

As this was my first time participating as a juror, I was able to experience how these performances are evaluated in the Japanese dance scene. And since the evaluation criteria remain to be set in stone, I felt a great sense of responsibility knowing that what is evaluated and how, will determine the future direction of contemporary dance in Japan.

The following is a message to all who participated, staff members, and everyone else who was involved.

As a jury member, I was careful to consider the evaluation criteria, and I have judged with sincerity in my own way. However, I would like you to understand that this is only the judging criteria for this year's competition and is not an evaluation of all dances. Criteria must surely change with the times, generations, country, culture, and more.

It is important for those who have received an award to consider how they are going to connect it to their own future endeavors. I hope that you will use the award as a springboard to take off in a big way, and that your career will add even more value to the award itself.

I also hope that all contestants who did not win an award will continue to pursue their own creative endeavors and make things that will repaint the jury's evaluation criteria, and that will even help the judges to grow themselves.

Your art makes society grow, and it is your art that will build a new era.

Umeda Hiroaki

(Choreographer, Dancer, Visual Artist, Yokohama Reb Brick Warehouse No.1 Choreographer)

The number of finalists was changed to eight from ten, and when Vietnamese finalist withdrew, then there were seven. As for the five Japanese groups, they were diverse; ranging from theatrical to conceptual, and demonstrated the multi-polarization of the scene. Ono Ayaka and Nakazawa Akira, who have been collaborating and reexamining the performing arts for 10 years, won the prize for their high-intensity non-dance-like performance that interrupts all possibilities for pleasure for dancing, earning their residency in France. Germany-based Shinohe Kenji compiled and presented a contemporary issue-centered piece, albeit with less original venom due to its cleverness. Ogura Emi proposed a unique dramatic dance in which the body plays with the versatility of the objects that fill the space, while Terasoma Aya used the individuality of the dancers to create a utopia of fascinatingly snarky qualities. As for Ikegami Fuko and Nakamura Takara, I look forward to more of their depth of content, an aspect often overshadowed by technique. The Jury Prize winner, Taiwan's Liu I-Ling, drew the audience in with a thrilling exchange of movements and a precise composition without embellishment, conveying a sincere message. Singapore's Fairul Zahid used a fresh choreographic vocabulary to portray human strength in the face of social conventions.

Despite the differences in methods, all the works were brimming with messages, and I sensed a sign that the human body, which is over-criticized and gradually losing ground in the real world, was crying out for its return to power. I am waiting for a dance performance with a strong artist's approach that penetrates through movement, sound, art, and words.

Okami Sae

(Dance Critic, Associate Professor of Kyoritsu Women's University)

In my role as a jury member, I was exposed to the evaluation criteria of others, and during the time we spent exchanging opinions, I even felt that the art of dance could be predicated on the very act of experience and sharing different perspectives around the art.

On the day of the performance, I was filled with a kind of contradictory expectation to encounter a performance of this phenomenon we call "dance" that would blow all the criteria away — all while preparing myself to evaluate the choreography, the composition, direction, the dance itself, and other things such as originality and quality, and wondering how the seriousness and challenging attitude toward creation would manifest itself on stage.

The works presented at the finals had the power to transform the phenomenon of the body disappearing from its birthplace into "dance," something that relates to the experiences and memories of others. Among them, the works by Liu I-Ling, whose delicate, sharp movements supported by tranquil choreography and advanced technique exuded a physical drama (drama of the senses) that could not be verbalized, and by Ono Ayaka and Nakazawa Akira, whose task-like movements brought out the strong individuality and materiality of the body, made me feel the accumulation of densely repeated dialogue and work between the choreographer/director and the performers.

In general, I strongly felt that it was difficult to choose better or worse, and that each was amazing by completely different standards. With that said, I look forward to experiences in the future full of surprises, in which the breadth of our viewpoints toward the phenomenon of dance will swing wildly in random directions.

Kitamura Akiko

(Choreographer, Dancer, Professor of Shinshu University)

Every year when December comes around, the time of the YDC judging, I think of the world, of dance, and of the creators — as various views and landscapes pass through my mind. This year, we finally had teams from overseas (too bad about Vietnam!), to which I first have to say how happy I am to see. As the name Dance Collection suggests, this year's performance had a "collection" feel to it. The judging could not have been done without differing tastes and preferences on the part of the participants. You could also say that's why it was so interesting! When it comes to performances, the big day has been and still is an important occasion that requires a sense of tension, but everyone handled it beautifully. By this, I was impressed. In a sense, however, the twenty minutes for each performance flowed by indifferently. As I watched, I felt like something was missing. For some reason, I felt that past performances had more background, and were "thinking about the times," or, to put it exaggeratedly, "carrying the country on their shoulders." But this year, I felt that this was less true. I wondered to myself, "Has the act of dancing become so commonplace?" I hope for it to be a place for young choreographers and aspiring dancers to talk about their hopes and dreams. That is how I feel. There were many interesting things in the video screening, and Terasoma Aya and Shinohe Kenji really spoke to the audience at the performance at the Yokohama Red Brick Warehouse No.1. I also saw the hope in Ogura Emi's piece. I would like to continue to support the Yokohama Dance Collection as a whole.

Kondo Ryohei

(Director of CONDORS, Choreographer, Dancer, Artistic Director of Saitama Arts Theater)

This year, more than anything else, I was honestly delighted that we were able to have finalists from overseas perform. I would like to pay tribute to Yokohama Dance Collection, which has continued to receive entries from overseas for the past two years, even for video participation, and to the artists who continue to create their works. The Jury Prize went to Liu I-Ling, whose choreography drew us in with its minimalist flow and changing relationships. Although there were many duos in this year's competition, all of the works were enjoyable for their unusual relationships and combinations. I felt both Ikegami Fuko and Nakamura Takara's work, shared something with Ogura Emi's performance, in that they both have a lot of potential for their uniqueness to grow, and I am very much looking forward to their future. Shinohe Kenji's high-grade performance was also a pleasure to see in Japan as he works in Europe. I felt that there was potential for one more twist at the end, to create more confusion or feeling of being overwhelmed. Fairul Zahid's work had a wonderful strength to its theme and body, especially in the way he handles the theme, which I think is something that Japanese artists could absorb more of. I feel that Ono Ayaka and Nakazawa Akira are taking on a totally new context, and I am very much looking forward to seeing what comes next through their experimentation. It was unfortunate that Nguyen Duy Thanh made his withdrawal so we couldn't see any solo work, but I believe that now and in the future, when we are sensitive to the distance and relationship between people and bodies, there are things to consider when watching works including multiple bodies.

Tada Junnosuke

(Director, Artistic Director of TOKYO DEATHLOCK)

It is most rewarding to finally be able to see the overseas participants in person rather than on video. Even festival directors from abroad are once again showing up in Yokohama, albeit not in large numbers yet. Liu I-Ling from Taiwan showed us a highly accomplished duet that explores the relationship between man and woman, with her piece "...and, or...". The female dancer Chou Ai-Hsuan was a major component with her charm. Singapore's Fairul Zahid's "So-PAN" is a symphony of Singaporean women's history and contemporary dance. It is truly regrettable that we were not able to see the unique physicality of Vietnam's Nguyen Duy Thanh in person due to his withdrawal.

Thoroughly conceptual, Ono Ayaka and Nakazawa Akira's "Balance" appears at first glance to be an echo of post-modern dance, but it also evokes something new that does not fit into that category alone. I'll make sure to keep my eye on their budding future. Shinohe Kenji, whose choreographic style changes like a chameleon every time I see him, impressed me again with his versatility. Ogura Emi's "M2" was intriguing, like an alien who has suddenly intruded from outside of the conventional contemporary dance scene. I would definitely like to see other works by her.

Hamano Fumio

(Senior Editor, Shinshokan Dance Magazine)

The Yokohama Dance Collection competition is undoubtedly an important moment for the Japanese choreographic scene because the identification of emerging artists is essential for the renewal of generations. It is certainly a space for the discovery of young talent that brings together local and international professionals.

The comparison of this platform dedicated to young creators with a time for dance performance programs leads the public to broaden its point of view. The "event" dimension brings people together and contributes to making dance better known.

Being a member of the jury alongside the French Embassy allowed me, beyond the selection of the winners, to have a better knowledge of the state of artistic development of dance in Japan. I noticed a high technical and artistic level of the dancers and an attachment to the performative dimension.

The winners of the 2022 Embassy Prize will be in residence at the CN D in 2024. Knowing their approach now will allow us to better prepare for their arrival and put them in contact with appropriate artists.

Catherine Tsekenis

(Executive Director of CN D Centre national de la danse)