

Kim Ki-min becomes first S. Korean ballerino to win top award

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Kim Ki-min has become the first South Korean ballerino to win the world's most prestigious ballet award, organizers said Wednesday.

The organizing committee of Benois de la Danse 2016 declared him the best dancer on Tuesday, local time, for his role as Solor in the Paris Opera Ballet's "La Bayadere de Rudolf Noureev" staged in late 2015.

The 24-year-old is currently the principal dancer with Russia's Mariinsky Ballet.

Previously, two other South Korean ballerinos -- Kim Hyun-woong and Lee Dong-hoon -- have been nominated for the award but came up empty-handed.

Kang Sue-jin became the first South Korean ballerina to capture the honor in 1999, and Kim Joo-won followed in her footsteps in 2006.

Benois de la Danse was founded in 1992 by the International Dance Association in Moscow in honor of the distinguished French choreographer Jean-Georges Noverre who lived from 1727-1810.

Each year, the jury evaluates performances done by the top ballet organizations across the world and selects winning choreographers, ballerinas, dancers and scenographers.

Kim became the first Asian ballerino to join Mariinsky, one of the world's top ballet groups, in 2011.

He went straight to the Dance School of Korea National University of Arts from middle school.

He has claimed first and second prizes at international ballet competitions since 2008, the first one coming in Rome. (Yonhap)