

Yokohama Dance Collection 2021 Competition II Jury Comments

First of all, I would like to express my appreciation to all the artists who created a performance, submitted their video, and performed it on the stage. This process requires a strong will towards self-expression. Thank you all very much. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to the audience for watching the performances. I was once again reminded that these stage performances are finally made complete only after there is an audience to witness them, which is reflected back to the very dancers on stage.

It is difficult to know what the correct answer is, but I felt the YDC this year was held in the best way possible considering the challenges it faced. One new attempt of the program was to set aside a time for the artists and the judges to meet after the performance. It was a brief, yet very meaningful and interesting time.

Although some people were restricted in their activities due to the peculiar circumstances brought on by the coronavirus, many artists showed their interest and distress towards the state of their own creative process. The majority of the pieces were centered around the question, 'How should I approach my own work subjectively? How should I approach it objectively?'

Almost all of the people who up until now were strongly conscious of how others, such as friends and spectators, might view themselves seemed to place emphasis on digging deep down within the self this year. And the pieces that came out of that were more unique than ever, with unprecedented strength. I presume that it is because they were able to implement solid self-referencing, on a different level from that of self-satisfaction. Changing your own personal form of expression because of how others might evaluate you is one thing. Changing it because of your own evaluation is another. But feeling completely true to what you're doing, from the bottom of your heart is something totally different, and incredibly important, and that's what I saw most of the artists who participated this year do.

It's a lot of hard work to give shape to what lies inside you for the outside world to see, but it's even more fun, not to mention precious. I strongly, strongly hope that the young artists who participated this time will continue to create without losing their passion for creation.

And to everyone in the audience, please continue to take in the work and be both receptors and reflectors of those on stage.

I hope that the fun, the intrigue, and preciousness of creating will reach many more people to come!

Ito Chieko

Our surroundings have changed significantly over this past year. From 'practicing' to

'encountering' audiences, things have become difficult. 'Making,' however, has never stopped. I would like to express my respect and gratitude to all those who participated in the competition and to everyone who visited the theater. Thank you very much.

Whether we like it or not, art reflects the world and our surroundings. This year there were many pieces that faced loneliness head-on. Or even, so to speak, how to resist loneliness. Instead of waiting for a return to the status quo when forced into a difficult situation, there was a sense of trying something new that one wouldn't have tried if under other circumstances. I could feel a strong swell of this sentiment from the finalist's work this year.

The state of expressive performance continuously changes with the times, moment to moment. We continue to see the emergence of works that are not only diverse but make you feel that dividing things into genres can seem like nonsense. On a personal note, it was also an opportunity to reconsider the way in which competitions deal with such works.

It is the creative work that allow us, the audience and the creators, to encounter each other. Now more than ever, when it's so difficult to get together, I hope that you will continue to create performances for the sake of others you have yet to meet.

I await more pieces that can only be expressed through performing arts, pieces that only you can make.

Kato Yumina

The Yokohama Dance Collection this year has come to a big turning point.

The coronavirus has affected all areas of society as a whole, including politics, the economy and culture. The Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben once warned us all. There are two kinds of human life; what he called 'bare life,' and life that is free to carry on a cultural society onto next generations which 'surpasses' individual bare life. If life is regarded as only the former, it is easy for controlling power to be applied, making the individual susceptible to administration and governance.

At the Yokohama Dance Collection as well, the questions of 'what is the human body?' and 'what is human life?' were posed, not only to the artists who entered, but to the organizers and judges as well. This topic is what made this year such a big turning point for this competition.

In Competition II, we have seen less group performances than we've seen in past years, and more solos, where individuals are forced to face their own bodies head-on. The threat of an invisible virus looms equally over everyone; a virus regarding one's own body and health, the so-called life of the individual, and the inherited life beyond that. In addition, regarding the performances with two dancers, there was a sense of 'absence' inside the piece. It wasn't on stage, or at least, it couldn't be seen. It existed beyond a choreographed set of movements, in a shared space in the two as a kind of unconscious 'anxiety' throughout the whole piece, a kind of shift or uncertainty of focus.

Vivienne Sato

In the unprecedented situation of the current global pandemic, it is safe to say that everyone must have been taking a hard look at the significance of their dance and the act of creating. There was more creations this year that had changed significantly between the videos of the preliminary rounds and the final performances than previous years, but I am glad that it was an improvement to the quality of the work, instead of a straying away from it.

I felt pulled to Onaya Rion's "I'm not a liar." which won the Outstanding New Artist Prize, and her physicality, which seemed to almost break through the concept of the work, nearly destroying her in the act. I'm looking forward to her performances next year as an award-prize. Takeuchi Haruka's "AM0: 01", winner of the Encouragement prize, shined with impressive constructiveness in her choreography. The unique individuality of the two dancers paired effectively and I would love to see them perform on a larger scale. Shimada Mikihiro's "tangle" also received an Encouragement prize, and despite the fact that it ended up being a video screening, you could feel the tingling of the skin and the gradually penetrating pain of human heart-ache. I hope to one day see the performance in person. Murakami Ikuma, who own the Best Dancer Prize, had an overwhelming charm that surely made most choreographers wish to include him in one of their future projects. It would be splendid to see him collaborate with many other artists in the future and utilize those encounters in his future creative work.

Each of the twelve performances this year overflowed with individuality and there were many other impressive works worth mentioning. It was like feeling the next generation "kicking inside the womb."

Hamano Fumio