

The 33rd Yasushi Akutagawa Suntory Award
for Music Composition
Wataru Mukai's
DANCING QUEER for Orchestra



Wataru Mukai

The concert to publicly select the winner of the 33rd Yasushi Akutagawa Suntory Award for Music Composition (formerly, Akutagawa Award for Music Composition) was held at Suntory Hall in Tokyo on Saturday, August 26 at 3pm. The winning composition was Wataru Mukai's *DANCING QUEER* for Orchestra. He received both an award certificate and cash prize of 1.5 million yen.

Additionally, *Falling Leaves Moon Steps*, a work by the 31st award winner Yu Kuwabara commissioned by the Suntory Foundation for the Arts to commemorate her winning, 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.

In 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 33rd Yasushi Akutagawa Suntory Award for Music Composition

Wataru Mukai's Work

DANCING QUEER for Orchestra

▽Reason for the award

The composer's attitude toward life makes itself felt in the unconventional presentation, expressed with an actuality that drew high praise.

▽Biography

Wataru Mukai was born on July 22, 1993 in Shizuoka, Japan. After graduating at the top of his class from the Department of Composition in the Faculty of Music at Tokyo University of the Arts, he moved to Germany. Awards include first prize at the International Composer's Competition NEW NOTE in Croatia(19'), second prize at the Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy Conservatory Competition(17'), second prize and the Iwatani Prize in the composition category at the Japan Music Competition(17'), finalist for the 27th Akutagawa Award for Music Composition(17') and the Ataka Prize(16'). He is currently a doctoral researcher at the Anton Bruckner Private University.

▽Selection process

1. On Wednesday, March 8, 2023, 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, 2022 to December 31, 2022, based on the music score and the recording of the first performance.

The three members of the selection committee were Yasutaki Inamori, Kunitaka Kokaji and Yukiko Watanabe. (In alphabetical order)

Hiroki Tanaka: *Trace/Spiral (Différance II)* for orchestra (2021-22)

Premiered “Subscription Concert for the Introduction of New Graduates
by the Geidai Philharmonia Orchestra, Tokyo” on May 21, 2022
at Tokyo University of the Arts, Sogakudo Concert Hall

Junichi Matsumoto: *Half-Forgotten Floors, or Rooms* for Scordatura Group and
Orchestra (2016/2018/2022)

Premiered “The 91st Music Competition of Japan” on Nov.10, 2022
at NHK Broadcasting Center 505 Studio

Wataru Mukai: *DANCING QUEER* for Orchestra (2022)

Premiered “ENSEMBLE FREE EAST The 17th Concert” on September 17, 2022
at Suginami Koukaidou Main Hall

2. At Suntory Hall Main Hall on Saturday, August 26, 2023, the above three compositions were performed publicly by the New Japan Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Seitaro Ishikawa. Following the concert, the three jury members—Yasutaki Inamori, Kunitaka Kokaji and Yukiko Watanabe—discussed the compositions publicly (moderated by Miyuki Shiraishi) and chose Wataru Mukai’s composition *DANCING QUEER* for Orchestra as the winner of the 33rd 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

Wataru Mukai 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