside seven live stage performances by those residing in Japan. Even in the midst of the chaos of the coronavirus, there is significant meaning in continuing a competition that sheds light on the new talent of the world.

Overall, the style of each choreographer stood out more than ever before, with high-level techniques, and I felt that they were all prize-winning level. Takahashi Moto presented a unique worldview in which social chaos and enigmatic illusions melt together. Shibata Miwa depicted the will and unconsciousness of women with rich choreographic vocabulary. Ida Asami analyzed events generated between individuals while leaving out any sentimentalism. And the once-in-a-lifetime duo “nouses,” with their ability to organically fill in minimalistic space, made us feel the immense potential in breaking preconceived concepts in choreography. In addition to the prize winners, Sakata Mamoru who visually depicted delicate human psyche, the ever surreal Taka Mizuki, Fukuda Tomoko who effectively used music and lighting, the intriguing Anggraini who hints at invisible laws of movement, Song who creates esthetic figures, the intellectual Zahid, all present works brimming with unique power.

However, with the vast amount of well-made works, it can be said that there were few surprises. I'm looking forward to encountering dances that I haven't seen yet, where one is not afraid of adventure and boldly confronting an increasingly complex society.

Okami Sae

It was pure pleasure to see that Yokohama Dance Collection, with its extensive list of programs, was held this year after a series of travel and event cancellations due to the coronavirus. In this competition among stage productions, where the aspect of live performance is the underlying real pleasure, it was an unforgettable experience for the judges to see overseas choreographers, who were supposed to have come to Japan, participate remotely by video screening.

As for my impression of the program as a whole, I felt a sense of satisfaction at the well-choreographed and directed works, the high-level physical ability, and of course simply being able to take in dance performances to my heart's content. On the other hand, I fell into the sense of not being able to follow along, to use my imagination to grasp what many pieces were aiming for, and to be surprised. Creating a well done performance fulfills one of the scoring criteria, but in an area of physical expression where almost everything has been attempted, trial and error is never easy. While the evaluations were divided among the judges, I personally became aware of the issues that occur related to body sensations and the generation of

movements, and I was strongly interested in the works that presented and addressed them in their choreographic methods. Fitri Anggraini's (Indonesia) piece, in particular, invoked both physical and inner tension between the performers the moment they connected, and nouses (Japan), whose two members moved in an ever-continuous detailed organic flow of improvised conversation and it came forth as piece through its qualities as a phenomenon.

Coming up with new perspectives for dance is a pursuit of undiscovered charm in the human body and a focus with which to behold it. At times that can appear as unpredictable boldness, while other times it might be unimaginable tenderness. It is the steady continuation of these elements that has led to the vast, diverse world of dance in our present day. I hope it will continue forever.

Kitamura Akiko

After the award ceremony, we all took a commemorative photo on stage, a moment which pretty much summed up this whole year.

All judges and performers wore masks while the rest of the performers who could not attend appear on the screen behind them. Most of the directors from European countries were unable to come to Japan as they have done in the past in glamorous fashion. I would like to show my sincere gratitude for this year's Yokohama Dance Collection.

From a dancer and creator's perspective, I was interested in what kind of hopes and trials would be mixed together in coming up with the performances for this year, but I could not feel that part very much. Rather I even felt that the power of emission in expression had become dull. It may be due to the unique approach to this being a competition, but overall, I could make out two distinct types of choreographers; those that shared similarities with others, and those that possessed intrigue that differed from others. I would like to see something that has more of a core to it, with a distinct sense of direction to be considered during the creative process.

From the scoring side, I felt the taste of each work was different this year, and it was difficult to choose one over the other. This year's program will have significant meaning for future competitions and will influence them in various ways. I want to continue to watch dance as it develops this young energy, and not lose sight of the common sentiment that "dance is something wonderful."

Kondo Ryohei

I felt that everyone involved has been dealing with their own creative processes in their own way. You have been trying different forms of expression online, you've danced outdoors, struggled in securing places to practice, and have continued to organize theaters programs while taking measures against infectious diseases. This Dance Collection Competition was

also another way for many to deal with these challenging times. The significance of this competition was reaffirmed by its decision to stay open to overseas artist and not become limited to domestic performances, even after it was confirmed that videos entrees would be accepted. It was unfortunate that the total number of applications decreased from past years, but I personally felt it encouraging to learn that artists all over the world continued to dance even during the pandemic. Takahashi Moto who won the Jury Prize and Ida Asami who also won the Encouragement Prize were highly praised for taking their works to the next level even during these trying times. Even though the overall impression was lacking in impact and novelty, things like the physicality of nouses and the uniqueness of Fitri Anggraini from Indonesia left a strong impression on me. How will dance respond to the online environment as it drastically advances during the pandemic along with the development of technologies like VR and AR putting more focus back on the human body. There is still so much to look forward to in the dance world.

Tada Junnosuke

There is immense meaning in the fact that the Yokohama Dance Collection was safely held this year in the midst of such a major crisis, the likes of which the performing arts world has never experienced before. Unfortunately, members from the three other participating countries, Korea, Indonesia and Malaysia, were unable to attend in person and had to perform via a screen. It is very difficult to judge live art that is being performed in front of you with remote video performances with changing camera angles, regardless of how minimal they might be. I was also conflicted about how to evaluate works with such a high degree of execution, even though they may have lacked a bit of novelty. I'm always waiting for new and radical expressions, but I also have doubts about creations that are aimed only at that. I feel like we have been presented with an array of difficult questions this year.

All 10 performances were unique and interesting, but I'm glad that Takahashi Moto, whose talents have attracting attention since an early age, has finally and completely found her own methodology by working in a group. I look forward to further leaps from her. As for nouses, despite having roots in street dance, I have a hunch that we will see the birth of a whole new style that we've never seen before. I want to keep watching to see how they develop.

Hamano Fumio

Yokohama Dance Collection 2021 was an exceptional event in many ways. Indeed, while the health crisis has forced some candidates to present their work via video, the very high quality of all the proposals really impressed us. In a wide variety of registers, the very high level of the

candidates, whether technical, choreographic or in the care given to the scenography and the use of space, was particularly appreciated. The length of the deliberations of the members of the jury, which the Embassy would like to thank here for their involvement, testified to the difficulty in putting forward one proposal rather than another, as the different paths explored were pushed with seriousness and talent.

The work of Shibata Miwa, a promising young choreographer, caught the attention of the French Embassy and Aymar Crosnier, in his plastic research and her talent for bringing bodies into dialogue. Hoping that an experience of sustained artistic exchanges in France will allow her to take a new step in her research, her inspiration and her next creations.

I would like once again to congratulate all the artists for their magnificent proposals, and to warmly thank all the Dance Collection teams for the tremendous work they have done in this challenging context.

Samson Sylvain