

Yokohama Dance Collection Competition II

This year the quality of the works presented in the New Choreographer Division was on the same high level as Competition I. The winners of the Outstanding New Artist Prize and the Encouragement Prize both displayed a combination of ideas, strength in composition, and technical skills. More important still, they had the wit to fully open themselves to the world, to fulfill the single most important condition of anyone who performs on stage. Minami NAKAYASHI's work had both a transparent fragility and intense physicality. It had a centripetal force that only dance has to keep the audience's consciousness glued to what is happening. Kouichiro Tamura's work had a dark side rarely seen in a newcomer's work, a combination of violence and resistance that reveals a contemporary and ominous perspective on life and death. While it didn't win a prize, Naoyuki Sakai's work was filled with energy, an anthem to youthful vigor, shy yet impulsive. I want to say to all of them, try and try again. Your efforts will reap a rich harvest.

(Chie SUMIYOSHI)

Competition II was, without question, more interesting than Competition I. In "girl," Minami NAKAYASHIKI displayed a fine delicacy of touch in her depiction of a dangerous moment in a girl's adolescence. This work also displayed a high level of finish. Kouichiro TAMURA's "Girl and Vulture," with its eerie construction and sounds of coughing, aroused violent emotions inside me. The way in which young Japanese choreographers are choosing unusual themes holds much promise for the future. I also enjoyed the energy of Naoyuki SAKAI's "HENSHIN," which came within a hair's breadth of winning a prize. Mako EGAMI's "Story without a Frame" and Satoru OHKITA's "Borrowed Words" were unfinished, but displayed an originality in which nothing was borrowed. I was touched by their unique movements. I want to see more of this work in which new forms of expression emerge from the dancer's dialogue with his or her own body. (Fumio HAMANO)

Five important points from a dancer's perspective:

- ① The necessity of the movement (Does the dancer move as if this gesture were truly necessary?)
- ② Originality (Is this the dancer's own work, not something borrowed?)
- ③ Openness (Does the dance reveal the dancer's inner world to the world outside the dancer?)
- ④ Double crossing (Is what happens next a double cross, a breach of expectations, not just to the audience but to the dancer as well?)
- ⑤ Questioning (Does it challenge existing things?)

All of the dancers had moments when they shined, when the dancers faced their bodies seriously. But the one who most carefully took this vital step was Minami NAKAYASHIKI, who won the Outstanding New Artist Prize. In a style different from her entry in the previous competition, she made me want to continue to sense the breadth of her movements. In the work of Kouichiro Tamura, who won the Encouragement Prize, there was a feeling of danger. I strongly felt the presence of the motivation behind the way he was dancing at each moment. These dancers are young. Their average age is 22. They possess unlimited potential. I want them all to have faith in the motivation that drives them to dance, to do as strongly as possible what they are driven to do. More than something polished, something rough but filled with energy. To accept the adventure of letting yourself go somewhere out of control. To escape from "the work." To demolish "the work." To move beyond the destruction to discover another self, looking on from a bird's eye view. I'm looking forward to the next time. (Maki MORISHITA)

Dance must have been born at the same time as music and song, much earlier than other forms of creative expression such as paintings (murals) or sculpture (fetishes). Dance is born as an expression of time. It speaks to a time before that handy word "art" appeared. It is certain that what gave birth to dance was the worship of gods, religious ritual. It is rooted in folkloric views of life and death. Now it exists under the patronage of "art" and the original goal of expression is lost. The better the art, the more conspicuous that loss; but the paradox that "loss" is the *raison d'être* of art also arises. This tendency is especially clear when it comes to dance. Dance works with movements and perceptions ingrained in the body through everyday life and gestures. It asks how much the body or the mind are an individual's possessions. How was it then, long ago, that those who first danced felt connected to their bodies? Those who dance and those who watch the dance are contemporaries, sharing the same moment in time. As humans, they share the same flesh at the same time. Dance can only happen when "contemporary" means "now" and "here." (Vivienne SATO)