



# Totsu-totsu Dance

Annual  
Report  
2023



torindo

## **"Totsu-totsu Dance" Annual Report 2023**

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## Forward

Takeshi Toyohira, torindo,  
general incorporated association

Totsu-totsu Dance, developed by dancer/choreographer Osamu Jareo and torindo, is now on the cusp of its 15th year. I believe it is an unusual example of an art project that has lasted as long as this.

The start of Totsu-totsu Dance was in Graceville Maizuru, a special elderly nursing home, in Maizuru city, Kyoto. It began with a residency Jareo did as a precursor for a stage production, and continued as a workshop at the facility for roughly 10 years. Once a month Jareo conducted a dance workshop with the elderly residents and caregivers, and clinical philosophers and cultural anthropologists would attempt to describe it with the participants. Even after visitors were not allowed due to the outbreak of Covid in 2019, the workshops continued online. And then in 2022 it took flight from Maizuru and began activities overseas to share the experiences accumulated thus far with people of other cultures.

Now this year, in addition to Malaysia where we ventured last year, we expanded our activities to Singapore and Kagoshima in Japan. Of special note is the start of full-fledged dance workshops with people with dementia and their families. In Malaysia last year, although there were workshops at some facilities as well as online, it was constrained mainly to dialogue through dance with locals interested in dementia care but this time we were able to devote time to full-fledged workshops with many elderly people with dementia and their families. The fact that the local coordinators in both Singapore and Kagoshima masterfully perceived our intentions played a key role. In Singapore, we were able to do a public workshop with people with dementia at a large-scale stadium event promoting understanding of dementia, and in Kagoshima we were able to visit not just special elderly nursing homes but also hospices and day service centers.

Furthermore, for HR development we also held workshops for artists, and explored ways to report the outcome of Totsu-totsu Dance while at the same time present a work-in-progress performance not just with Jareo but with other participating artists.

I believe Totsu-totsu Dance is an “open textbook”. Everyone who gets involved writes into it and new colors are created. The content changes every time it is read. This Report is a description of Totsu-totsu Dance as it stands at this moment in time.

## The Journey of Totsu-totsu Dance in 2023

In addition to organizing workshops overseas, in 2023 Totsu-totsu Dance focused on holding continuous workshops in Japan and building interaction partners.

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### ● Malaysia

**Date:** August 1-5

**Venue:** Taylor's Lakeside Campus,  
Bagan Specialist Centre/Elder Care Centre, Five Arts Center

**Participants:** Elderly people with dementia, carepartners, and artists

**Activities:** Workshops and lectures

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### ● Singapore

**Dates:** August 7-10, September 5-9

**Venue:** New Horizon Center, Dementia Social Club, Apsaras Arts, Our Tampines Hub, and online

**Participants:** Elderly people with dementia, carepartners, and artists

**Activities:** Workshops, lectures, performance, and participation in "Family Fiesta Carnival"

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### ● Kagoshima, Japan

**Dates:** September 22-23, November 2-3

**Venue:** Aozora Higashi Sengoku, Home Hospice Mokuren no Ie,  
LL Sanekata, Home Hospice Anma no Ie,  
Special Nursing Home Silk Road Shichifukujin, Hirayama no Ie,  
Fun2 Terrace Shichifukujin, Myogyouji Montokaikan Hall

**Participants:** Elderly people with dementia, carepartners, caregivers and medical personnel

**Activities:** Site visits, pinion exchanges, workshops, and lectures

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### ● Tokyo, Japan

**Date:** December 2-3, 2023

**Venue:** Tokyo Performing Arts Center, White Studio

**Participants:** General public

**Activities:** Report on activities in FY2023

(Video and text exhibition, work-in-progress performance, talk session)



## If One Were to Verbalize Totsu-totsu Dance

Takeshi Toyohira, torindo,  
general incorporated association

A new activity that started this year was the Totsu-totsu Dance workshop for artists which were held in Malaysia and Singapore. We would like to get various artists such as dancers and performers interested in Totsu-totsu Dance so that they could conduct their own version of the workshops with people with dementia and carepartners. This rises from our desire to explore how the activity could continue even without visits by the Totsu-totsu Dance team led by Jareo.

Incidentally, we had thus far avoided verbalizing Totsu-totsu Dance. We did have people from various fields such as philosophers, anthropologist and medical practitioners verbally trace the outlines of Totsu-totsu Dance but we had made sure that it did not result in a definitive statement, "Totsu-totsu Dance is ...". The worry was that the moment it was verbalized, its meaning would become set in stone, and the valuable blank margins would be lost, but when we tried to conduct a workshop for artists we were confronted by the question, "What is Totsu-totsu Dance?" which we had purposely avoided. In addition, it was one thing to do it in Japanese but we had to explain it with our halting English.

Once we decided to do a workshop for artists, we broke down the component elements of Totsu- Totsu Dance together with Osamu Jareo and attempted to verbalize each one. We would verbalize it, present it at a workshop, and then make revisions. As a result, we extracted several key words, such as "synchronize breathing," "lock eyes with each other," "maintain distance," "join hands," "cross the border". By using these as guides we were able to have a meaningful workshop with the artists, and it resulted in the "Outcome Report" in the form of a performance at the Exhibition of Activity Reports 2023. But this journey has only just begun and I believe it is a question that we need to continuously examine moving forwards.

## Record of activities in Malaysia and Singapore

The Japanese production team lead by Osamu Jareo travelled to Malaysia and Singapore in the summer of 2023. In order to explore the possibility of activities from different perspectives, contemporary artist Okui Lala who works in Malaysia joined us for most of the program. Here we share the activities conducted at various places we visited.

### ● Malaysia (31 July - 6 August 2023)

#### 1 Taylor's Lakeside Campus

**Date:** 1th August 2023

**Venue:** Taylor's Lakeside Campus

(Subang Jaya, Selangor)

**Facilitators:**

Osamu Jareo and Megumi Kamimura

**Guest Artist:** Okui Lala

**Coordinator:** Cecilia Chan



#### ● Morning: Closed workshop.

**Participants:** 31 in total; elderly people with dementia, their families, and carepartners.

**Content:** Look at each other, imitate partner's movements, mirror partners' movements without making physical contact

##### **Feedback from participants**

- The "lock eyes" exercise was awkward as being Asian I was not used to looking eye to eye. It felt like my partner was also uncomfortable.
- In the exercise of sensing your partner without touching them, despite the lack of physical contact we settle into a rhythm and started moving together. It wasn't as if either one of us was taking the lead. I felt a rhythm develop.

#### ● Afternoon: Public lecture, designing a workshop.

**Participants:** 86 in total; students studying dance or art, and medical practitioners.

**Content:** Introduction of past Totsu-totsu Dance activities, design a workshop for elderly dementia patients.

##### **Participants' Feedback**

- Because it was post-pandemic, it reminded me of the joys of a workshop involving physical contact (carepartner).
- I used to work at a Japanese facility but I never knew of this approach. I now run an elderly nursing care facility. I'd like to learn more about it (facility operator).

## 2 Bagan Specialist Centre/ Elder Care Centre

**Date:** 3-4th August 2023

**Venue:** Bagan Specialist Centre/Elder Care Centre  
(Butterworth, Penang)

**Facilitators:** Osamu Jareo and Megumi Kamimura

**Guest Artist:** Kamal Sabran, Aida Redza, Okui Lala

**Coordinator:** Cecilia Chan

**Participants:** 39 in total; elderly people with dementia, carepartners, USM students, dancers based nearby.

**Content:** **Day 1-** Self-introduction and simple exercises. **Day 2-** Without setting any particular rules, dance along to the movements that well up naturally from within while listening to the music.

### Feedback from participants

- I was very surprised that my father, who initially had no desire to talk, was dancing at the end.

(dementia patient's family).

- I simply followed my partner at the start. When we made eye contact, I started wondering what am I doing, what is the other person thinking? Gradually the user I had paired up with started teaching me various movements, such as elbows and back. (carepartner).

- As I'm a dancer, I started off thinking I should take the lead. Normally I listen to the sound and dance by recollecting my memories but this time I danced wondering if the (movement) was suitable or unpleasant for my partner (dancer).



## 3 Bagan Specialist Centre

**Date:** 3rd August 2023

**Venue:** Bagan Specialist Centre (Butterworth, Penang)

**Facilitators:** Osamu Jareo, Megumi Kamimura  
and Takeshi Toyohira

**Coordinator:** Cecilia Chan

**Participants:** 85 in total; carepartners and medical practitioners.

**Content:** Each group designed a workshop, presented, then emulated it. Q&A session.



## 4 Five Arts Center

**Date:** 5th August 2023

**Venue:** Five Arts Center (Kuala Lumpur, Selangor)

**Facilitators:** Osamu Jareo and Takeshi Toyohira

**Coordinator:** Kyoko Kugai

**Participants:** 15 in total; artists residing in Malaysia.

**Content:** Briefing on aging in Japan and its social impact. Implement and design workshops. Q&A and discussion about detailed physical movement, distance between body and mind.



● Singapore #1 (6 - 11 August 2023)

## 1 New Horizon Center

**Date:** 7th, 8th, 10th August 2023

**Venue:** New Horizon Center (Bukit Batok)

**Facilitators:** Osamu Jareo and Megumi Kamimura

**Guest Artist:** Mohd Yaziz Bin Mohd Hassan (Yaziz) ,  
Kamal Sabran and Okui Lala / **Coordinator:** Audrey Perera

**Content:** Creating portraits, exercises to music, lecture  
on activities for caregivers and designing workshops .



● Closed workshop (7th, 8th, 10th August 2023)

**Participants:** 45 in total; elderly people with dementia, carepartners.

**Feedback from participants**

- I had difficulty with the "Lock eyes" exercise because I couldn't get rid of my "caregiver's hat". I want to continue thinking what was meant by Jareo's words, "Lock eyes and movement begins, lock eyes for an encounter." (carepartner).

- I felt that sound and music was important. When one hears sound the body moves instinctively and so it would be good if everyone move in the same manner. Does a connection form as a result? (carepartner).

● Lecture & Workshop for Carepartners (8th August 2023)

**Participants:** 16 in total; carepartners working at Dementia Singapore.

**Feedback from participants**

- The slow walk exercise was very good because I felt a sensation that was different usual from in my feet, fingers and knees.

- Because I had dance experience, I felt like I could see how the creative powers of dance and art could be helpful to elderly dementia patients.

## 2 Dementia Social Club

**Date:** 7th August 2023

**Venue:** Dementia Social Club (Tiong Bahru)

**Facilitators:** Osamu Jareo and Megumi Kamimura

**Guest Artist:** Yaziz and Okui Lala

**Coordinator:** Audrey Perera

**Participants:** 46 in total; elderly people with dementia living  
in the community and their families.

**Content:** Exercises such as "Make physical contact with a part of the body" and "Walk together without touching each other." Some participants were from the previous year's online workshop.

**Feedback from participants**

- It wasn't as if my relationship with my partner changed dramatically because of the workshop. But what was important is how one can acquire the sensations born out of dances like these and how one could develop a relationship that lets you do it together. Today my partner continued to watch over me. I'd like to think about what lies beyond that. (J, a participant of last year's online workshop).





● Singapore #2 (6 - 10 September 2023)

## 1 Apsaras Arts

**Date:** 7th September 2023

**Venue:** Apsaras Arts (Goodman Arts Centre)

**Facilitators:** Osamu Jareo

**Coordinator:** Audrey Perera

**Participants:** 20 in total; artists residing in Singapore and staff members.

**Content:** After explaining about the Totsu-Totsu Dance thus far, the elements comprise it described. Exercises based on said elements are done. Lock eyes with each other and move, close eyes and move together with one's partner.



## 2 Our Tampines Hub

**Date:** 9th September 2023 (Creation of works: 5, 8 September)

**Venue:** Our Tampines Hub (Tampines Area)

**Facilitators:** Osamu Jareo and Takeshi Toyohira

**Collaborator:** Yaziz, Dementia & Co.

**Coordinator:** Audrey Perera and Dementia Singapore

**Content:** Composed of 2 parts. In part 1, a workshop-based performance was created. The audience and dementia patients joined in as well in the dance. Part 2 was a public workshop. An exercise where a tissue paper placed on the back of the hand is passed along to your neighbors was done together with the general participants.



## Essays - Malaysia and Singapore

The following essays were written by three people who have been instrumental in the development of <Totsu-totsu Dance> in Malaysia and Singapore. Cecilia Chan has coordinated in Malaysia, and Audrey Perera in Singapore. Don Mendoza is a senior manager of a welfare organization, Dementia Singapore, in Singapore.

### Malaysia



**Cecilia Chan**  
(Coordinator / Malaysia)

In Malaysia, people living with dementia are among the most stigmatized. It is usually framed within a medical model which often conveys them as lost, robbed of mind, doomed, and the living dead. This has profound consequences for Malaysians with dementia and their families, perpetuating the stigma and misunderstanding about dementia and causing much harm, suffering, and discrimination.

My objective is to challenge this perception and change the narratives by creating a more inclusive culture for all. However, this is a huge challenge and an uphill battle as this concept is very new in Malaysia. I believe that the Totsu-Totsu dance is one platform that can help create this inclusive culture.

Totsu-Totsu dance has been introduced to Malaysians for the past two years. Last year was the second time we experienced hands-on Totsu-Totsu with the team from Japan. It took place in August 2023 with sessions both in Penang as

well as in KL. There were two different categories of workshops conducted, one catered for the public and the other specifically for those living with dementia and their family members and care partners.

What I observed and discovered from the workshops in the year 2023 is that many participants shared their positive experiences, especially from the family members of those living with dementia. This is especially so with PWD who are non-verbal, and who are not able to communicate using language. Totsu-totsu provides a tool for them to connect with their loved ones without having to use language. This is a powerful mechanism as very often in Malaysia, those who are not able to communicate verbally are being ignored. Thus, they are deprived of any human connection, and their fundamental needs as human beings are often ignored. Many participants who are family members of those living with dementia voiced their surprise when they saw their loved ones fully participate during the tots-u-totsu workshops. Many also shared that they were calmer and happier after the tots-u-totsu experience. I believe it is because their basic need to connect and to be a part of the shared human experience was met during the workshop. The positive emotions were very prominent as it appeared to have evoked a positive response from everyone involved. Participants seemed to forget their physical condition, especially those confined to wheelchairs while dancing, and there was a mutual tenderness in communication between the dancers( participants). The most significant result was the emotional reaction shown when those living with dementia moved and their bodies were engaged

as they danced with different partners.

This demonstrates how tots-u-tots-u has the potential to challenge the stigma associated with dementia and support social inclusion. This underscores the urgent need to make dance programs such as Tots-u-Tots-u more widely accessible to people living with dementia. I believe that this experience has strengthened my belief that compassion and hope are possible when we recognize our shared humanity and one such experience is through the Tots-u-Tots-u experience.

## Singapore



**Audrey Perera**

(Program Manager / Singapore)

It was very fulfilling to introduce Tots-u-tots-u dance to Singapore. Our country, like Japan and many other countries, is facing the realities of an aging population. This population has a higher life expectancy, bringing with it the need to effectively manage and provide treatments for chronic illnesses and conditions such as dementia.

The Singapore government is racing to prepare the country's healthcare and social service sectors for the rising numbers of people living with dementia. In the area of using the arts as a

form of therapy – that has been proven to improve mood, memory and create joy – there are already ongoing programmes at the various dementia care centres and geriatric wards.

But Tots-totsu dance was something no one had experienced before.

Thanks to Dementia Singapore, the national “anchor” organisation for dementia, for its support, enthusiasm and willingness to work with Torindo/Totsu-totsu dance. With its support, we were able to organise several pilot workshops. These were conducted in dementia day care centres managed by Dementia Singapore over 2 weeks in August and September 2023. The participants included Young Onset dementia patients. Care partners at the centres and caregivers of the participants also participated.

In order for the workshops to be as lively and engaging as possible, and also to include some familiar musical sounds which the participants hear in Singapore, we enlisted the services of renown percussionist Mohd Yaziz Bin Mohd Hassan (Yaziz), who is co-founder and executive director of percussion ensemble, Nadi Singapura. Yaziz already conducts drumming workshops for people living with dementia, and was eager to experience and contribute to the Tots-u-totsu dance workshops. He brought with him his rhythmic talents, a range of Asian percussion instruments and some creative approaches to integrating his percussive beats with the dance/movements of Osamu Jareo and Megumi Kamimura.

We realised that if we are to develop a full Totsu-totsu dance programme in Singapore, we need to be able to scale it up. This means that we must be able to train a few dancers/choreographers/movement artists in the Totsu-totsu dance methodology. To kickstart this process, we organised a Totsu-totsu dance workshop for

performing artists in Singapore. This presented us with an idea of whether/how many artists may be interested to understand this approach better, and keen to use their talents towards working with people living with dementia.

It was heartening for two reasons: firstly, 17 artists signed up and 15 of them attended (the two who did not attend were on medical leave); and secondly, most of them were in their 20s and 30s. Of these, Osamu Jareo identified some with the potential to be trained in the methodology.

The venue, AV equipment and operation for the workshop was provided at no charge by homegrown Singapore Indian classical dance company, Apsaras Arts. Senior dancers from this company have been trained in dance therapy, so there was a natural willingness to support Tot-su-totsu dance.

The experience of organising the workshops and bringing so many people together, and working with so many creative talents from different disciplines for a shared cause, was indeed very profound. We hope to develop a Tot-su-totsu dance programme in Singapore, developed based on research and findings from the experiences in Japan.

Our primary focus must begin with developing a pool of performing artists who can conduct the sessions, and we look forward to beginning work toward that goal.



**Don Mendoza**

(Senior Manager, Advocacy & Communications, Dementia Singapore)

## 1 About Dementia Singapore

Formed in 1990 as Alzheimer's Disease Association to better serve Singapore's growing dementia community, increase awareness about dementia, and reduce the stigma surrounding the condition, Dementia Singapore is today Singapore's leading Social Service Agency in specialised dementia care. Its aim is to advocate for the needs of people living with dementia and their families, and empower the community through capability-building, knowledge, and consultancy, as well as deliver quality person-centred care innovations.

As such, Dementia Singapore is constantly looking into ways to innovate and improve how we support our growing community of PLWDs and their unique needs. We know that arts-based programmes are increasingly being used to help with their wellbeing, to engage their minds and lift their moods. But aside from craft work (which also creates a sense of achievement), dancing has in fact proven to be particularly beneficial in delaying the effects of dementia. The process of combining music and movement to express oneself can create well-being, stability, and connection with reality at the physical, sensory, emotional, and social level. And the success of the creative arts programmes we offer at



our care centres offer further prove of these advantages.

This is also why we find the Totsu-totsu approach very interesting. Predominantly because it aims to find and create connections on a deeper level, affording PLWDs and their caregivers the opportunity to communicate more intimately even when the task seems challenging or on some days seemingly impossible.

## 2 Purpose and potential

One of the main reasons we feel the Totsu-totsu approach opens the door to potentially deeper connections is because we feel it there is a uniquely personal exchange between participants using the Totsu-totsu's approach, as it utilises the principles of improvisation. Which means there are no wrong or right moves or set moves to memorise. Instead, the approach utilises elements of trust exercises to help facilitate a more intimate channel of communication, shared Dr Chen Shiling, who is also a Dementia Singapore board member. She added that "it leaves participants open to discovering new ways to connect, and that is particularly beneficial when dealing with the uncertainties and anxieties persons with dementia may face".

While the positive effects are not always immediately obvious, we have witness how Totsu-totsu's approach is able to engage a participant of the workshop who had been having an emotionally stressful week and was not in the right mood or place for engage in the usual, fun activities. Another caregiver shared how impressed she was that the Totsu-totsu team was able to connect with participants "through both physical and non-physical contact (non-verbal), and the effect it had on them".

## 3 Local advantage

Just as obvious is the potential the Totsu-totsu approach has in engaging partners in

the local arts community – from dancers to musicians to sound artists and even filmmakers – and in new ways, to boot. Such collaborations could also create new ways to engage the wider community, create conversations and help reduce the stigma surrounding dementia.

### ● Profile:

#### **Cecilia Chan**

Gerontologist (Doctor of Gerontology). She has consulted for a number of elderly welfare services and facilities, and also founded "Living Beyond Dementia," a community support group to support people with dementia, their families and caregivers, and promote understanding of dementia. Currently, she works at the Eldercare Centre in the Bagan Specialist Centre.

#### **Audrey Perera**

Singapore-based arts festival producer and writer. In 2018, she directed the first True Colours Festival (TCF), held in Singapore and presented by The Nippon Foundation. From 2018, Audrey was Advisor and then Executive Producer of TCF, which brings people together to celebrate diversity and inclusion through concerts, documentaries, music videos, film festivals, workshops and dialogues. She serves in a voluntary capacity as a board member of two Singapore traditional arts companies, Apsaras Arts Singapore and Nadi Singapura.

#### **Don Mendoza**

Senior Manager of Advocacy & Communications at Dementia Singapore, a social welfare agency in Singapore. Dementia Singapore is one of the leading organizations in Singapore in dementia care, caregiver support, training, consulting, and advocacy.

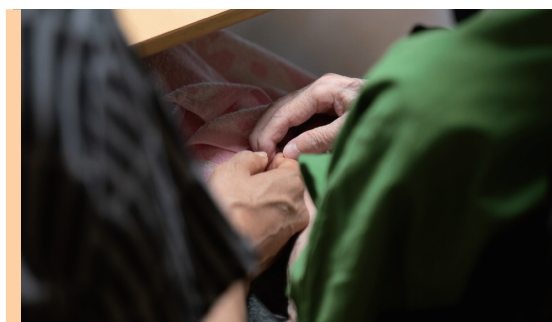
## Site Visit, Workshops and Lecture in Kagoshima

In 2023, we also focused on further expanding our activities within Japan. As a first step we visited several facilities such as hospices in Kagoshima, a region which our staff had a gies with. We worked on organizing a Totsu-Totsu Dance that suited the characteristics of the facilities, its residents and caregivers. Here is an introduction of the facility and workshop as seen through our eyes.

### ● September: First site visit to Kagoshima, and subsequent lecture and workshop

#### 1 Home Hospice Mokuren House

A hospice meant to be a final home for residents. Jareo sits diagonally in the front of a woman who happened to be there, and a silent and steady “dance” unfolded between the two of them, involving fingers and toes.



**Date:** 22nd Sep. / **Venue:** Hioki city / **Participants:** 5 in total; elderly people with dementia, carepartners.

#### 2 Hirayama House (Iroha Co. Ltd.)

A home with a large window providing a wide view of the outside and a unique floor plan. Received a grand welcome and a workshop was conducted impromptu.

**Date:** 23rd Sep. / **Venue:** Minami-kyushu city / **Participants:** 15 in total; elderly people with dementia, carepartners.

#### 3 Myogyoji Temple, Monto-kaikan

An introductory lecture and workshop for carepartners and others who came in response to the open invitation. They experienced standing in a long horizontal line and walking from one end of the space to the other as slowly as possible. They shared their thoughts afterwards.



**Date:** 22nd Sep. / **Venue:** Kagoshima city / **Participants:** 40 in total; carepartners, medical professionals, university staff, community members interested in dementia care, etc.

\*In September we conducted site visits of several other facilities in addition to the above.



- **November: Full-fledged workshops were held at those facilities who had expressed interest during the earlier site visit.**

## 1 Aozora Higashi-Senzoku

A facility that is located in a building in the centre of the city. Because there were many participants, Jareo explained using a whiteboard. He got the carepartners involved, and had them do exercises in pairs like taking 5 minutes to shake hands, and moving hands at a distance close enough to touch but never making contact.



**Date:** 2nd Nov. / **Venue:** Kagoshima city / **Participants:** 20 in total; elderly people with dementia, carepartners.



## 2 LL Sanetaka

Community-based, day care facility located in a house on a hill. An in-depth conversation takes place outdoors, led by a man who plays the harmonica, Jareo and Ishida. A relaxed atmosphere with staff working nearby and a mobile vegetable seller stopping by.

**Date:** 3rd Nov. / **Venue:** Kagoshima city / **Participants:** 5 in total; elderly people with dementia, carepartners.

## 3 Fan 2 Terraces Shichifukujin

A group home located on a quiet residential street. Carepartners also joined in the workshop which had people sit across from each other in pairs and moving hands at a distance close enough to touch but never making contact.



**Date:** 3rd Nov. / **Venue:** Kagoshima city / **Participants:** 20 in total; elderly people with dementia, carepartners.



## 4 Myogyoji Temple, Monto-kaikan

Following up on September, a workshop for the general public was held at Myogyoji. Participants moved their bodies using the key words that were used at the workshop for artists overseas. Totally unrelated conversations were conducted among the group.

**Date:** 3rd Nov. / **Venue:** Kagoshima city / **Participants:** 30 in total; carepartners, medical professionals, university staff, community members interested in dementia care, etc.

Photo: Kota Baba (excluding Myogyoji Temple of 4)

## Essays - Kagoshima

The development of "Totsu-totsu Dance" in Kagoshima was coordinated by UD Labs, LLC. In addition to introducing us to the various facilities, they also introduced us to the Myogyoji Temple as a venue for workshops for the public. The essays here are written by Reiko Tsutsumi, the representative of UD Lab LLC, Satomi Adachi, a staff member, and Yoriaki Inoue, the chief priest of Myogyoji Temple.

### Totsu-totsu Dance is a Tree of Acceptance

**Reiko Tsutsumi**

(representative of UD Labs, LLC. / Coordinator of  
Totsu-totsu Dance in Kagoshima)

The number of senior citizens with dementia in Japan was estimated to be 4,620,000 in 2012, and is forecasted to reach roughly 7 million in 2025, or 1 out of every 5 seniors above 65 years old (New Orange Plan, Comprehensive Strategy to Accelerate Dementia Measures). Our company provides staff who travels with and cares for persons requiring nursing care, and half of our clients are elderly dementia patients.

This time we took on the job of introducing Totsu-totsu Dance to carepartners in Kagoshima, but we struggled with how to describe it. Generally dementia symptoms tend to be thought of as a condition requiring intensive care, and Totsu-totsu Dance has no beginning, middle or end, nor a landing point, and is far removed from regular dance.

Jareo, a dancer, expressed it as, "Wanting to be a plant next to you." The tree's existence puts elderly with dementia at ease about "living" and they start to express themselves. A dance of breath begins. A metaphor would be the tree of acceptance. After each Totsu-totsu dance, I end up quietly weeping. Why do I feel like my soul has been cleansed? It's a dance I'd like to get as many carepartners as possible to watch.

**Satomi Adachi**

(staff member of UD Labs, LLC. / Coordinator of Tot-  
su-totsu Dance in Kagoshima)

Jareo said that, "All the cells in a person's body are aching to dance." Although their everyday lives differ, do the cellular rhythm of people with dementia and the carepartners ever synchronize? I felt a cellular dance naturally appeared from within the people with dementia, travelled across to others, and synchronized. It was a moment I felt the depth of dance as an art form.

## Having Experienced Totsu-totsu Dance

### Yoriaki Inoue

(chief priest of Myogyoji Temple / cooperator in  
organizing “Totsu-totsu Dance” workshops  
and providing the venue)

Out of the desire to make the temple a “a safe place to rely on” for the local community, we have held many events to learn and consult about medical treatment and welfare to create a “place of safe haven” which resulted in this workshop. The exercise at the beginning, “form a line from one end to the other and simply walk slowly”; initially I kept looking at the feet of those in front of me and fretted about maintaining my distance but I was gradually engulfed by the many “heartbeats of life” like the sensation of my feet pressing down on the tatami mat, the various noises around me, the breath of others, and I began to sense my existence in the moment. Once that was achieved, I was excited about “what” I would notice and gain during the workshop. How greatly the “distance” between individuals when they are together impacts our “emotions,” how difficult the seemingly simple act of “synchronized breathing” is and its preciousness; by experiencing each movement that I normally do without a second thought in this workshop, I had the opportunity to think about the abundance of treasures not just in our relationship with people with dementia but the preciousness of being with others.

It feels like that this “temple,” a space that has valued people and been overflowing with respect for life over its long history, played a role in nudging me to recognize this important awareness as a human.

### ● Profile:

#### Reiko Tsutsumi:

Representative of UD Lab LLC. Started business in Kagoshima in 2015 as an accompanying service for outings. She provides services ranging from personal outings to planning and accompanying senior tours for facilities. She has been working energetically to “Let’s give elderly people a chance to go out!”

#### Satomi Adachi:

UD Lab LLC Staff. As president of the NPO Listening Mama Project, she manages a party organization that provides online listening services to mothers in child-rearing. Since the Corona disaster, she has been advising and supporting online outreach at UD Lab regarding relations with those who are unable to go outside the home.

#### Yoriaki Inoue:

Born in 1962. Graduate of College of Arts, Rikkyo University; postgraduate course, Chuo Bukkyo Gakuin. Previously headmaster of Taniyama Kindergarten, putting into practice the approach centered on play and educating all children together regardless of whether they have disabilities or not. Currently as priest of Jinkizan Myokoji, Jodo Shinshu Honganji-ha, he coordinates with specialists in medical, welfare and funeral matters to create a temple that is a safe haven for the community (temple providing comprehensive care to the community).



## Exhibition of Activity Reports 2023

Video of activities at the places visited in Singapore, Malaysia and Kagoshima were screened at the venue as well as past Totsu-totsu Dance performances. Also, the performance piece produced with the Japanese and foreign artists who were involved in the 2023 activity was presented a total of 3 times. There was also a talk session reflecting back on the activities and performances in the afternoon of the 2nd day. Many people came, mainly those interested in art and dance as well as those involved in welfare and caregiving in the Kanto region. For certain time slots, we received many seat reservation requests for performances, indicating a high level of interest.



\*For details regarding speakers  
(<https://torindo.net/news/2023report/>)



**Date:** 2-3 December 2023 / **Venue:** Tokyo Art Center, White Studio (Adachi-ku, Tokyo)

**Supports:** Japanese subtitles, Japanese-English text support, Japanese-English interpretation and sign language interpretation / **Participants:** 202 people

### **Contents:**

#### ● Video recordings of past activities

1. "Totsu-totsu Dance 2023 in Malaysia-Singapore" Filming and editing by Kota Baba

2 "Totsu-totsu Dance 2023 in Kagoshima"

Photographed by Kota Baba and production team members

3 "Totsu-totsu Dance 2009-2015" Director: Tetsu Kubota

#### ● Talk session: Report on activities in 2023

**Speakers:** Audrey Perera, Okui Lala, Megumi Kamimura, Osamu Jareo, Takeshi Toyohira

#### ● Performance

**Artist:** Tomoya Ishida, Okui Lala, Megumi Kamimura, Osamu Jareo

**Cooperation for Workshops:** Dementia & Co. / **Technical Director:** So Ozaki

**Lighting Designer:** Yasuhiro Fujiwara / **Video and Sound Design:** Yoshihiro Yoshida (Edith Grove)

**Video Operation:** Yosuke Sakai / **Video Editing:** Kota Baba, Okui Lala / **Time:** 60 min.

The program kicked off with an online session connecting 2-3 sets of people with dementia and their families based in Singapore who we met this year with Jareo and Kamimura in Tokyo. Afterwards, with a physical performance by Jareo and Kamimura as a center piece they talked about their experiences, Okui Lala who had participated in the Malaysian leg recited a poem, Tomoya Ishida who took part in the Kagoshima portion talked and presented a performance. The Totsu-totsu Dance activities were presented using a variety of methods.



### ● Talk Session

During the talk session, Osamu Jareo, Megumi Kamimura, and Okui Lala commented about the various workshops and the creation process leading up to the performance piece, and Kamimura and Okui shared how the Totsu-totsu Dance experience has shaped their own creative process. Furthermore, after a brief commentary by Audrey Perera, the Singapore coordinator, about the current state of dementia care and art in that country, we heard about how facilities to host Totsu-totsu Dance were selected and the hopes she had for it in the future.

In the latter half of the session there were many keen questions regarding dementia care in Malaysia and Singapore, as well as about dance and art from the caregiving point of view, and we were able to share about many aspects of this year's activities.

Photo by Masanori Nishino



## Contributed essay

Totsu-totsu Dance 2023 activity report session was a unique experience consisting of a video exhibition, a performance, and a talk session. Mr. Kanji Miyashita, a researcher of performing arts, contributed an article on "Totsu-totsu Dance".

### The Future of Totsu-totsu Dance

**Kanji Miyashita**

The Work-in-Progress presented at the Exhibition of Activity Reports 2023 was a performance not just by Osamu Jareo but also artists from diverse genres with varying backgrounds such as Megumi Kamimura, Tomoya Ishida and Okui Lala. On the other hand, those who did not actually get up on stage (although connected via online) were the people with dementia. I felt this contrast gave a glimpse of the issues this Project aims to address, how a physical art form like dance can provide a unique ethical answer.

At the outset Jareo and Kamimura expounded on the 4 tasks. Based on their past experience, these tasks are muscular memories of their interactions with various people which have been translated into a methodology. If anything, these tasks seem like a physical contact that occurs just before an explicit communication takes place. Furthermore, because it is not a movement which recreates an actual episode, it is abstract. As a result, although we may not be able to vividly experience the past through the implementation of the task, we can experience the delicate moment of physical contact each time. Within the performance space created by tasks which are physical methods, it becomes possible to get a little closer to dementia patients who are constantly physically absent. At the same time we continue to reminisce about getting close to physically an absent person, and (just as the execution of tasks yields varied reactions), an

encounter with an individual is by chance and sustaining that connection is most likely not easy and sustainable.

This performance was not just a moment of reminiscence but also a moment to encounter various people who came on the stage. This was because we could see their bodies and listen to their voices through a physical method not bound by rules. Furthermore, it was also a moment where we could meet those present as well as others we could potentially meet, and it no longer felt like a dance expressing Jareo's personal reminiscence. The question had shifted from how to transform an encounter into a dance but how to create that moment of encounter. The ethical position that dance represents attempts to answer this question, and to create an opportunity for a physical encounter no matter how unstable and limited it may be.

#### ● Profile:

Part-time lecturer at the Department of Literature, Keio University as well as the Department of scenography Design, Drama and Dance theatre, Tama Art University. Left school after earning doctoral student credits. An expert of contemporary dance and performance in Japan and Europe. Currently working on PhD dissertation on "subjectification" in contemporary dance and performance based on his knowledge of dance and theatre studies in Germanic regions.



## Exhibition of Activity Reports 2023:

### Participant Comments (excerpt)

The performance and video made me think about what it means to touch a person, and the sense of distance to someone. The desire to know despite not being able to understand. I tend to be pessimistic about this and protect myself by not trusting others but I felt a warm hopefulness after today's performance. Thank you.

---

academic researcher/technical expert

Ms. Kamimura's comment, "I'm always fascinated by how quickly Jareo, in any situation, can entrust himself to another person". I was in total agreement.

---

welfare/medical practitioner

I was interested in how experiences were summarized in a dance. The video was also beautiful and striking.

---

academic researcher/technical expert

It was comforting to see how it was not about getting a dementia person to "do something" but to "draw something" out from them

---

primary school teacher

There were so many memorable scenes!! For example, the story about the physical sensation of "seeing" mentioned in Tomoya Ishida's reading was truly refreshing. The phrase, "people living with dementia," (as in coexistence including other diseases and disabilities) was also interesting.

---

housewife living with an elderly person

It was really interesting. I was very happy as someone coexisting within the same space. Director Ishida's work also left a deep impression. But I felt that this project is what it is because of Jareo.

---

Japanese language instructor

I was thinking about the distance between the audience in real and in streaming performances, and I noticed that this performance included all of the various forms of mediums of viewing! I realized that this is actually one of the most technologically advanced performances available today.

---

Performing arts practitioner

I felt the time of each individual. I thought of the time not being visualized. Fragility? Anxiety? I felt like I was being suffocated, but at the same time I felt relieved.

---

Art-related practitioner

I was slightly surprised by the "attempt to explore the relationship between a person with dementia, a carepartner and a third person" but it was really interesting how at the end the object and person turned into the same shape, and the reading by Tomoya Ishida and Alison and Kit's relationship who appeared online were all condensed within those words.

---

welfare/medical practitioner

## Artist Essays / Tomoya Ishida, Megumi Kamimura, Okui Lala

In 2023, we were aware of how we could create “Totsu-totsu Dance” together with multiple artists. For this report, we asked Tomoya Ishida, Megumi Kamimura, and Okui Lala to write about “Totsu-totsu Dance” respectively.

### Getting to Know a Person Through Their Preferences

Tomoya Ishida (film director)

This year I actually visited Kagoshima (\*1) and participated at the Exhibition of Activity Reports 2023 as a performer. In Kagoshima I had the opportunity to experience the reaction resulting from “being in the same space” for the first time. I especially spent quite a bit of time interacting with the people I met at the following 2 facilities.

Anmar’s House: Conversation around pork stew and omusubi(rice balls). As she eats her omusubi, the woman next to me sneaks looks at the omusubi that has been placed on my wheelchair table. She places her half eaten omusubi onto her plate. Just as I thought she was going to reach out for another one from the main plate our eyes meet. Her gaze pleads, “I want to eat that little omusubi.” In her mind, it has become “this omusubi.” The omusubi on the wheelchair table is now just the plastic that had been wrapped around it. When written this way it seems as if the omusubi had been “taken” by the woman but it felt like I had had the most direct connection with her in that moment. It warmed my heart that despite being strangers she had told me “her preference.” Around us there were not only eating utensils but also tissue paper, rubbish bin, items labeled “Belongs to \_\_\_\_” . Daily items which tend to be edited become “this object” and there were numerous conversations along the lines of “Could I have \_\_\_\_’s tissue?” Could this interaction with the woman not

be called a dance?

LL Sakaneta: I met a man who played the harmonica well. Jareo handed him objects like a tangerine, coat, and pot and talked to him. After a while I approach them. The man mutters, “ will you wait a bit before I play?.” When I handed him my brown stick, he gently traced the grain of the wood. Next I received his harmonica. I held it for the first time, and took my time exploring how it should be held and how to blow into it. After the interaction through the exchange of objects, the stick and harmonica are returned to their respective owners. The light blue harmonica seemed to hesitate at the awkward touch of a stranger but once it returned to the man it seemed at comfortably settled between his fingers. It was curious that I felt more nervous about the exchange of personnel objects than looking at the owner face to face. Just as I was about to leave towards the end of an hour this man gave me a gift..



At the Exhibition of Activity Reports 2023, I read aloud about an episode triggered by a movement of a female participant at the Maizuru online workshop. I had written about what had welled up from my observation but I would like to put on record that this reading session also

transported me to the same sensation as Totsu-totsu.

\*1 Ishida participated from his home last year via OriHime, a remote avatar robot.

\*2 A tool used by Ishida to press elevator buttons and to operate the levers of his electric wheelchair

## What Already Exists, What Has Already been Achieved

**Megumi Kamimura (Dancer/ Choreographer)**

For Totsu-totsu Dance 2023, I participated in the Malaysian and Singapore tours held from 31 July to 11 August, and as Jareo's assistant conducted many workshops with elderly dementia, their families, carepartner, and performing artists.

At all of them I witnessed firsthand how elderly persons who had not moved or spoken much till then change as they participated, moving energetically or starting to talk.

For example, at the Bagan hospital in Butterworth, northern Malaysian peninsula, a woman who normally had difficulty walking began spontaneously dancing a duet with Jareo partway through the workshop and entranced everyone with her smooth and confident movements. When I asked if she had done tai chi or dance before, she replied, "I just used to cook."

It was not that all elderly persons who moved energetically had suddenly acquired the ability to move in that manner but seemed to be instinctively remembering and expressing movements they had used to do.

I believe these changes in the people with

dementia occurred because Totsu-totsu dance spends ample time on each exercise and adopts a "waiting" attitude as we invite them to participate.

There was also an incident which left a strong impression on me at the workshop held at Taylor's University in Kuala Lumpur, when we asked participants to think up of a Totsu-totsu Dance exercise.

The exercise a woman who was caring for her elderly mother at home shared together with a drawing was how her mother, who had difficulty walking, would slowly descend the stairs every morning from her room upstairs by sitting on each step.

Normally negotiating the stairs in a sitting position because walking was not possible would be considered a negative but she saw how her mother was actually enjoying the movement and recognized a form of beauty in the action. I felt that the woman showed me an important facet of Totsu-totsu Dance, to shine a light on not what one cannot do but what has already been achieved, and to appreciate and enjoy it.

This Totsu-totsu-like perspective can help those who care for the elderly and related persons break free from pursuing idealized correctness to creating a relationship where both sides can be more relaxed.



## “Totsu-totsu Dance” and Time

Okui Lala (Artist)

In the very first workshop that I joined the Totsu-totsu Dance team at Bagan Specialist Centre, we were tasked with giving a slow massage to our partner. As I gently massaged Auntie Lim’s hand, I noticed my thumb was hanging in the air when I tried to slow down my movements. My motions were hesitant and clumsy as I was adapting to the slow pace. In contrast, Auntie Lim executed the task naturally, moving slowly and softly across my palm. We repeated the same task with different partners in the workshop, which consisted of people living with dementia, doctor, nurses, caretakers and members of the Totsu-Totsu Dance. I realized that everyone’s slow massage was different: some applied firm pressure, while another partner was so gentle it felt like a cloud on my palm. It was this realization that made me more comfortable with my clumsy massage.

However, it is not always “slow” during my time spent with Totsu-Totsu Dance. During our session at Dementia Singapore, Megumi and Jareo led a session of making a collective video with the people living with dementia. As everyone began swinging their hands and tapping their feet, a phone was passed around to record. At the end of the dance, we watched the video together. In the video, we witnessed many movements from a first-person perspective: shaking, swaying, clapping, and numerous fingers covering the camera lens. These fingers gave an intimate feeling and a baby-like experience. It felt like I was sitting on a baby chair, while others were making hand gestures and trying to make me smile (refer video still 1). There was also an aunty who had been sleepy throughout the sessions that day, but in this exercise,

she moved vigorously with the camera in her hand! The camera goes up and down, up and down, a constant movement and in the video we can also see the images of us being shaken as well (refer video still 2).



refer video still 1



refer video still 2

That was one of the most beautiful video I saw in 2023. I thought about what Jareo shared, that he was inspired by the post-war dance movement: “How do we dance in the most natural way?”—a question I’ve pondered in my video-making practice as well: “How do we appear in the video in the most natural way?”. Through these experiences, I’ve come to understand that the concept of “natural” differs for each individual, and at times, something out of norm is required to evoke it.

During the two-day performance and sharing in Tokyo, our discussions and conversations were centered around dementia and elderly care; which we rarely talk about in our daily lives. Reflecting on my own journey while taking care of my family members, I recall how we need

to carve out time in our everyday lives to make space for the caretaking. It is definitely not easy to remain patient and it took me some time to get into the rhythm of it. At times, it does feel like we were in another time zone with others around us.

I often tell the team that everytime after a Tot-su-Totsu encounter, I talk much slower. By saying so, I also realize that my usual pace is actually fast. Perhaps that's why I like to relate my experiences with Totsu-totsu Dance to the sensation of feeling jet-lagged. Similar to the disorientation travelers feel after crossing different time zones, our bodies take time to sync with the present. It is in these transitional and temporary moments that we realize our usual norms.



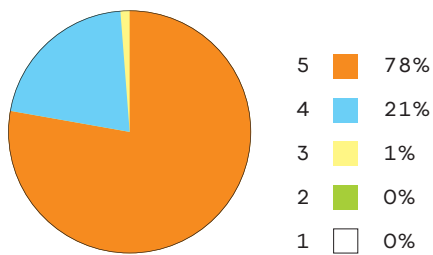


# Survey of Totsu-totsu Dance Participants

Out of the many comments and views we received regarding this year's activities, we would particularly like to share the feedback from the public workshop held in Kagoshima. These were thoughts from people with a wide range of backgrounds who had experienced Totsu-totsu Dance for the first time.

● On the Scale of 1 to 5  
Statistical number: 164 persons  
5 (very good) 4 (good) 3 (average)  
2 (below average) 1 (no good)

(1) How was the Totsu-totsu Dance workshop?



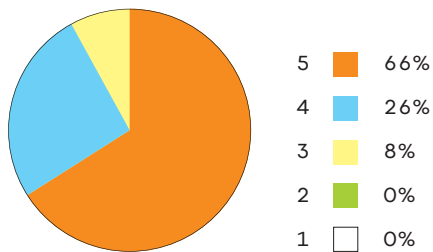
I feel like I'm much more aware of my own body, contact and relationship with those around me. There were new discoveries listening to various people talk about the same phenomena, and it was very enjoyable. Thank you.

physical therapist

I often talk with dementia patients because of my work, but I now realize that I had assumed that they lack the capacity to understand, not seriously listened to what they said and was imposing myself on them. Furthermore, it seemed like one could sense their feelings better by placing a hand on theirs rather than a hand shake.

medical doctor

(2) Did you find Totsu-totsu Dance to be useful for your caregiving or activities in the future?

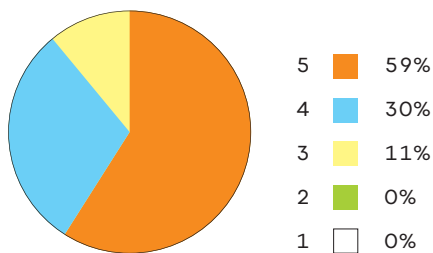


I was surprised that one could dance without using words, avoiding eye contact. And I also realized the importance of interaction without categorizing someone as having a disability or dementia. That's the difficulty

carepartner

It was my first time and it made me realize that there were so many things I had missed out on in my communications with others. I wish there had been more time at the end to share views with other participants. The workshop made me hopeful for what will happen next.

(3) Do you hope for more from Totsu-totsu Dance?



chief priest

It was not an unpleasant sensation to feel unspeakable, ambiguous, and unsure with someone else through all five senses, even though I was puzzled by it, but rather, I felt a warm sense of security, as if I was accepted for just being here. I think that is the most fundamental basis for living as a human being, and I hope that this is the starting line for everything.

Music therapist

## Lastly

### What Totsu-totsu Dance 2023 has Allowed me to See

Osamu Jareo (Dancer/ Choreographer)

Until it was conducted in Malaysia last year, Totsu-totsu Dance had mainly taken place at Graceville Maizuru, a special elderly care facility located in Maizuru, Kyoto. The methodology we have today is the result of having spent the time slowly building a relationship with the elderly residents of Graceville. While having the freedom to slowly allow our activity to take shape at one facility has helped the Totsu-totsu Dance methodology to mature, we were some what lax when it came to verbalizing and theorizing it.

Since last year though, Totsu-totsu Dance has suddenly began expanding its activity overseas, to Malaysia last year, then Singapore and Kagoshima, Japan this year. I was happy that this project which had slowly developed at one facility was now spreading to various new places and languages but as we met different people we had to go back to the fundamental questions of “What exactly is Totsu-totsu Dance?” and “What am I doing with this work?”

Aware of these issues, I had many discussions with our producer Toyohira with whom I had built this project on the sidelines, and worked on verbalizing Totsu-totsu Dance. We also obtained the cooperation of Okui Lala, a Malaysian contemporary artist, who accompanied us and shared her verbal observations an outsider. As a result of these efforts, 4 key phrases, “synchronize breathing,” “maintain distance,” “lock eyes with each other,” “join hands” were identified. Furthermore, together with dancer/choreographer Megumi Kamimura, we converted those sensations which could not be expressed by these key phrases into physical expressions. By repeating this cycle of workshop, verbalization, physical expression, and working with the video artist, Tomoya Ishida as well as Okui Lala mentioned earlier, we were able to sublimate the concept around Totsu-totsu Dance into a performance.

After these series of works, the Totsu-totsu Dance project in which I had played a central role, has managed to build a relationship with various other people and opened itself to an even wider audience, not limited to the care of the elderly but how to relate with others, medium and a place to think about living and put into practice. Next year I hope to not only conduct workshops building on the performances of last year but get the people of each place to participate as performers and think about how to expand the workshop activities, HR development and its continuity into the future.

**Artist:** Osamu Jareo, Megumi Kamimura,  
Tomoya Ishida, Kamal Sabran, Okui Lala,  
Mohd Yaziz Bin Mohd Hassan

**Film Director:** Kota Baba

**Camera & Edit (Talk session) :** Mikihiro Endo

**Flyer design:** Norichika Yokota, Haru Kakiuchi

**Translation:** Moe Ishii, Akiko Kume

**Workshop Coordination:**

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Audrey Perera (Singapore), Reiko Tsutsumi,  
Satomi Adachi (Kagoshima)

**Director of production management:**

Takeshi Toyohira

**Production management:**

Sayo Yokota, Mafumi Wada

**Publicity:** Megumi Seki

**Organized by Agency for**

**Culture and General Association (Japan),**

**torindo**



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Centre (Eldercare Centre), Taylor's Lakeside  
Campus, Five Arts Center, Dementia Singapore,  
Dementia & Co., Apsaras Arts, Aozora Higashi  
Sengoku, Home Hospice Mokuren no Ie, LL

Sanekata, Home Hospice Anma no Ie, Special  
Nursing Home Silk Road Shichifukujin, Hirayama  
no Ie, Fun2 Terrace Shichifukujin, Myogyouji

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**"Totsu-totsu Dance "**

**YouTube page**

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@totsu-totsudance9801](https://www.youtube.com/@totsu-totsudance9801)



**Totsu-totsu magazine (note)**

[https://note.com/totsutotsu\\_dance](https://note.com/totsutotsu_dance)



**Torindo Facebook page**

<https://www.facebook.com/series.totsutotsu>



**Osamu Jareo Home page**

<https://www.jareo-osamu.com/>





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