

Cadenza Wins Grand Prize with “Hunger” at MBC Campus Song Festival



The Cadenza members

Courtesy of Kang Min-seo

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Kyoung Hee University (KHU) band Cadenza took the grand prize of the MBC Campus Song Festival, which returned this year after a 13-year break. With their original song “Hunger,” the group sang about the emptiness and longing many young people feel in everyday life. As they plan to continue performing together beyond the festival, expectations are high for their future endeavors. The band plans to stay together for the long haul and continue to release great music.

A Classic Campus Stage Returns After 13 Years

The MBC Campus Song Festival is a creative song competition for university students. It aims to promote a healthy music culture among students and contribute to the development of popular music. The festival was first launched by MBC in 1977. In 2005, MBC Plus took over its production, continuing the tradition until it was discontinued in 2012 because of low ratings.

On October 3, the festival came back with the theme “Lighting Up Youth,” held at Korea Maritime and Ocean University in Busan.

The festival’s long-awaited return heightened public interest. According to MBC, around 2,000

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students from 115 universities participated. Eleven teams made it to the final stage after video and on-site preliminary rounds, each performing an original song.

The judging panel included a lineup of top-tier musicians—including Yoon Sang, Lee Juck, Kolleen Park, Lee Won-seok from Daybreak, Lee Young-hyun, Yook Joong-wan, and Kim Yong-joon from SG Wannabe.

Cadenza Wins Grand Prize with Original Composition “Hunger”

The highlight of the MBC Campus Song Festival was Cadenza, which was made up of five students from KHU’s Dept. of Postmodern Music: Kang Min-seo, Kang Min-goo, Sung Ji-won, Lee Chan-yeong, and Ryu Young-geun. Their band name comes from the musical term *cadenza*, the improvised solo section that appears near the end of a piece. Kang Min-seo

explained, “Our team name reflects our hope that each member’s unique musical talent can be fully expressed within the group, just like the *cadenza* section in music.”

Cadenza showcased their musicality with their original song “Hunger.” Kang Min-seo, the lyricist, explained, “When I thought about ourselves, I realized there are so many things we want to achieve—like dreams or love. I felt that humans must live with this sense of hunger until the very last moment of life, so I titled the song ‘Hunger’ to express that feeling.”

Sung Ji-won, the composer, explained the image they had in mind: “Through this song, I wanted to express the longing that young people often feel. Youth is a time full of frustration; we strongly wish to achieve something, but often experience repeated failures. I wanted to capture that emotion through the song.”

Ryu Young-geun, the drummer, added that hunger itself can be a source of strength. “While frustration and disappointment are inevitable in the process of pursuing dreams, I believe that the way you embrace that hunger can make you stronger,” he said. “Hunger is an emotion everyone experiences in life, but it is a game-changer at the same time, depending on one’s attitude toward it.”

Cadenza received high praise from the judges. Judge Lee Won-seok commented, “This is a band that knows how to cap-

tivate audiences. They are absolutely deserving of the grand prize.”

Judge Yoon Sang added, “Their performance was excellent, as expected of music majors. They had a charm that made you fall for them.”

Lyrics and Sound That Hit Home

The lyrics of “Hunger” capture the emotions and everyday struggles felt by young people. Kang Min-goo, the bassist, shared, “The line ‘I deleted the numbers I had not read in two days’ resonates with me the most. Sometimes when I am exhausted, I put off reading messages and only open them when I feel okay. That line perfectly captures the kind of tough, messy life we live.”

Lee Chan-yeong, the guitarist, also shared, “The line ‘The sky is so high that even if I reach out, I

cannot grasp it at all is the most memorable for me. Life often gives us vague goals. No matter how hard you try, they feel out of reach. I think that lyric expresses that feeling well.”

What’s noteworthy about “Hunger” is not just its lyrics. Sung Ji-won explained, “The core of ‘Hunger’ lies in its mood shifts. The song begins with a fast rhythm, slows down for a moment, and then picks up speed again. I think these tempo changes are the key elements that make the song truly attractive.”

Ryu Young-geun highlighted the bridge as the emotional peak. “We play the first and second verses calmly, but after the bridge, we suddenly perform as if pouring out all our pent-up emotions. I believe this part is what moves the listener’s heart the most.”

What’s Next for Cadenza

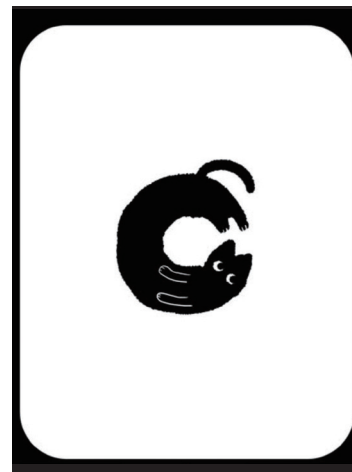
For the band members, the grand prize was not the end but a starting line to develop as musicians. Ryu Young-geun stated, “Cadenza fulfilled a long-held dream. One of my bucket list items was to perform on a big stage, and thanks to my teammates, I could achieve that dream.”

Sung Ji-won also added, “Since I usually write in a more commercial pop style, it was not easy to incorporate meaningful messages. But with Cadenza, I could express those messages more naturally.”

Following the festival, Cadenza plans to continue its musical activities. Kang Min-seo revealed that their short-term goals include releasing a single version of “Hunger” and appearing on the music program “Music Core.” She added, “We want to explore more deeply the sense of deficiency and emptiness embodied in ‘Hunger.’ We plan to incorporate our longing into an album to be released next year.” They also plan to stay connected with listeners through YouTube and Instagram, sharing updates on new music and performances.

Furthermore, Cadenza conveyed a powerful message to fans. Kang Min-seo also stated, “Loving someone requires a lot of energy. We sincerely thank everyone who poured that energy into us. We will strive to create good music and ensure that love does not fade.”

At the MBC Campus Song Festival, held for the first time in 13 years, the band Cadenza won the grand prize. This achievement stemmed from the public’s strong resonance with their song “Hunger,” which captures the emptiness and longing felt by youth in everyday life. Cadenza’s musical journey seems to deserve high expectations.



Cadenza’s symbolic icon

Photo: Cadenza’s Instagram
(instagram.com)