

## Hirano Sho's Natural Life (vol. 1)

*"I can't dance any more... There have been nights I've cried in despair"*

Hirano Sho was born January 29 1997, 7:02 in the morning in Nagoya, Aichi. "When I was little, it seems all I did was make my mum fearful. Like putting a cigarette butt or one yen coin in my mouth. I don't remember it, but I've had a serious illness before too. Apparently when I had an injection for it, my body turned green like a Namekian from *Dragon Ball*" A shocking confession from the outset! He had a big surgery and although the surgery itself was successful, the truth is even now, intense activity is still forbidden.

"I'm also being quite careful when I do acrobatics. When I was in school, I definitely couldn't do relays or long distance events. And I was having regular medical checkups at the hospital... To my mum, I think I was a troublesome kid."

And yet, what he remembers from his mischievous early childhood is clothing. "My mum loved fashion, and bought me lots of clothes, but at the time I loved things like Kamen Rider and Anpanman. Even though other kids were wearing things like Anpanman t-shirts, I was the only one stylishly dressed in a shirt and denim (laughs). I really didn't like that. Everyone was wearing those shoes that light up. Those were so cool. And I was the only one wearing boots. I understand now that it was fashionable, though," he said with a laugh.

"It's true with other things too, but in the end, everything my mum said was right, I think that now. She didn't nag me about studying, but she was strict about proper greetings, etiquette and manners. She told me school isn't just a place you go to study, it's a place you go to learn how to interact with people. I didn't get that at the time, but I naturally became able to treasure my relationships with friends. And I think it was thanks to those words too that I made lots of friends in middle school who would help each other out."

In primary school, he transferred 3 times. “Back then, if you played dodgeball you were friends immediately (laughs). I was good at dodgeball, so I made friends quickly. My first popular period was in year 4 of primary school. Getting 64 chocolates on Valentine’s day was the first record in my life (laughs).”

He started dancing in year 1 of primary school. Surprisingly, at first he was very much against it.

“I took the lessons in tears. It’s still true, but actually I’m not good with being the centre of attention. Back then, I didn’t like standing out for anything aside dodgeball. I was embarrassed. Why did I have to dance in front of people? Right, right, at the chorus for parents in preschool I was the only one who was hugged by the head teacher, in tears...”

This shy boy was captivated by dance within just 1 year. After thinking a little about the reason why he disliked dancing so much but became completely absorbed in it, he told me “... I think it’s because I found my way to express myself.”

“After I started to like dance, I asked to attend other dance lessons. I practised for like 7 hours a day at home. We bought a big mirror, and I would practise in front of it with my mum. It was tiring, but it was really fun. At every lesson, we were given choreography homework, but because I practised for 7 hours at home (laughs), when we had to show the teacher at the next lesson, I was the only one who was good. And then I was so, so happy when I got praised! It was a repetition of that. I really liked my dance teacher too, and my dream of being a dance teacher or dancer in the future sprouted.”

Meanwhile, even while continuing to switch schools, he continued attending dance school as usual and improving his skill. But he also watched the drama *Proposal Daisakusen* and held a vague admiration for Yamashita Tomohisa.

“I didn’t know at all that Yamashita-kun was in Johnny’s. I just liked the drama and thought Yamashita-kun was cool. I loved him as an actor. Huh? Did I think I wanted to be on TV? No way! I didn’t think that at all.”

Just when he thought that, because of his dancing too much, he hurt his knee.

“I really loved to dance, so I was so so nervous that I wouldn’t be able to dance in the future. The doctor at the hospital told me not to move too much from now on, but because there was also my serious illness when I was young, I thought “Eh? There are two reasons I can’t exercise? I can’t dance either?” At home, I overheard my parents talking seriously about the surgery cost and I felt so sorry and cried by myself... I even thought I didn’t need to do the surgery. I don’t know, more than my knee hurting, worrying and troubling my parents with the surgery and thinking about what I’d do from now on was harder.”

Even now, if he moves too much, the old wound on his left knee cannot bend. However, this experience allowed him to face dance with more passion.

“Of course, I stopped practising for 7 hours a day, but I never missed my two lessons a week. Around that time, I became able to take part in contests and stuff too, and I got a bit used to standing in front of a crowd.” While saying this, he was clear that he never once thought “I want to be in front.” It seems that even now as he stands at the centre of dazzling stages and mesmerises fans with perfect performances, at his core he still feels that “I don’t want to stand out.”

“But when I dance in a group or something, I end up trying hard, wanting people to look at me more than anyone else.”

Despite acknowledging that he does hope to be watched, when he comes back to himself and views himself objectively it gets unbearably embarrassing. He has those two contradicting selves. “Probably... I want to be acknowledged,” he said softly.

“I started to like dance, wanted to be like my dance teacher, practised recklessly, steadily got better, ruined my knee and fell into darkness. I was in despair that I might not be able to dance anymore, but I can still dance. So I want to work harder. I got more fired up then. Wanting to quickly become a proper dancer. With my gratitude for my parents who have supported me so far too, I’ll work hard and work hard, as much as anyone else. No, I want to be able to do more than others. The experience of those two big surgeries is always in my heart.”