

Kang Mi-sun, Universal Ballet's Principal Dancer Wins 'Benois de la Danse' Award

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On June 20th, in local time, Kang Mi-sun, a principal dancer of the Universal Ballet, received the "Outstanding Female Dancer Award" at the "2023 Benois de la Danse" ceremony. The event took place at the esteemed Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow, as confirmed by the Benois de la Danse organization committee.

Kang Mi-sun garnered this accolade alongside Zhu Yunting of the National Ballet of China, outperforming esteemed nominees like Étoile Dorothee Gilbert of the Paris Opera Ballet, Elizaveta Kokoreva of the Bolshoi Ballet, and First Soloist May Nagahisa of the Mariinsky Ballet.

Consequently, Kang became the fifth Korean dancer to achieve this distinction, joining the ranks of ballerinas Kang Sue Jin (1999), Kim Joo-won (2006), Park Sae-eun (2018), and danseur Kim Ki-min (2016).

The award-winning ballet, "Mirinae's Path," is an innovative piece encapsulating the distinct Korean sentiment, "Jeong (情 = heart / sentiment / emotion)," communicated through eloquent body language and the vibrant colors of Korean dance. Conceived as part of the "Korea Emotion" work by Artistic Director Yoo Byung-hun, the piece features a crossover music track of the same name from "Da-ul Project, 2014," an album by Jipyong Kwon, a master of Hallyu drama OSTs. This ballet garnered universal acclaim for its poignant portrayal of a wife yearning for her departed husband.

Taken aback by the unexpected honor, Kang Mi-sun expressed, "I didn't anticipate winning this prestigious award, given the extraordinary caliber of the other nominees. I'm exhilarated to showcase Korean creative ballet on an international platform, and I believe the 'Jeong' sentiment, intrinsic to Korean culture, resonated with the judges. I attribute my success to my company's director, Julia Moon, Artistic Director Yoo Byung-hun, and my mentor, Yoo Ji-yeon."

Julia Moon, the director of Universal Ballet, commended Kang, stating, "She is an exceptional dancer, demonstrating remarkable artistry, technique, acting ability, and interpretation of pieces. Her relentless dedication, paired with her humility -- an essential trait for an artist -- has culminated in winning the Benois de la Danse award. This achievement serves as an inspiration, elevating the status of K-Ballet not only in Korea but also

globally."

Established by the International Dance Association (now known as the International Dance Union) in 1991, Benois de la Danse is a revered international award, first given in 1992.

Each year, it reviews the works of ballet companies worldwide, selecting dancers, choreographers, and composers for this honor, often likened to the Academy Awards in the realm of dance.