



Totsu-totsu Dance

Annual
Report
2024



torindo

2024 Annual Activity Report

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When Dance Emerges

Takeshi Toyohira, torindo,
general incorporated association

I had the chance to rewatch some old footage of Totsu-Totsu Dance just the other day. On a whim, I muted the sound.

It was 2009. In this silent world, Osamu Jareo—fifteen years younger, eyes sharply focused—was working on a choreography with an elderly woman named Ms. Taniguchi and two elementary school students. They were in the hall of Graceville Maizuru, a special nursing home in Maizuru City. As residents and staff passed by in the background, the two children desperately tried to decipher the letters Ms. Taniguchi traced on their backs with her finger. Gradually, their expressions revealed boredom. Despite this, Jareo, his brow furrowed, had them repeat the 'Guess the Letter' game. While the children's faces showed growing dissatisfaction, Ms. Taniguchi remained serious, tracing each letter with deep concentration.

This was a rehearsal for the 2010 performance of Totsu-Totsu Dance. It was the first and, fifteen years in, the only time that elderly individuals with dementia participated in the production. As clinical philosopher Masaru Nishikawa, who also contributed to this booklet, has often pointed out, this performance was particularly striking for the interaction between Jareo and Miyuki, a woman with advanced dementia who spoke to a baby doll continuously. Their dance became emblematic of Totsu-Totsu Dance. However, we have seldom discussed the presence of Ms. Taniguchi in that moment.

Looking back at the records of the early Totsu-Totsu Dance workshops, I noticed that Ms. Taniguchi was there, enthusiastically, in nearly every session—always dancing with a serious expression.

Ms. Taniguchi had mild dementia and a hearing impairment. She never fully understood Jareo's instructions; she was a proud person and it was difficult for her to admit, "I don't understand." This

often led to behaviors that posed challenges for the caregivers. Yet during the workshops, she was calm, and her dedication was a source of encouragement for us.

I believe she kept coming back to the workshops because it was a space where "not understanding" was okay. We live in a society built on the assumption that we "understand" things. But as dementia progresses, that sense of understanding seems to become more ambiguous. Seeing how their "not understanding" frustrates those around them, individuals with dementia often grow confused and frustrated themselves.

One day in 2009, Jareo and I were wandering through Graceville Maizuru, looking for someone to dance with us. Amidst the bustling hall, we found Ms. Taniguchi sitting quietly alone. Jareo spoke to her, but due to her hearing loss, their conversation didn't quite connect. Then—though I can't recall what prompted it—Jareo suddenly began dancing in front of her, with an intensity I had never seen before. At first, she seemed bewildered, but her expression gradually turned serious. It seemed as if they slowly tuned into each other. Though Ms. Taniguchi's body wasn't moving, a dance had emerged between them in the midst of the noise. Even today, I can recall it vividly, like a silent film. In many ways, that was the moment Totsu-Totsu Dance began for me.

Both Ms. Taniguchi and Miyuki have since passed away, but the practice of Totsu-Totsu Dance continues. This year, we held workshops in Malaysia, Singapore, and Kagoshima. Along the way, there were moments when dance emerged—both documentary and fiction, belonging to no one, transcending time. Currently, we have no better way than to call it Totsu-Totsu Dance. This year, we shared this dance through performances and documentary films, allowing many audiences, and most importantly, the dancers who participated, to experience it together. That, I believe, is one of our greatest achievements.

International Initiatives

Totsu Totsu Dance began in 2009 at a special nursing home. The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 prompted its shift online, breaking barriers of distance and language and expanding workshops to Malaysia and Singapore. In 2023, the focus shifted to “conveying” Totsu Totsu Dance through workshops and lectures. By 2024, the theme evolved to “nurturing,” with immersive experiences alongside Singaporean artists. Here, we reflect on key international initiatives to date.

● 2020

May: Online Totsu-Totsu Dance workshops begin.

November: Symposium held with a Malaysian sound artist

“Totsu-Totsu Dance Online Talk Session: — The possibility of non-contact communication through dance and music with the elderly with dementia —”

● 2022

August: Online workshops and talk sessions between Malaysia and Japan, held monthly until December trip (five sessions in total).

Dec 24 – Jan 3, 2023: Malaysia Trip 1

Coordinated by gerontologist Cecilia Chan, this trip included public dance workshops at elderly care centers, lectures for art students, and a lecture at Bagan Specialist Centre. The team also participated in the IPOH Healing Arts Festival.

● 2023

Feb 21 – Feb 26: International Delegation Visit to Japan 1

In conjunction with the 2022 Activity Report Meeting, the international delegation visited Japan and toured welfare facilities to observe dementia care practices.

July 31 – Aug 6: Malaysia Trip 2

Conducted workshops and lectures at a university, workshops at Bagan Specialist Centre, a two-day residency at an elderly care center, and workshops with local Malaysian artists. Local contemporary artist Okui Lala accompanied most of the trip.

Aug 6 – Aug 11: Singapore Trip 1

A three-day workshop for elderly people with dementia and a workshop at a senior club was conducted in collaboration with Dementia Singapore and under the coordination of Audrey Perera (arts festival producer and writer).

Sep 6 – Sep 10: Singapore Trip 2

Conducted a workshop for Singapore-based artists, followed by participation in a dementia awareness event hosted by Dementia Singapore.

Nov 30 – Dec 5: International Delegation Visit to Japan 2

The international delegation attended the 2023 Activity Report Meeting, participating in talks and performances.

● 2024

July 21: Online workshop with Singapore

Conducted an online workshop with young Singapore-based artists recommended by Audrey Perera.

Aug 11 – Aug 19: Singapore Trip 3

Conducted lectures and workshops for local artists, followed by a three-day workshop at a daycare facility and a feedback session with the artists.

● 2025

Jan 3 – Jan 8: Malaysia Trip 3

Conducted workshops as part of a retreat program for families of people with dementia. Additional workshops for the Japanese community in Malaysia and workshop and lecture at Bagan Specialist Centre.

Jan 23 – Jan 26: International Delegation Visit to Japan 3

Singapore-based artist Michael Chen visited Japan for a *Totsu Totsu Dance* performance in Osaka.

Feb 16: *Totsu Totsu Dance* Film Screening & Talk in Tokyo

Online participation by Michael Chen and Cecilia Chan.



1. Online workshops conducted during the pandemic.
2. Participation in a dementia awareness event (2023).
3. International delegation attending the 2023 Activity Report Meeting (Photo: Masanobu Nishino).

Report from the Singapore Trip

In the summer of 2024, the Japan team including Osamu Jareo and Megumi Kamimura traveled to Singapore and conducted workshops at elderly care facilities, aiming to share and co-learn the essence of Totsu-Totsu Dance with Singapore-based artists. Here, we introduce the daily activities, followed by insights from the participating Singapore-based artists.

● Participating Artists



Jamie Buitelaar
Performer. A member of the early-onset dementia advocacy group Dementia & Co., specializing in applied theater.



Ellison Tan Yuyang
Puppet opera performer and actor.



Kimberly Long
Dancer and choreographer, affiliated with a contemporary dance group in Singapore.



Krishna Ganapathi
Science teacher and performer in theater and dance, with experience as a hospital clown.



Michael Cheng
Actor, involved in art programs for people with disabilities and dementia.

1 Lecture Workshop for Artists

Date: August 12, 2024

Venue: Apsaras Arts, Goodman Arts Centre

The session began with an introduction to the history of Totsu-Totsu Dance, followed by self-introductions. The workshop then explored key themes such as “synchronizing breath,” “measuring distance,” “making eye contact,” and “touching.” The artists, with their performance backgrounds, quickly adapted to the exercises. A lively exchange of ideas continued well after the session ended.

2 Three-Day Workshop at an Elderly Care Facility

Date: August 13–15, 2024

Venue: Active Ageing Care Centre, operated by Thye Hua Kwan (THK)

Michael, Ellison, Krishna, Jamie, and Kimberly joined the Totsu-Totsu Dance team for a three-day workshop with individuals with dementia



and their caregivers. Alongside THK clients, members from Dementia Singapore, whom we had worked with last year, also took part alongside their families and caregivers. We had 10 to 12 groups joining us each day.

Day 1 focused on “making eye contact” and “touching.” On Day 2, participants worked in teams to create paintings, title them, and then perform improvisational acts inspired by the artwork. On Day 3, the group explored “DIY Gamelan,” using everyday objects as percussion instruments. Although the atmosphere began stiff, the artists relaxed as the workshop progressed, leading to a vibrant and quirky session.



3 Feedback Session

Date: August 18, 2024

Venue: Aliwal Arts Centre

In the final workshop, we reflected on the three-day program alongside Krishna, Jamie, Kimberly, and Michael. Jareo emphasized that his goal was to experience “freedom beyond relationships.” By removing hierarchical dynamics of the leading and following, the group became equals, creating “a space where I truly want to be at.” In the latter half of the session, new workshop ideas for Totsu-Totsu Dance were discussed.



● Voices of the Participating Artists

"This program allowed me to convey experiences that are difficult to put into words. The idea that we have the freedom to explore and experiment becomes a wisdom we could apply not just to dance but also to co-working and spending time with others. On the other hand, explaining this concept to others can be quite challenging."

Michael Cheng

"Totsu-Totsu Dance's greatest strength is that it doesn't aim for a specific goal. Many treatments for any patient have predetermined objectives, but in reality, we often don't know what will work until we try, especially for individuals living with dementia. It is not ideal to only perform treatments that have proven to show results. If we can introduce more open-ended approaches and treatments like Totsu-Totsu Dance, we could provide a healthier balance for patients."



Jamie Buitelaar

"What I love about Totsu-Totsu Dance is its freedom. Coming from a theater background, I think I perceive things differently than those who come from an improv dance background. I see this as a strength and consider how to leverage it—whether to approach things with a Tetris-like mindset, focusing on results, or more like improv dance. I think this program can also be adapted for different participants."

Krishna Ganapathi

"The process itself is the outcome. It enables internal connections with others and allows us emotional release. This technique is quite rare in Singapore, where results are often prioritized. By shifting the mindset to see the process as the outcome, we can consider how to deeply and effectively integrate this approach into our own dance practice."

Kimberly Long

Report from the Malaysia Trip

In early 2025, the Japan team including Osamu Jareo and Megumi Kamimura traveled to Malaysia. We participated in a “retreat” program, organized workshops for local Japanese residents, and conducted workshops and lectures for healthcare professionals. They all created an opportunity to communicate with people working on-site, while observing how dementia is perceived around the Penang area. Heret, we introduce the overview of the programs, followed by an interview with the local coordinator Cecilia Chan.

1 Two-Day Workshop for Individuals with Dementia and Care Partners

Date: January 4–5, 2025

Location: Flamingo Hotel (Penang)

Participants: 25 individuals living with dementia, elderly individuals, and their care partners

A Totsu-Totsu Dance workshop was held as part of a retreat program organized by Bagan Specialist Centre’s Elder Care Centre. A retreat refers to a time to take time off from familiar surroundings, heal both body and mind, and reflect on oneself and their environment. The workshop was conducted at a resort hotel, where many participants felt relaxed in the different environment.





2 Workshop for Japanese Residents in Penang

Date: January 6, 2025

Location: Coconut Club (Penang)

Participants: 12 Japanese residents in their 40's to 80's

Since 2002, the Malaysian government has issued long-term stay visas for retirees, called the Malaysia My Second Home (MM2H) Program. Coconut Club, which runs a local support programme for the Japanese, requested us to organize a workshop for MM2H visa holders, with the aim of fostering interaction among expatriates through Totsu-Totsu Dance. Participants relaxed and engaged in conversation, with some staying after the workshop to mingle.

3 Workshop for Healthcare Professionals at Bagan Specialist Centre

Date: January 7, 2025

Location: Bagan Specialist Centre (Butterworth)

Participants: 40 individuals with dementia, their families, and healthcare/eldercare professionals

This is the third time we host a workshop and lecture at Bagan Specialist Centre. Among the attendees were participants from the above-mentioned retreat, and about one-third of them were already familiar with *Totsu-Totsu Dance*. Despite the large number of participants and limited time, the workshop received positive feedback. Participants shared insights such as, 'I felt happy even without understanding the other person's words,' and 'With non-verbal communication, patients can engage with the activity like a game, ultimately moving their bodies proactively.'



● Interview

From the Dementia Care Frontlines: Reflecting on Three Years of Activities

The Start of my Journey with Totsu-Totsu Dance

In Malaysia, dementia is still heavily looked at as being a disease or stigma. As the individuals lose their language abilities, individuals living with dementia often get abandoned, whether at home or in facilities. This also leads to isolation for caregivers. On the other hand, those with dementia naturally seek connection with others. This results in frustration for both caregivers and individuals with dementia, leading to unfortunate situations.

Against this backdrop is where we started working with Totsu-Totsu Dance. At first, Malaysians were utterly confused about how this dance could help those living with dementia. A personal turning point came when Jareo danced with a patient at the care center I work at. The family and I were truly surprised, as this patient had never danced before. Of course, Jareo doesn't speak Chinese, and the patient doesn't speak Japanese, but a connection was formed and communication happened. It was truly remarkable.

Being Present is What Matters

This marks the third year of our activities in Malaysia. Based on our experiences, we have incorporated the concept of Totsu-Totsu into our work, particularly as a tool for building connections with those in the advanced stages of dementia. Specifically, when patients make a gesture or vocalize a sound, we mirror it as a form of therapy. This response has become second nature to us, as we have seen its immediate positive impact in Totsu-Totsu Dance

workshops. The uplifting atmosphere it creates quickly influences everyone's attitudes in a positive way."

This year, we introduced our inaugural retreat program in Malaysia, incorporating Totsu-Totsu Dance into the schedule. In Malaysia, there is often the perception that individuals with dementia should be locked up at home or in facilities. People hesitate to take them outside due to concerns about public perception, potential confusion or agitation, or the risk of them getting lost. However, this leaves caregivers with no chance to relax. We wanted them to realize they are not alone in facing these issues by allowing them to de-stress, and talk with other families and caregivers.

I also enjoyed participating in the Totsu-Totsu Dance session at the retreat. Personally, through Totsu-Totsu, I feel that I have become more playful and aware of how I interact with the person in front of me. I have realized that being present is what truly matters, regardless of whether they're "right" or "wrong."

Thanks to the workshops and interactions over the past three years, healthcare professionals in Malaysia are starting to understand that creative activities like this can help build connections with patients with dementia and improve their care. Totsu-Totsu Dance has started to take root in Malaysia, for a world where we live alongside individuals living with dementia, and I truly feel it is beginning to bloom.

Cecilia Chan (Gerontologist, Coordinator)

Viewing Totsu-Totsu Dance through Video

Totsu-Totsu Dance has had filmmakers and video artists on the team since 2022 to create deliberate documentary footage. This year, we asked Tetsu Kubota (video artist) and Mikihiro Endo (filmmaker), whom we have worked with since 2009, to shoot and edit our activities. What emerges when we view Totsu-Totsu Dance through video? A roundtable discussion was held alongside Osamu Jareo.

Jareo Kubota has been documenting Totsu-Totsu Dance from the early stages, but this is Endo's first year on the documentary team. You accompanied us on our trip to Kagoshima.

Endo I filmed at the LL Sanekata day-care service and the home hospice Anma-no-le. The former is a space where many users interact with each other, while the latter is a small facility run by a couple where more intimate workshops are possible. The setup was quite different, and I wasn't sure how to approach the editing. But when I reviewed the footage, there was a shot at Anma-no-le that felt especially well-captured. This made me think that I could create a video piece based on that.

Kubota I participated in the workshops in Malaysia and Singapore, where we had many people come to the facility. I had to document Jareo and Kamimura work sequentially, one person at a time, which was quite challenging. So, when I saw the footage from Endo's work at Anma-no-le, I must admit I felt a bit envious of the space that was relatively small, and intimate connection between Jareo and the individuals could be documented.

Endo For me as well, at LL Sanekata, it felt like Jareo was engaging with many people at once. So when I first saw Kubota's footage, I felt a similar kind of difficulty. Jareo, do you notice a difference between working one-on-one and with large groups?

Jareo When it's one-on-one, it feels like "waiting." Of course, I try to engage with the person, but I'm not solely focused on touching them. I'm always in sync with the other person's breath, waiting for their action. When I'm working with a large group, the space is chaotic, so I take a more proactive approach to initiate action. I noticed that with the large group situation, both of you were filming quite close.

Kubota It's possible waiting, or not waiting, might be a significant factor. When I filmed "Miyuki," all I could do was wait, so it was purely a "documentary" where the camera was just observing. In contrast, I felt I was actively documenting the process in Singapore and Malaysia.

Jareo What did both of you feel while filming?

Kubota I'm still affected by the footage I took in 2013 of Miyuki, an elderly woman with severe dementia, dancing with Jareo. The communication between them lasted for 50 minutes, and it was incredibly beautiful. For example, there's a moment where Jareo lies down near Miyuki and gently brings his face close to hers. She stares at him and caresses his cheek. The reason is unclear, but at least in that moment, the physical act of "caressing" was something Jareo had elicited from her. Throughout Totsu-Totsu Dance, there are similar scenes — a fleeting instant where the

body leads the action, fleeting moments captured in sequence. I always want to document Totsu-Totsu Dance through such moments. In Singapore and Malaysia, I focused on documenting what was happening in the large-group settings, but it was completely different from freely capturing the moments of interaction between people. That said, this balance is necessary for us to convey to those who weren't present at the moment.



From left to right:
Toyohira (interviewer), Kubota, Jareo, Endo

Endo We can't prepare with a specific goal in mind, so for now, it feels like I'm piecing together fragments. Also, both at Anma-no-le and LL Sanekata, the time we have with the users is very limited. Some of the past footage has been edited, so I didn't have a good sense of the time constraints. So the most surprising thing on site was Jareo's "high batting average," so to say, in creating meaningful moments in such a short period. For example, at Anma-no-le, a woman who danced with Jareo started reminiscing and sharing thoughts. I don't know if what she said was factual, or perhaps she unintentionally shared something she intended to take to her grave. The truth is unknown, but the moment she and Jareo created felt like a "memory-like something" that neither belonged to anyone nor undefinable as a fact. And because of that, the viewer could relate to and experience it as something personal. I

believe it's crucial to capture such moments. They aren't easy to capture intentionally, but when I'm close to Jareo, something happens. That's a strong motivation for me.

Kubota The moments that emerge in Totsu-Totsu Dance always leave many mysteries. Why did he place his foot like that? Why did Miyuki caress Jareo's face? What always strikes me is the inexplicable nature of these moments. Totsu-Totsu Dance is full of these occurrences. The "why" is left entirely to us, and the moments offer no explanations. Yet, there is still contact, and the other person is undeniably reaching out. This relationship is all that is thrust upon us. In daily life, touching others is quite challenging, and you usually need to express the "why" before you can touch. People often search for meaning within themselves or over explain it to others. But when you have no such intentions and just engage with someone, it's shocking and mysterious—especially when they offer their foot expressionlessly. I think that's what makes Totsu-Totsu Dance so interesting.

Interview conducted on February 15, 2025, at -suisei-.

Totsu-Totsu Dance 2024 in Kagoshima

Following last year's visit, the Totsu-Totsu Dance team once again traveled to Kagoshima this year. This time, in addition to Jareo and Kamimura, Nishioka also joined and spent time with daycare attendees and residents at various facilities. We also organized a mini performance at Myogyoji Temple, followed by a talk and workshop featuring guest speaker Hisako Takase, representative of Mirai wo Tsukuru Care Cafe.

Residency Program

Date: October 31 (Thu)

– November 2 (Sat), 2024

Venue: LL Sanekata and Anma-no-le

At daycare service provider LL Sanekata, the team spontaneously created the “Sanekata Exercise” together with the participants. Meanwhile, at the home hospice Anma-no-le, we spent quality time being present with two residents. By spending prolonged time together, we witnessed the residents’ natural movements gradually unfold into dance.



“Sanekata Exercise” created with the participants at LL Sanekata, for easy, anytime practice.



Mini Performance, Talk & Workshop

Date: November 2 (Sat), 18:30–21:00

Venue: Myogyoji Temple, Montokai Hall

Guest: Hisako Takase Participants: 45

We also organized a mini performance at Myogyoji Temple, followed by a talk and workshop featuring guest speaker Hisako Takase, representative of *Mirai wo Tsukuru Care Cafe*. Participants were then divided into groups to discuss their insights, which gained high praise for providing practical take-aways that could be applied to their professional settings.



● Workshop Participant Survey Responses

“It was a fresh experience that awakened senses I don’t usually engage in. I also reaffirmed the importance of waiting and slowing down.” (Welfare professional)

“I had the opportunity to speak with people from different professions and backgrounds. Meeting others who share similar values was uplifting and motivating. I’d love to participate again.”

(doctor)

LL Sanekata & Anma-no-le Interview

In Kagoshima, workshops were held at two different types of facilities. We asked them about the features of their facilities and this year's Totsu-totsu Dance activities in a question-and-answer style.

● Interviewee

Tomoyuki Watanabe

(Manager & Care Worker, LL Sanekata)

1 ● LL Sanekata is a day-care service.

Could you explain the characteristics of the facility?

As people age, many activities become restricted in care facilities due to risk management concerns. However, LL Sanekata aims to be an active engagement day-care service that allows individuals to make full use of their abilities. For example, we encourage users to work with DIY tools such as saws, or to use a cooking knife to help with cooking and serving food. While most facilities avoid such activities due to safety and hygiene concerns, LL Sanekata takes on the challenge of incorporating them.

2 ● You hosted three dancers from Totsu-Totsu Dance in the workshop. How was the experience?

At first, we weren't sure what to expect, and we were worried whether our users would be receptive. But through their non-verbal approach to communication, the dancers gradually became accepted. I found it fascinating to see new sides of our users that we had never seen before.

3 ● Was there anything you gained from the Totsu-Totsu Dance workshop?

Since we are not performers, we generally take on a passive role in responding to the movements

of our users—caring for them rather than engaging with them. However, the dancers interacted with our users through movement, drawing out expressions and actions. This allowed us to see aspects of our users that we had never noticed before. It made me realize the potential for a more active form of caregiving beyond just taking passive actions.

● Interviewee

Hatsue Yamashita

(Director, NPO Home Hospice Yuitabar "Anma-no-le")

1 ● Anma-no-le is a home hospice.

Could you explain the characteristics of the facility?

Hospices are generally associated with end-of-life care for terminal cancer patients or those with limited life expectancy. However, Anma-no-le is a place where people of all ages, from children to adults, who are unable to live at home and require care due to dementia or illness, can live together in a shared home environment. Now in its second year, Anma-no-le welcomes a wide range of individuals, from newborn babies to those who have been given terminal diagnosis. I hope that, in the future, this place will become a space for interaction among diverse individuals—children, people with disabilities, those with dementia, and those in need of care.

2 ● You hosted three dancers from Totsu-Totsu Dance in the workshop. How was the experience?

I thought they were a wonderful team. The production team fostered connections with a variety of people, while Osamu Jareo created new dance expressions inspired by those encounters. Then, there were Nishioka and Kamimura, who were drawn to Jareo's dance and approached it with their own unique movements. I believe they will continue to create beautiful works by embracing each of their artistic perceptions.

3 ● Was there anything you gained from the Totsu-Totsu Dance workshop?

In relation to my work, it gave me a chance to reflect on how I engage with individuals who have difficulty expressing their thoughts. I realized that even simple gestures—using one's fingertips or just being physically present in the same atmosphere—can serve as a form of communication.

4 ● How are Hiroko and Noriko, who spent time with the dancers? How do you think they felt about the experience?

Hiroko, who worked at the courthouse, and Noriko, a former pharmacist, had periods of poor health due to pneumonia and pyelonephritis after November, but they have since recovered and are doing well. On the night after your visit, both of them slept soundly. Perhaps they felt reassured knowing that their feelings had been acknowledged and understood.



Totsu-Totsu Dance Workshop in the Kanto Region

This July, we held “Totsu-Totsu Dance Workshop in Tokyo” in Kichijoji, Tokyo, offering workshops for the general public and for artists. Several participants from the workshops accompanied us to our workshop for elderly residents and facility staff at an assisted living residence in September. Additionally, two dancers (Osako and Nishioka), who participated in the September workshop, joined the performance in Osaka in January.

Totsu-Totsu Dance Workshop in Tokyo

Date: July 21, 2024 (Sunday)

10:30 AM–12:00 PM (General Public)

1:00 PM–2:30 PM (Artists)

Venue: Noah Studio Kichijoji

Number of participants: 25 (General Public),
20 (Artists)

In the workshop for the general public, people with prior interest in Totsu-Totsu Dance had the opportunity to experience it firsthand. The artist workshop provided a deeper insight into the Totsu-Totsu Dance method, giving participants the opportunity to explore how they could expand the method in line with their backgrounds.



Totsu-Totsu Dance Workshop in Shin-Kodaira

Date: September 17, 2024 (Tuesday)

2:00 PM–4:00 PM

Venue: Assisted Living Residence near
Shin-Kodaira Station

Number of participants: 20

Alongside Jareo and Kamimura, two new artists who participated in the “Totsu-Totsu Dance Workshop in Tokyo” joined the facilitation. For the two new artists, this was their first opportunity to work with the elderly in a workshop.



Performance in Osaka

Date & Time:

Saturday, January 25, 2025

1 ● 2:00 PM performance

2 ● 6:00 PM performance

Sunday, January 26, 2025

3 ● 2:00 PM performance

Venue: Art Area B1 (Osaka City)

Performers:

Osamu Jareo (dancer/choreographer),

Megumi Kamimura (dancer/choreographer),

Juri Nishioka (dancer),

Kenji Osako (dancer/actor),

Tomoya Ishida (film director),

among others

Audience: 185 people

This year, in an effort to share the current development of Totsu-Totsu Dance beyond the Kanto region, performances were held at Art Area B1 in Kansai. New dancers Osako and Nishioka joined the team, along with film director Ishida, who also appeared on stage; all three took part in the creative process alongside Jareo and Kamimura. The performances embodied the Totsu-Totsu Dance that Jareo and others have come to understand through their workshops. The show featured scenes such as a workshop connecting venues in Malaysia and Osaka; “a reenactment” by Osako and Nishioka of an exchange between Jareo and a former workshop participant, who had since passed away and whom the two dancers had never met; and a reading by Ishida in which he reflected on Totsu-Totsu Dance through his personal experiences and observations. Many audience members had followed Totsu-Totsu Dance since its inception, and lively conversations emerged reflecting on how it had evolved over the years.



5



Photography: Toshie Kusamoto (photos 1,2,5)
Photography: torindo (photos 3,4)

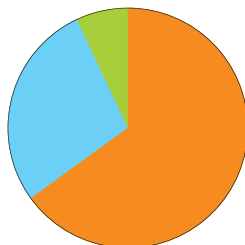
● Survey Results

Survey responses from attendees (46 respondents):

Have you participated in Totsu-Totsu Dance before?

- First time: 30
- Yes: 13
- No answer: 3

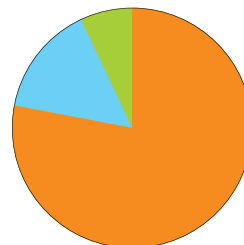
(First time – 65%, Previous experience – 28%)



How was the performance?

- Very good: 36
- Good: 7
- No answer: 3

(Very good – 78%, Good – 15%)



Totsu-Totsu Dance 2024 Screening & Talk

Date: Saturday, February 15 & Sunday, February 16, 2025

Venue: -suisai- (Nakano, Tokyo)

Audience: 108 people

We held a screening of video recordings from dance workshops conducted over the past year in Japan, Malaysia, and Singapore, featuring participants including people living with dementia, caregivers, and artists. The screenings were followed by talk sessions with project members. The audience included many individuals with an interest in art and dance, as well as those working in welfare and caregiving in the Kanto region. The event sparked active engagement, with numerous questions during the talks and lively conversations afterward, reflecting the strong interest in the project.



Details of speakers
available here



● Video Documentation of Past Activities

1. Activities in Kagoshima (2024, filmed/edited by Mikihiro Endo)
2. Activities in Singapore (2024, filmed/edited by Tetsu Kubota)
3. Activities in Malaysia (2025, filmed/edited by Tetsu Kubota)
4. Totsu-Totsu Dance Performance in Osaka (2025, filmed/edited by Mikihiro Endo)

● Talk Sessions – 2024 Reports

1. Totsu-Totsu Dance (2009–2025):

From Its Beginnings to the Present

Speakers: Osamu Jareo (dancer/choreographer),
Tetsu Kubota (filmmaker), Mikihiro Endo (film director)

2. Participating in the Performance in Osaka (2025)

Speakers: Megumi Kamimura (dancer/choreographer),
Kenji Osako (dancer/actor), Juri Nishioka (dancer)

3. Activities in Singapore: Reflections as a Performer

Speakers: Osamu Jareo, Michael Cheng
(actor/performer, online participation)

4. Activities in Malaysia: Reflections on the Third Year

Speakers: Osamu Jareo, Cecilia Chan
(gerontologist/coordinator, online participation)



Video (Japanese subtitles,
sign language interpretation)



Video (Japanese subtitles,
sign language interpretation)



Video
(Japanese/English subtitles)



Video
(Japanese/English subtitles)

Moderator for Sessions 1-4: Takeshi Toyohira (torindo)

Totsu-Totsu Dance Through Diverse Viewpoints

This fiscal year's Totsu-Totsu Dance welcomed not only choreographers and dancers such as Jareo and Kamimura, but also a diverse group of collaborators from various backgrounds, both in Japan and abroad. Through a series of essays and interviews, this page explores how each of them perceived and experienced Totsu-Totsu Dance from their unique perspectives.

1. Impressions on Totsu-Totsu Dance

Personally it is an interesting experience for me, unlearning our words/language learnt, to open up to a free, no SOP, no boundary, non-restrictive way to connect and communicate with what we have with our body, with our movements and voices.

I remembered the last few months of my dad's life, his most common word used was "mai", meaning "don't want" regardless he really meant it or not. Most days he lost the interest and ability to focus on a conversation. We needed to wild guess and took much effort to know his real desire or intent. There was a lot of frustration both side, as we couldn't communicate effectively both ways.

"Totsu-Totsu Dance" is a powerful tool to empower us to connect and communicate in the world of dementia and in those with language and cognitive impairment.



Dr Hui Ling Tan

Managing Director at Oriental Melaka Straits
Medical Centre, Bagan Specialist Centre &
Oriental Nilam College of Nursing

2.
Essay 1
Takeaways from the Osaka
Performance
— Taking the Stage with
a Touchable and Distinctive Body

This marks my third time performing in a piece by Osamu Jareo, counting from my debut performance, where I stepped down from my power wheelchair and touched the floor with my entire body.* In this production, four dancers embodied what they had received from their past experience with Totsu-Totsu Dance, particularly centering on the act of “touch.” Here, I reflect on two key thoughts that emerged from participating in the rehearsals and performances.

Jareo once said, “Without people with dementia, we can’t express what we create with them.” Indeed, in this performance, the speed, intensity, and frequency of touch were clearly different from the workshops conducted with people with dementia and their caregivers. This reminded me of something Megumi Kamimura mentioned during the 2022 Totsu-Totsu Dance online workshop, in which Jareo’s seminar students also participated: “Slowing down movement is also a technique.” In this piece, aside from the opening online segment and few videos, people with dementia and their caregivers were not present on stage. Yet at times, it felt as if they were, creating a strange sense that we were sharing the stage with those we had shared time with before.

During rehearsals, I was asked to verbalize the experience as the one “being touched.” I tend to be the one who is “touched” rather than the one who “touches.” Reflecting on daily movements, I noticed that rather than hand-

to-hand or foot-to-foot contact, the contact is usually between different body parts, such as hand-to-waist or arm-to-hand. Beyond the completion of care tasks like toileting or dressing, I wondered what other meanings the act of “being touched” might carry.

In one scene, dancer Juri Nishioka used Kamimura’s hand relentlessly to touch her own and Kamimura’s body—pressing, tapping, and tracing forcefully. The sounds echoed through the venue, surprising me. This moment overlapped with my experience of the sensation of being transferred from a wheelchair to a futon. The dryness of the air, the feeling after a bath, and physical fatigue all combine to create subtle conditions where even a slight angle of the caregiver’s hand can cause my skin—my waist, my knees—to tear.

More often than not, instead of the soft flesh of a caregiver’s hand, I feel the hard bones pressing against me. When force is applied, small cuts frequently occur, many times without us even realizing it. Some caregivers cause this, while others don’t, and I still don’t fully understand the difference. Hands, after all, are shaped by a person’s history—the work they have had, the habits they have formed. This allows me to experience firsthand that each hand is truly unique.

For this production, I participated by reading an essay about the Totsu-Totsu Dance online workshops and by filming a scene of the performance. Taking part as a “reader” and “camera operator” felt like an attempt to explore new possibilities for performers with distinctive bodies, who are often categorized as socially vulnerable. When people with distinctive bodies take the stage and engage in “self-expression,” they gain opportunities to explore their potential and affirm their existence. I sincerely hope that more works like this will emerge in various scenes. However at the same time, I question whether it is enough to

simply conclude that having them on stage fosters “self-affirmation” and an “inclusive society,” wrapping everything up neatly in a positive message.

Then, how should we create such works to include those with distinctive bodies? I cannot provide a definitive answer. I fully understand the challenges ahead, the countless obstacles are evident. One major difficulty is securing caregivers and creating an environment for continuous rehearsals and creative development. I will not delve further into production logistics here, but I believe that performances that go beyond merely showcasing distinctive bodies have the potential to attract audiences beyond just supporters and stakeholders.

For this piece, my reading influenced the movements of the four dancers. My filming shaped the way the scene was perceived, determining the perspective it was viewed. I felt great joy in being part of a stage production where my presence was not limited to simply “showing a distinctive body.”

* Ishida participated the Metamorphose
—Contemplating the Fragility of Life through
Kafka’s “The Metamorphosis” (2019),
choreography and direction by Osamu Jareo.

Tomoya Ishida (Filmmaker)

3.

Tripartite talk Participating in the Totsu-Totsu Dance Workshops and Performances

Since FY2023, we have continued to share Totsu-Totsu Dance with other artists. This year, in addition to dancer and choreographer Megumi Kamimura who has been with us since FY2022, two dancers, Juri Nishioka and Kenji Osako, also participated in workshops and the Osaka performance. We spoke with the three about their experiences in this year's Totsu-Totsu Dance activities.

● How did you first get involved with Totsu-Totsu Dance?

Kamimura My first participation was in 2022, the year Totsu-Totsu Dance first traveled to Malaysia. Before we went, we held several online workshops with people there, and then visited many places across Malaysia. We ran workshops with a range of participants, including people living with dementia, caregivers, and those interested in caregiving. At the time, I didn't yet have a grasp of the long history of the project—it was something I gradually came to understand through being in the field. Even now, I still don't quite feel like I'm playing a significant role in Totsu-Totsu Dance.

Nishioka I joined in autumn 2024. I originally lived in Kansai and met Jareo as a student over a decade ago when he was teaching. After I moved to Kanto this past fall, he invited me to take part in a workshop—that was my first experience of Totsu-Totsu Dance. From there, I

joined the team in visiting Kagoshima, where we engaged with older residents in the area. I also performed in the Osaka show. It's still early days for me, and I'm learning what Totsu-Totsu Dance is through firsthand experience.

Osako I came into performance through acting. My first time with Totsu-Totsu Dance was in September 2024, when I went with Nishioka to an assisted senior living facility in Shin-Kodaira, Tokyo. I got to participate alongside the other participants. I took part in the Osaka performance with the same sense of closeness. Through the creative process, I'm gradually getting to know Jareo's thoughts and way of working. Sometimes, it feels like Kamimura understands him even better than himself.

● Has anything particularly stayed with you from your experience with Totsu-Totsu Dance?

Kamimura Jareo sets general rules for the workshops, but he always adjusts on the spot depending on the participants and the atmosphere. While we try to follow the rules seriously, he's often the first one to break them. But I think that is the point. The aim is to spark real interactions with the participants—not to unfold things neatly or rigidly stick to pre-set rules. That realization hits me every time.

Nishioka In Kagoshima, I had a chance to dance with a female resident at home hospice Anma-no-Ie. She stayed in her wheelchair the whole time, with her hands moving right and left across the table. I began to move with her, drawn into her rhythm. I found myself wanting to see more, to follow where it would lead. That moment has stayed with me, it doesn't feel nostalgic when I watch the footage. Instead, the physical feeling returns instantly like I'm

right back in that vivid, intimate moment with her.

Osako One memorable experience was creating the stage piece with Tomoya Ishida, a film director who uses a powered wheelchair. I'd never worked closely with someone using that type of wheelchair, and I honestly didn't know how to engage with him at first. There was a moment during rehearsal when Ishida and I danced a little, and I touched his hand. It was unlike any sensation I'd felt before—the texture of his fingers, the softness of his skin, its fragility and gentleness. And yet, the way he touched back also communicated something meaningful. I vividly remember crying on the train home that night.



From left: Toyohira (interviewer), Kamimura, Nishioka, Osako

● How would you each describe Totsu-Totsu Dance at this point?

Kamimura After watching the video footage again, for me, what makes Totsu-Totsu Dance most compelling is the fact that people with different motivations and backgrounds keep it going together. It's not strictly caregiving, nor just dance art. I think it's okay to see it as a phenomenon called Totsu-Totsu Dance and to approach it with curiosity and openness, invit-

ing others to join in.

Nishioka In the performance, Osako and I reenacted an exchange between Jareo and an older woman named Miyuki. The source for this scene was documentary footage shot in 2013 by Tetsu Kubota (see roundtable discussion, p.8). Jareo handed this footage to us and said: "Osako, you be me. Nishioka, you're Miyuki." I was stunned. We had never met her, never spoken, never touched her—only seen her on video. How will we respond to this request only with footage? So I watched that footage again and again. There's a scene where Jareo draws out Miyuki's movements, but also a moment where it feels like Miyuki opens the door between them, letting him in. When that happened, it felt like their distance suddenly shifted, like their distance wavered. I think maybe that's what Totsu-Totsu Dance is.

Osako One important point is that there are so many people like Jareo who have been involved in this project for over a decade. While he may be the one who embodies the work physically in a central way, it's sustained by many people who bring their own interests and sense of its necessity. No matter who we engage with, we keep returning to the foundational values. For people like myself, who don't have personal experience with dementia or disability, it can feel intimidating or hard to approach. But by using the language of performance, we can sidestep emotional overexposure and connect in a different way. That's something I find deeply compelling.

Interview date: Saturday, February 15, 2025, at -suisai-
Photography: Tetsu Kubota

4.

Essay 2

Totsu-Totsu Dance

— Some Personal Thoughts

I do not know what led to the naming of Totsu-Totsu Dance. All I know is that fifteen years have passed since I first became involved with it, and by now, I can't imagine calling it anything else.

There's a poem called "Totsu-Totsu na Oto" ("The Totsu-Totsu Sound"), which an artist Nobuaki Date—an essential member of Totsu-Totsu Dance—had written by chance. Though he's a visual artist, Date participated as a ukulele player in the 2010 and 2014 Totsu-Totsu Dance performances. In his poem, he writes:

Between an unprocessed past and a hazy future, there lies a present that can only be drawn pointillistically.

A sound that draws this — tots-u-tots-u.

While the dictionary definition of tots-u-tots-u refers to speaking in a halting or faltering manner, Date's interpretation resonates far more deeply. His words settle into the heart like his gentle rendition of "Tasogare no Bigin" ("Beguine in the Twilight") at our first performance in 2010 at the Maizuru Red Brick Warehouse. As for me, all I can do is gather flickering fragments of memories from these fifteen unprocessed years and try to put them into words.

I first encountered the dancer Osamu Jareo on March 7, 2010, at a Totsu-Totsu Dance performance. As a former nurse turned researcher in clinical philosophy, focusing on dementia care, I had been invited as a guest speaker for the post-performance talk. The performance was conceived as a culmination of dance workshops held at Graceville Maizuru, a special nursing home in Kyoto Prefecture, and featured

residents with dementia; I was expected to comment as a specialist in dementia care. Even though I had virtually no experience with dance, I accepted the invitation with a certain confidence grounded in my understanding of dementia. I also had spent time reflecting on the possibilities of non-verbal communication, and believed I could offer some insight. But what I saw that day far surpassed anything I could have imagined. It overturned the conventions of dementia care—and exposed the limitations of my own thinking. I no longer remember what I said in the after-talk. All I remember is how deeply I wanted to uncover the secret of Jareo's dance.

Not long after that meeting in Maizuru, I learned of a presentation Jareo was giving at a theater in Itami. There, he performed a bold duet with a plastic bag filled with garbage he had collected in the city. That was the moment I decided to follow him closely. I asked Yukiko Awaji, director of Graceville Maizuru, to let me join his workshops—and that was how I stepped into the world of Totsu-Totsu Dance.

Eventually, I began facilitating philosophical dialogue sessions after the workshops and succeeded in becoming more deeply involved. My relationship with Jareo expanded to include collaborative research on physical communication and research trips to places like Miyako Island and Mexico. Over time, Totsu-Totsu Dance outgrew its role as a performance title and came to signify a broader, evolving practice centered around Jareo. By the 2014 performance Totsu-Totsu Dance Part 2: Lessons in Love, I had gone from being a spectator to a member of the production team.

Looking back over these fifteen years, it's clear that Totsu-Totsu Dance is inseparable from my life. Just as someone caught in a tornado can't see the shape of the storm, I don't have the words to describe Totsu-Totsu Dance with clarity. All I can do is halt and falter—but

still, there is something I want to say. And I realize that when I've spoken or written about Tot-su-Totsu Dance before, I've placed too much emphasis on Jareo. Reflecting now, I see that he is, at his core, a duet dancer. Even when he stands alone on stage, he is always dancing in duet—with someone, or something, absent.

We tend to focus on the pitcher: the one with the strong arm, who throws fastballs and curveballs. But we often forget the catcher, who receives every pitch. Likewise, in Tot-su-Totsu Dance, attention tends to center on Jareo. In the context of care work, too, there's a tendency to frame the cared-for as problems to be solved, while applauding the efficiency of the caregiver's solutions. The missteps of people with dementia are often revealed and scrutinized, while their efforts and ingenuity go unseen, as if they never existed.

When Jareo extends his hand slowly, viewers try to find a purpose in the gesture. But then he suddenly stops. He waits. He waits for the other to move—so quietly that even the act of waiting is forgotten. And then, from that stillness, a dance emerges. It is neither my dance nor your dance. It is our dance.

Even those who struggle to move with the current of time can surrender to the invitation of the "here and now." The improvisational dance unfolds, tots-u-totsu, in repetition. Movement without destination has no end. Repetition is not inertia, but a new beginning, moment by moment. It generates fullness, not fatigue.

How, then, does a duet begin? What does it mean for a dance to be neither mine nor yours? Let's begin with eye contact. For two people's eyes to meet, each must not only look at the other, but also be seen by the other. Looking is active. Being seen is passive. Both must occur, simultaneously, for eye contact to exist. We may be able to control our own gaze, but we cannot control how we are seen. That depends on the other. Eye contact is not something

either person can control alone—it can only happen, like a miracle, arriving unexpectedly from beyond our control.

Jareo once said, "The world is not filled with logos." If that's true, then where are its gaps? I have a feeling they are not at the farthest reaches of some unknown world, but right here—nestled in the space between you and me.

Masaru Nishikawa (Clinical Philosophy)

Closing Words

Totsu-Totsu Dance is a dance that unfolds in the moment with elderly individuals one happens to meet that day. Each time I face them, I wonder: Should I make eye contact? How close should I get? How can we touch each other? Even after all these years of doing this, I never get used to it. Each time, with hesitation, I quietly and carefully — tots-u-tots-u — explore the relationship that might emerge.

With loosened tension, aligned breathing, and a search for a comfortable distance, I timidly meet their gaze and extend a hand. There's no guarantee they'll take it. And the point isn't necessarily to make contact—touching hands or fingers isn't the goal, nor is it the endpoint of the dance. Instead, I surrender to the coincidence of that day, placing myself in a space of uncertain connection, not knowing whether or not they'll respond. I try not to impose my rhythm onto them, nor do I simply fall into theirs. It's in this openness—or perhaps in the reversal that such openness creates—that I confront the dynamic between self and other, and, inevitably, the experiences of life and death I've come to face through all the people I've danced with so far. We grope for the path of the dance that arises between us, destination unknown. That, I believe, is what makes Totsu-Totsu Dance truly unique.

From that chance meeting between one dot and another, a relationship begins, as we attempt to touch one another. Through each hesitant tots-u-tots-u line drawn by those dots, I re-encounter myself and shape the relationship of “us” that began by chance. Even after the relationship ends, the tactile memory, the lingering trace, the path it carved—these lines remain for me to trace, pondering the essence of what it means to meet and live alongside others. Lately, I've come to feel that this ongoing questioning might be at the very heart of Totsu-Totsu Dance.

Osamu Jareo (Dancer / Choreographer)

● **Participating Artists**

Osamu Jareo, Megumi Kamimura,
Juri Nishioka, Kenji Osako,
Tomoya Ishida, Jamie Buitelaar,
Ellison Tan Yuyang, Kimberly Long,
Krishna Ganapathi, Michael Cheng

● **Video Production, Filming, and Editing**

Mikihiro Endo, Tetsu Kubota

● **Photography**

Toshie Kusamoto, Tetsu Kubota, torindo

● **Flyer Design**

Haru Kakiuchi

● **Translation**

Moe Ishii, Akiko Kume

● **Workshop Coordinators**

Kyoko Kugai, Cecilia Chan (Malaysia),
Audrey Perera (Singapore), Reiko Tsutsumi,
Satomi Adachi (Kagoshima)

● **With Assistance from**

Masaru Nishikawa,
Graceville Maizuru Special Elderly Care Home,
Rikkyo University Department of
Body Expression and Cinematic Arts,
Bagan Specialist Centre,
BSC Eldercare Centre,
Coconut Club,
THK Active Ageing Care Centre,
Aliwal Arts Centre,
Dementia Singapore, Dementia & Co.,
LL Sanekata,
Home Hospice Anma-no-le,
Myogyoji Temple,
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