

The 31st Yasushi Akutagawa Suntory Award
for Music Composition
Yu Kuwabara's
Time Abyss for Seventeen Musicians Divided in Two Groups



The concert to publicly select the winner of the 31st Yasushi Akutagawa Suntory Award for Music Composition (formerly, Akutagawa Award for Music Composition) was held at Suntory Hall in Tokyo on Saturday, August 28 at 3pm. The winning composition was Yu Kuwabara's *Time Abyss for Seventeen Musicians Divided in Two Groups*. She received both an award certificate and cash prize of 1.5 million yen.

Additionally, *Hypomnemata* for Piano and Orchestra, a work by the 29th award winner Yasutaki Inamori commissioned by the Suntory Foundation for the Arts to commemorate its anniversary, had its world premiered on the same day prior to the public concert.

The Yasushi Akutagawa Suntory Award for Music Composition was established by the Suntory Music Foundation (now the Suntory Foundation for the Arts) in April 1990 with the support of the Japan Federation of Composers, and celebrates the achievements of Yasushi Akutagawa (1925-1989), one of the leading Japanese composers of the post-war era. In fond remembrance of the late composer's love of music, his lucid views on music and the passion that he brought to the promotion of music, this composition prize, which

was the first of its kind in Japan, is a unique initiative aimed at up-and-coming composers creating orchestral works full of freshness and steeped in potential, with winners selected from among pieces premiered at public concerts. This is a compound award, as composers winning the prize also receive a commission for a new orchestral work, with the premiered performance held two years thereafter.

The year before last, 2019, marked the 50th anniversary of the founding in 1969 of the parent organization of the Suntory Foundation for the Arts, the Torii Music Foundation, and also a change in the name to “the Yasushi Akutagawa Suntory Award for Music Composition,” to make the spirit of the award clearer. At the same time, the prize-money was increased to ¥1,500,000. Going forward we will continue to support the young composers of Japan as they emerge onto a wider stage.

▽The 31st Yasushi Akutagawa Suntory Award for Music Composition

Yu Kuwabara’s Work

Time Abyss for Seventeen Musicians Divided in Two Groups

▽Reason for the award

She used cutting-edge composition techniques to successfully provide a new listening experience based on the concept of three different types of time, which was highly appreciated.

▽Biography

Yu Kuwabara was born on December 7, 1984 and has completed her master's degree at Tokyo University of the Arts. She investigates Japanese sounds and language from their origins, and her creativity is focused on connecting between the past and the present, and also between Japan and the rest of the world. She was commissioned internationally by the National Theatre of Japan, Kanagawa Kenritsu Ongakudo, Concert Hall Shizuoka AOI, Transit 20/21, I&I Foundation, and others, and her works have been performed in prestigious festivals and projects around the world. She is one of Awai-Za's members, a chamber ensemble mixed with new music and Japanese Edo culture.

▽ Selection process

1. On Tuesday, March 9, 2021, the three members of the selection committee, after careful consideration, came to a decision on the three nominated works by online. These were chosen from among orchestral pieces created by Japanese composers that were first performed in Japan or abroad during the period from January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020, based on the music score and the recording of the first performance. The three members of the selection committee were Keiko Harada, Jo Kondo, Naoki Sakata. (In alphabetical order)

Yu Kuwabara : *Time Abyss* for Seventeen Musicians Divided in Two Groups (2019-20)

Premiered “cresc...Biennale für aktuelle Musik

CRASHKURS HUMAN__MACHINE” on Mar.1, 2020

at Albert-Schweitzer-Schule Offenbach, Offenbach am Main, Germany

Yoichi Sugiyama : *Autoritratto* for orchestra (2020)

Premiered “Suntory Hall Summer Festival 2020

The Producer Series TOSHI ICHIYANAGI-2020 Tokyo 'Avant-garde'

Orchestra SPACE XXI-2” on Aug.30, 2020

at Suntory Hall Main Hall

Takuya Harashima : *YOSEGI fashion* for Biwa and Orchestra (2020)

Premiered “The 89th Music Competition of Japan” on Nov.19, 2020

at NHK Broadcasting Center 505 Studio

2. At Suntory Hall Main Hall on Saturday, August 28, 2021, the above three compositions were performed publicly by the New Japan Philharmonic Orchestra, Biwa performed by Takuya Harashima, conducted by Yoichi Sugiyama. Following the concert, the three jury members— Keiko Harada, Jo Kondo, Naoki Sakata—discussed the compositions publicly (moderated by Yuji Numano) and chose Yu Kuwabara’s composition *Time Abyss* for Seventeen Musicians Divided in Two Groups as the winner of the 31st Yasushi Akutagawa Suntory Award for Music Composition.
3. At the award ceremony held on the stage immediately following the public selection, Suntory Foundation for the Arts Director General, Tsuyoshi Tsutsumi delivered the award certificate and cash prize (1.5 million yen).

The Suntory Foundation for the Arts will also commission a new orchestral work to Yu Kuwabara which, upon completion, will have its premiered performance at a concert sponsored by the foundation. (Commission fee: One million yen)

See [here](#) for more on the Akutagawa Yasushi Suntory Award for Music Composition

See [here](#) about the Suntory Foundation for the Arts