

The judging over, I went to London. There I was participating in a workshop in the East End, interacting with relatively inexperienced dancers, when I heard the news of the earthquake and tsunami that has devastated the Pacific coast of Northeast Japan—an absolute tragedy, a universal loss. If dance is always a struggle that, loving “uncouth forms,” is advancing hand in hand with already collapsing signs, assaulting amorphous forms of life, it is also the evanescent joy of discovering generative forms. As an insolent, heroic effort to deliver the coup de grace to forms that hamper the expression of unformed life, dance ought to be both an ultimate act of rebellion and a thing of joy. But in this context, it is not dance; it is simply impotence.

If contemporary dance consists of flow and movements with no fixed location in space and time, the criteria used to evaluate it must include the willingness and the power to break the conventional boundaries of dance. I felt I had already done the impossible in selecting eleven finalists. Rather something already valued, already considered full of promise, the prize should have gone to something as yet undefined, something that makes us wonder, “What is this?” I look forward to next year’s competition with high hopes.

Murobushi Ko  
Paris, March 15, 2011

I served for the first time in a judge in the Competition I (Dance Composition Division) of Yokohama Dance Collection EX, an event that continues to evolve.

The act of assigning points to a creative work being presented, while being awed by it, and choosing which gets a prize is extremely difficult, even pregnant with contradictions. Yet at the same time, as many people in the dance world have pointed out, it is quite difficult for a dancer-choreographer, while dancing and creating works on a daily basis, to create opportunities to enable large numbers of people to see the resulting work. Under these circumstances, an event like the Yokohama Dance Collection EX undoubtedly has a valuable role to play as a platform at which to expose choreographers’ work to others.

This year the Dance Collection was divided for the first time into two parts, Competition I: Dance Composition Division, and Competition II: New Choreographer Division. The question now is, to make the event even more significant, especially to choreographers, how well it has achieved the objectives that were defined with the new “EX” naming. I hope that future planning will be based on a thoughtful assessment and analysis of this year’s experiences and outcomes.

Now let me make some brief general comments.

To be honest, none of the eleven works I actually saw performed this time deeply moved me. As a result, I was the harshest among the five judges in assigning points. It greatly disturbed me that the reason for my reaction seemed to lie in the choreographers’ and dancers’ creative work itself, rather than the tension the performers might have experienced in exposing their work to others or in the spatial and temporal conditions the event imposed on it. If you are performing an expressive work in front of others, I would want its relationship with those viewing it, at a minimum, to be one that stirs up communication and imagination. In addition, if the work takes the form of physical expression, I would want it to make visible those bodies and the consciousness or subconsciousness that is moving those bodies in a way that builds on the stage. Shouldn’t we expect to see the “regression to the interior” that the late dramatist Terayama Shuji used to point out so persistently, long ago? Most of these works, if I may put it rather crudely, seemed so feeble that a “regression to the interior” couldn’t help. I am, to be blunt, not very interested in the “naive inner self” and the like. Rather, I would like fully to experience dance as pure (or not so pure) bodily movement that directly, consciously addresses the physicality of the body.

That said, *syzyg*, by Neji Pijin, who won the Jury Prize, was outstanding, if somewhat clumsier than in its first performance. *Le Blanc* by Takeuchi Azusa, *lismoa* by Suzuki Airi, *The Son* by Kunimoto Bunpei, and *Wonderful World* by Takahashi Koehi all offered discoveries of rich sensibilities that gave a sense of future potential. With what may be rather harsh words for these creators, I hope to stimulate them to even greater action, even to the possibility of expression on the verge of being described as “not dance.” It is you, you dancers, who ought to sense most clearly the as yet unknown reach of dance’s potential

Maeda Keizo



There was considerable conflict over the preliminary judging, in which we considered 80 works based only on videos of them. Having made up our minds to choose works that gave a sense of originality and a passion for communication, even if somewhat awkward in execution, we left in the running for the final judging many works by young choreographers who were unknown quantities. The prize-winning dance compositions by Neji Pijin, Kunimoto Bunpei, and Takeuchi Azusa glowed with compositional ability, freshness of choreography, and the dancer's presence. But there was no overwhelming gap between them and the other finalists' work, which was also enthralling--Takahashi Kohei's sharp wit or Son Myong-hui's polished, fully formed mode of expression, for example. In addition, compared with the previous year's competition, in which we were shown many elaborate performances that might as well have been on video, I had the strong impression that the competition this time was dominated by works that went back to the body itself, to move with fresh vitality. I will be keeping an expectant eye on the future activities of all the participants.

Shindo Hiroko

For Yokohama Dance Collection EX, 2011 was a year full of new discoveries. Many of the Japanese dance companies made an impression on me, and I think that the many Asian and European professionals who came to the event will contribute by introducing their work abroad.

The French Embassy Prize for a Young Choreography went to Kunimoto Bunpei. The decisive factor in the judging was the power that he radiated. His minimalist movements and use of the space on stage created dramatic force rarely to be seen.

Rebecca Lee

Yokohama Dance Collection, the gateway to success for young choreographers, has now been held for the sixteenth time--evolving with the times, of course. For the first time in years, I walked to the Dance Collection site, the Red Brick Warehouse, along the Kishamichi Promenade, the old port railway route, from Sakuragi-cho Station. Today, the Minato Mirai Line will take you there more conveniently, but before that line was completed, the Kishamichi Promenade was the main route. In the Yokohama Dance Collection EX Competition I, I was particularly impressed by the work of the younger choreographers. The screening committee and the organizers had talked it over and decided to emphasize the choreographers' appetite for fresh creativity and originality throughout the preliminary judging based on videos and the final competition. Neji Pijin, whose unique approach to the body and space was widely noted, won the Jury Prize, an expression of high expectations and encouragement for his originality. Kunimoto Bunpei's tranquil power, Takeuchi Azusa's individual sense of space, and Takahashi Kohei's power at composition also offer great promise. I hope that all the choreographers who submitted the 80 works we experienced in this competition continue to take up the creative challenge and forge even clearer identifies for themselves. If creating is the work of the artist, we would like to devote our energies to ensuring that that work continues unbroken. This is a dance project through which people related to Aerowaves and other festivals, theaters, and other parts of the dance world overseas can participate in considerable numbers and can take a look at young choreographers. If theaters plant trees and festivals give out bouquets, Yokohama Dance Collection, while changing with the times, does both--playing a major role in giving a supportive push to artists.

Ono Shinji

