

Like the last time I judged, I was happy to have the opportunity to meet 10 choreographers who are rich in personality and charm.

From the works of Suzuki Rion, Okada Yumi, and Onishi Yuria, I got the impression that they delicately controlled the audience's gaze. I strongly felt the potential for their works to become even more intense. As choreographers, Watanabe Asuka, Kashima Riena, Ogasawara Miyu, and Urashima Yuna all have shown their ability to bring out the individuality of dancers. All four had a different approach that was captivating, whether it showcased their own personality prominently, or balanced it with the overall composition of the piece. Sengoku Kotaro and Hirata Shiori fascinated the audience with their high physical abilities and their strong desire to dance that emanated from their entire bodies. Takahashi Haruka demonstrated strong compositional skills and successfully elevated the raw body of flesh on stage into a piece of work.

As a judge, I strongly felt that it is our responsibility, not only to provide opportunities for creating but also for showcasing the work. Increasing the opportunities for others to see the work is part of the responsibility of those like me involved in creating the environment. Both the works and the choreographers will continue to evolve through the act of being seen. Unfortunately, those who missed out on awards may be carrying a sense of frustration. I sincerely hope that they have the confidence to continue creating, as they have the potential to make significant leaps with that frustration as a driving force.

Kato Yumina (Director of Steep Slope Studio)

As someone who participated in the Yokohama Dance Collection 12 years ago, I would like to provide some personal insight as a judge who can relate the most with the performers. This competition saw very little difference in scores, in a very good way. Everyone did exceptionally well. There were no works that were underpar, which made the judging process quite challenging. While it may be interpreted as a lack of any groundbreaking performances, creativity is something that everyone can develop from here on out, and I have high expectations for that.

Sengoku-san, Hirata-san, and Suzuki-san exhibited high-quality physicality as dancers, and I hope to see them continue to improve their physicality in the future. Urashima-san and Kashima-san's group demonstrated a very high level of formation and contact work, and their performance was well-crafted. Takahashi-san and Okada-san presented a unique world view, and I hope to see them further develop their creativity. Watanabe-san, Ogasawara-san, and Onishi-san incorporated elements beyond only body control into their works, such as the delicate use of music, props, sound-emitting costumes, and paper materials. This strongly conveyed the potential in using the stage as a comprehensive form of art.

Overall, I felt that while it's natural to think about creating a unique worldview in contemporary dance, it's essential to emphasize that dance (the body) comes first. I hope to see more young artists prioritize dance and understand that it's the core. There's a need for a shift in the notion that a dance performance can be created regardless of whether the performer can dance well, or even chooses to dance or not.

Suzuki Takuro (Head of the dance company CHAiroiPLIN, Choreographer, Director)

A variety of works with diverse themes and styles were presented, making the judging process exceptionally challenging this time. Among them, Takahashi Haruka's "EAT," which won the Outstanding New Artist Prize, left a strong impression with its handling of childhood memories and possessed a certain criticality that seemed to coldly distance itself from her own motions and movements. Alongside the clever composition, the unsettling expressions on her face that constantly changed from one to another, are unforgettable. Urashima Yuna's "My Habit" shone brightly with its unique movements and excellent composition, raising high expectations for her future creations. Okada Yumi's "aerobic language" also had an appealing conceptual structure, but the distance between the words she crafted and her body may have been too close. Sengoku Kotaro, who deliberately refrained from any conventional dancing this time despite being an exceptional dancer, and Hirata Shiori, who passionately and fully expressed herself through dance, both delivered performances worthy of the Best Dancer Prize.

It is evident that a new generation of applicants is entering the competition, and that contemporary dance is starting to see new perspectives. I look forward to the next round, hoping for the emergence of choreographers who will continue to surprise the audience.

Hamano Fumio (Senior Editor of Shinshokan Dance Magazine)