

Yokohama Dance Collection EX 2013 Competition I Evaluations

The 124 works from five countries entered in Competition I, the Dance Composition Division, opened my eyes to the ever-widening horizons of contemporary dance. Contemporary dance, which was born about thirty years ago, may be a young art, but one that is spreading on a global scale, not just in Europe and North America but in South America, Asia, and Africa as well. Yokohama Dance Collection, now in its eighteenth year, has gained prominence overseas and attracts many dance festival and theater producers and directors from around the globe. It is also inviting, and offering increasing opportunities to perform, young choreographers brimming with talent and originality – and not just the prizewinners. Yokohama Dance Collection has indeed maintained its position, for eighteen years, as a dance platform open to the world.

The opportunity at Yokohama Dance Collection to experience the growth of the artists who will be the next generation's leaders was extraordinarily enjoyable. It was my third time to see a work choreographed by NAKAMURA Yo. Her wealth of performance and expressive expertise and her good taste are impressive. In her work, based on a film, she makes effective use of the text and her humor and taste in props to present social issues concerning women and the family, with a skill at composition that engenders a delicate pleasure. IRITE Anna's work (first performed in March, 2012) combines performance, lighting, and sound with a high level of polish, showing us the choreographer's growth and the development of the work itself. OKUNO Miwa's composition, with its powerful combination of sound, video, and physicality, and, indeed, all of the twelve works that were selected as finalists, depicted worldviews from unique perspectives. I look forward with great anticipation to the next works the talented KIM Boram of Korea, SHIMADA Tadashi, and ARA Yuhei will unveil.

How honestly can we address the body? Artists confronting issues occurring simultaneously throughout the world, problems never before experienced, depict their perceptions, impossible to put into words, through their bodies. They have the potential to give birth to a new wisdom for today's world.

Ono Shinji (Producer, Aoyama Theater and Aoyama Round Theater)

The values of the choreographers and judges clashed and mingled in a stimulating fashion during both the preliminary judging, based on videos, and the final judging.

All twelve works that made it to the finals are quite distinctive. While none had the impact to stand out dramatically from the others, I felt in them all, more strongly than in my previous three experiences as a member of the jury, a pure fervor to reveal their own unique styles.

Although I assume that choreographers are necessarily driven to work on refining their works again and again between the initial and final judging, that effort is sometimes counterproductive, weakening the energy with which they began; I find that rather ironic. The prizewinners, NAKAMURA Yo and OKUNO Miwa, seem to be establishing their own styles. What also made a lasting impression on me was IRITE Anna's almost impudent strength, KIM Boram's cheerfully delightful physicality, and the fascinating ideas presented by KIHARA Kota and AKITSU Sayaka.

Shindo Hiroko (Dance Critic)

Yokohama Dance Collection has built a considerable history as the gateway to success in contemporary dance, through a competition in which anyone can enter his or her work. The key feature of this project is, of course, that it is a competition; the entrants are competing to win prizes. Yet, for those in the audience, it also functions as a showcase for dance, an opportunity to experience new works in the field of dance, regardless of who wins the prizes.

In Competition I this year, the preliminary, video-based judging narrowed the field of 200 entrants to twelve finalists. Then, over the course of three days, those twelve works were performed, at the Yokohama Red Brick Warehouse Number 1, before dance professionals from around the world and the other members of the audience.

The finalists included LIN Yu Ju from Taiwan and KIM Joon Young and KIM Boram from Korea. KIM Boram's *Coexistence*, performed on the third and final day of the competition, did not win a prize but was a remarkably ambitious work. IRITE Anna's *Fifteenth month of the year* was impressive for the sounds of rain and the candy, although it too was not among the prizewinners. SHIMADA Tadashi, who had been little known until now, presented *twilight*, which was captivating in its revelation of an interest in the body in motion and at rest, rather than in dance as such. KIHARA Kota's *Foot, Footstep, Sound and Step* is a powerful work that came close to carrying off one of the prizes. KIHARA's work was so highly regarded by the professionals in the audience that, after the final performance, several of the producers from overseas objected to the judging, saying, "Why didn't the grand prize go to KIHARA? This is odd!"

NAKAMURA Yo's *good-bye*, which won the Jury Prize and the Sibiu International Theater Festival Prize, received some criticism for being "a commonplace work lacking in freshness," but the power of its composition and the work's air of freedom from bitterness or satire won it support. OKUNO Miwa won the French Embassy Prize for a Young Choreographer, which seems a significantly weightier award this year, and the MASDANZA Prize; I look forward to seeing her make use of her superb physical abilities to make significant advances in her art.

This year's Dance Collection was a rich harvest of dance overall, though it did lack that one talent who would leap far above the others to impress us, as KAWAMURA Mikiko did two years ago. What I still hope to see is something not yet identified, something that might, or might not, be called "dance," but that communicates a demanding hunger.

Maeda Keizo (Board Director, Realcities, an NPO)

NAKAMURA Yo's *good-bye* is a splendid performance seeking humor in the interstices between words and spirit, based on material from the script for an Ozu Yasujiro film.

OKUNO Miwa's *Highlight of Decline* brings the audience, against a background of images, the experience of her own physical decline, with extraordinary power.

SHIMADA Tadashi's *twilight* is an unexpected harvest, a mysterious space generated through highly original movements.

IRITE Anna's solo work, *Fifteenth month of the year*, is fascinating for the way it generates an odd discomfort through the conflict between her movements, tinged with madness, and the sober gaze with which she herself views them.

Among the many other memorable elements of these performances were the distinctive texture of ARA Yuhei's composition, the appeal that KIHARA Kota and KIMURA Aiko have as dancers, and the new waves in dance from Korea I sensed in KIM Boram's performance.

Hamano Fumio (Senior Editor, Shinshokan Dance Magazine)

What I said at the awards ceremony was, "Wilder, yet more delicate!" Fabulously wild dances, works that are almost crimes against humanity, do not seem to be entered in Yokohama Dance Collection . . . Or perhaps they are off scattering fireworks somewhere else, in some other place. Where is that other place, you ask? We may find the answer in the future physicality of all the choreographers who submitted their work.

We jury members, having served on the jury for three years, agreed that the level of the works being entered is rising. This was indeed a fierce contest. It also seems that more and more dance curators are coming to Yokohama from overseas.

I hope that the talents who have launched new careers here will be further roughed up by harsh seas in Japan and abroad, through winning their prizes, and will become pivotal figures in a new age of dance.

Murobushi Ko (Dancer, Choreographer)

This year's Dance Collection EX Competition I was, once again, full of surprises and discoveries.

In this competition, young choreographers from throughout Asia submitted video works for the preliminary judging. The twelve most individual works were then presented on stage to a packed audience.

The Jury Prize was awarded to NAKAMURA Yo, who presented a nostalgia-tinged work inspired by one of Ozu Yasujiro's films. Her choreography skillfully unified a theatrical format with opportunities to display what dance can be.

SHIMADA Tadashi, a dancer originally from Yokohama, won the Encouragement Prize for a work that impressed the jury with its overwhelming sense of presence and a commanding reach of creative bodily movements.

Finally, the French Embassy Prize for a Young Choreographer was awarded to OKUNO Miwa, who presented a beautifully mature work that intelligently combined video, dance, and sound. The prize will enable her to experience the best of France's dance scene, in the national dance center, theaters, and festivals in Paris, Montpellier, and Lyon, during a six-month residency that will begin in July.

I am confident that her artistic approach will become even stronger and that she will return to Japan with a wealth of experience from her encounters and interactions in France. I am already looking forward to the new work she will present at the 2014 Dance Cross!

Rebecca Lee (Director, Institut français du Japon - Yokohama)