

Competition II: General Commentary

Competition II always surprises me in the best way every year. The choreographers and dancers (this year even a turtle!) who appear before me after the video screening present works that far exceed my imagination. Sometimes I'm stunned, and other times I catch myself thinking, "Was it really like this?" —and before I know it, time has flown by. Immersed in this concentrated energy with my whole body, I attend the judging sessions with a sense of satisfying fatigue and fulfillment.

Each piece overflowed with individuality and charm: the pure passion of those who truly love to dance, bodies yearning to transform beyond their past selves, and time constructed through seeking coexistence and harmony with the environment—including the audience's presence. Among them, I strongly felt that Tamura Nizika, who I believe will "surprise us again" in her next work, was chosen for the Outstanding New Artist Prize. Speaking with the finalists, I could sense their genuine enjoyment in the creative process. Equally, I felt their struggles and uncertainties. Please never forget these feelings as you continue creating. I sincerely look forward to the day you brilliantly defy the audience's rigid expectations.

Kato Yumina

(Board member of Nonprofit organization Arts Platform)

This year's Yokohama Dance Collection, which aims to be a crossroads of diverse cultures, truly featured a lineup of uniquely talented choreographers.

Tamura Nizika, Ushitani Shoyo, Tasumi Maho, Sakata Konami, and Noyo pursued originality. Works distinguished by a focus on direction, structure, and space were presented by Toyama Haruhiro and Ueda Sono. An emphasis on dance skill characterized the performances of Muto Miyu, Sugino Mahiro, and Yokoi Kaho. Audiences could truly enjoy the current state of contemporary dance from the bottom of their hearts. While it didn't win an award, Noyo's piece 'Chrysalis' had a particularly unique creative process. The electroluminescent wires wrapped around the body's lines created an utterly mysterious space. The expression method discovered while exploring ways to visualize insect hatching became the essence of the work, yielding results that even the creator found unexpected. It was a creation born purely from the desire to do something. Not asking "Why do I want to do this?" but simply doing it because they wanted to. May art always begin from such a place. The participants this time will undoubtedly continue nurturing such seeds of ideas.

Suzuki Takuro

(Head of the dance company CHAiroiPLIN, Dancer, Choreographer, Director)

This year's ten works are all unique. Each was fascinating and hinted at its own potential. The Outstanding New Artist Prize winner, Tamura Nizika's "Lecture on harmonizing with the space," demonstrated a keen awareness of the relationship between the body and space. Furthermore, it meticulously constructed space through sound design, conveying a strong determination to establish a distinct world on stage. For next year's award winner's performance, I hope she will pleasantly surprise us and deliver something overwhelmingly impressive.

The Encouragement Prizes went to two works: Ueda Sono's "Is it shaking now? The ground, or me?" and Sakata Konami's "Ah, how many more times do I have to bend my knees before I die or not". Both were compelling: the former seeks to open its well-considered choreography further to the outside world, while the latter, featuring Sakata Ichiro, a turtle, fearlessly embraces happenstance, betting instead on the genuine moments that arise from it.

The Best Dancer Prize went to Yokoi Kaho's "Peeling Scales". Beyond its delicate expression, the longing to break free from her current shell and move forward lingered in the heart. Sugino Mahiro's "genwakunomaaya" also impressed with its sharp dancing. Noyo's "Chrysalis", which begins with visual imagery, possesses a unique quality that connects it to the lineage of Loie Fuller, Oskar Schlemmer, and Alwin Nikolais. Tasumi Maho's "Clutter Inside the Desk", though unfinished, possessed an eccentric charm in its movement.

Hamano Fumio
(Senior Editor of Shinshokan Dance Magazine)

This year, it was striking how each artist sought to forge their own unique path. Tamura Nizika's work, "Lecture on harmonizing with the space", which won the Outstanding New Artist Prize, was exceptionally compelling as a piece, offering something rarely seen before. Having pioneered her diverse activities—spanning art, fashion, and dance—entirely through self-study, her dance is profoundly distinctive. By not learning established forms, she revealed a fresh surprise: that humans possess such hidden potential for movement.

Ueda Sono's "Is it shaking now? The ground, or me?", which received an Encouragement Prize, was a highly entertaining piece with a well-structured choreographic composition and progression that effectively followed its theme. I sensed a strong foundation in her skills as a choreographer.

Similarly, Sakata Konami's "Ah, how many more times do I have to bend my knees before I die or not", also an Encouragement Prize winner, featured her dancing with a turtle kept

at her family home. Her dancing, seemingly at the mercy of the turtle's unpredictable movements, conveyed the human condition of living amidst things beyond our control.

The Best Dancer Prize winner, Yokoi Kaho's "Peeling Scales", utilized her exceptional physical ability in the choreography. While demonstrating solid technique, her approach of breaking it down to pioneer new movements for herself was highly praised.

Sugino Mahiro's "genwakunomaaya" also showcased exceptional physical ability and expressive power as a dancer. I look forward to seeing her expand her dance further, broadening her perspective beyond her previous work.

Noyo's "Chrysails" presented a compelling idea where the human body appears as lines of light. However, it felt like the choreography didn't fully realize the potential of this visual concept, which was a shame.

Amidst this overwhelming abundance of information, I am personally encouraged anew by their challenges to create your own dance. I look forward to encountering more performances that expand the boundaries of dance.

Yoshigai Nao
(Filmmaker, Dancer)