

I felt the performance pieces that felt totally closed off for a few years due to the corona pandemic have opened up all of a sudden. Social conditions and mass mentality that may seem uninfluential to the individual physical movements were greatly reflected in the pieces. We ought to examine the fact that the body must sync to the mass minds of the era. On the other hand, is it even possible for physicality to be independent from an era?

Matsuzaki Momoko's soaring departure from commercial style dance into the world of contemporary. Saito Kenichi's stoic piece, seeming to reconfirm fundamental modernism once again—sighs and rustle of plastic garment heard from gaps between ideologies. SHIon's worldview based on dark aesthetics. The relationship between language and body language, presented by Akita Noriko—and space recognition carved out by woofer-heavy sounds. Yasunaga Hiyori's everyday movements played out in triplets and funny yet creepy puppet world. Kitamura Sakura pulling the audience into the depth of her childhood twilight nightmare. Imai Ako illustrating unfathomable subterranean waterways and awareness—a punctum experience represented by Lo-Fi. Okada Hiroe's refined composition as well as her unique choreography emphasizing each dancer's characteristics. Miwa's gifted body and its physical ability—her charm, more than anything, is its freedom. And finally, worthy of special mention is Miya's division and closeness of dual narratives—his expression and his body. Starting out with a story of denial, his piece stunningly illustrated the shadows of his life through dance.

Vivienne Sato (Artist)

For a few years, there were many pieces that felt “closed off” both physically and mentally. There must have been many choreographers who spent difficult times creating—especially in contemporary dance where they face society using their bodies. Yet this year, the collection was filled with “opened” pieces. The creative process must have been for the sake of more than just themselves—for those who are with them during the process, for the audience, and for the world. As an audience member I was delighted, while given great encouragement that young creators are continuing to create with positivity.

In an age flooded with SNS where anybody can easily “release” any work, the piece that conveyed the strongest sense of earnest desire to dance in the flesh received the Outstanding New Artist Prize. As for the finalists who did not achieve the award, I wish for them to realize how important it is to be given a platform where many people encounter their work, as well as the act of giving an explanation about their pieces. Art is something that projects society and the world. I wish for you all to keep creating what can only be created now, especially in an era such as this one.

Through this competition, I hope to continue to encounter pieces that renew ideas on “what choreography is.”

Kato Yumina
(Director, Steep Slope Studio)

I'd like to show my gratitude to all the finalists, as well as everyone who entered the competition. This year saw an array of colorfully unique pieces, giving us a sense of "the morning after the passing of the pandemic (in expression)." The sincere attitudes towards the body and works resulted in a variety of expressions. In fact, due to its diversity, the judges' opinions at times went in different directions.

Saito Kenichi and Imai Ako had their concepts vividly emerge. The high levels of perfection made me excited for their future pieces. With exceptional physical abilities, Miwa Reina and SHIon's energies overflowed beyond the concept and structure of their pieces. Miya Yusuke and Okada Hiroe seemed to have found a balance between those two realms. Regardless of solo or group, from those three pieces including Yasunaga Hiyori, a sense of spatial design was felt. All pieces were at such extremely high levels, that there were moments when the judges discussed revising the criterion in the future.

Essentially, dance is not to be judged, but to be emitted to (or shared with) an audience. And expression—especially in "contemporary" context—must constantly change according to the times. Regardless of winning an award or being selected as finalists, I want to tell everyone that "these results aren't everything." I also sincerely wish that you all continue to seek to express, not in order to accommodate to some value system, but because you yourself absolutely need to. Seeking a moment when that expression deeply resonates with the hearts and lives of the audience. Here's to the future of dance!

Kitao Wataru
(Dance Company Baobab • Choreographer • Dancer)

The ten works presented were fascinating because they were all unique and with no similar trends. At the same time, however, their variety made it very difficult to know where to place the scale for judging.

Among these, the Outstanding New Artist Prize went to Miya Yusuke's "Shape," which showed his strong potential as an artist in its delicately thought-out, rapid-fire arrangement of sound and lighting that did not limit the work to a simple, naked, self-deprecating narrative. I look forward to new challenges in his next works, such as duos or trios, that are different from his solo narratives. The Encouragement Prize winner, Saito Kenichi's "Rotary Production," shined with the picturesque sensibility that made this conceptual work possible. The physical intensity of Miwa Reina's body, who won the Best Dancer Prize, was very impressive, and we hope that her future encounters with various choreographers will give her great inspiration for her creativity. Other unforgettable works include Yasunaga Hiyori's "abukunoto," which explores how dance deviates from the conventions of contemporary dance; Kitamura Sakura's "Road of Summer," with its fresh relationship between music and movement; and Okada Hiroe's "Serial Boy," with its unique sense of movement and composition, shows great promise for the future.

As we are finally emerging from the hardships caused by the pandemic, I strongly felt that the power of young creativity is sprouting anew. I can hardly wait to see what talents will appear in Yokohama next time.

Hamano Fumio
(Senior Editor, Shinshokan Dance Magazine)