



Totsu-totsu Dance

Annual
Report
2025



torindo

2025 Annual Activity Report

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Resonate With Each Other

Takeshi Toyohira (torindo)

Since its start in Maizuru, Kyoto, and as it expanded to Malaysia, Singapore, Tokyo and Kagoshima, people have asked time and again: “Totsu-totsu Dance workshops can’t be done if Jareo isn’t around?” “We really like Totsu-totsu Dance.” “We’d like to continue doing it. Could it be done using locally available resources?”

Cost would certainly go up if one had to invite Jareo and the Totsu-totsu Dance team each time not to mention the hassle of organizing schedules, and sustainability would be an issue as well. This was the reason behind the attempt to communicate the essence of Totsu-totsu Dance to other dancers, artists, and caregivers. In other words, the development of facilitators.

Of course, having persevered after a fashion for 16 years since 2009, there had been multiple occasions that affirmed our success in communicating the essence of Totsu-totsu Dance. For example, people like Dr Cecilia, a Malaysian gerontologist who we have worked with since 2022, and nurse Nakai at Maizuru who had long worked with us, have incorporated a certain “*je n’est ce quoi*” of Totsu-totsu Dance that they had identified into their personal work and disseminated it to others.

And so although clearly one can “understand without words,” if one has been continuously involved with Totsu-totsu Dance and is able to “dance” together, what has become important over the past 4 years has been how to create that first step in a new setting. As our scope of activity has expanded and we head into the next phase, a way to communicate Totsu-totsu Dance from “someone” to “someone” has become necessary. The way ripples expand as they impact each other.

In this 4th year of ongoing experimentation, we had 2 major achievements in terms of “communicating Totsu-totsu Dance.” One was the establishment of a performance model, and the other the creation of a Toolkit.

Regarding the former, we were able to debut a performance model at the Georgetown Festival in which dancers, dementia patients and care partners joined Osamu Jareo and Megumi Kamimura. Through the performance, the format for “communicating Totsu-totsu Dance” with the co-performers and the audience was established, opening up the possibility of performances in other regions in the future.

The latter mentioned Toolkit was a result of a joint effort with Michael, a Singaporean artist who participated in our 2024 program. Thanks to Michael’s thoughtful phrasing based on repeated observation and participation in workshops, we ended up with not just a manual but something that touched upon the required mindset and philosophy.

The intention is to have these two solid outcomes be the basso continuo (foundational harmonic structure) as we expand and evolve the program, but this year’s task of reorganizing the program focusing on “communication” also turned out to be an opportunity for each team member to rethink about Totsu-totsu Dance. In this Report, various contributors share their thoughts on the topic.

The sound is no longer coming from just one source as in the past. With the overlap of diverse voice waves, a new Totsu-totsu Dance is starting to resonate. One can clearly feel its pulse.

Convey with Words

Parallel to the Georgetown Festival performance in which young dancers, dementia patients, care partners shared the stage, over in Singapore work began to create a Toolkit for sharing and spreading the Totsu-totsu Dance workshop method. Totsu-totsu Dance had started as a workshop for the elderly but in this section, I'll share the reason why we wanted to "convey verbally" as it spreads and gains momentum, look back on our work thus far and on this year's effort to verbalize.

Reason for attempting verbalization

Although Totsu-totsu Dance has become a widely known workshop format, it originated from a performance at Maizuru in 2010. And so although Jareo and the team refer to it as a "workshop," even today there is a belief that it was a one-time only performance. And precisely because it was a performance, there was an attitude that an explanation was unnecessary, just first have a look.

However, when the workshop ventured overseas in 2022, that approach no longer worked. There was the linguistic difference between English and Japanese but one could also not hope to have it accepted without a clear "objective" and "hoped for outcome." This was only natural as our intention was to hold a "workshop," not deliver a performance.

We began having discussions with Jareo, and in 2023 managed to identify 4 keywords that summarized Totsu-totsu Dance and conducted an artist workshop around it, and then a performance in Osaka in 2024. Despite that, we still did not know the direction to take the next step in order to achieve "verbally communication." Just then, at Osaka in 2024, one of the workshop participants, the Singaporean artist Michael Chen, proposed creating a synopsis of Totsu-totsu Dance Workshop in the form of a Toolkit.

Having identified this next step of creating a Toolkit, I felt the work of verbally communicating Totsu-totsu Dance had definitively entered the next stage.



1. Moments from a planning meeting for the toolkit in Singapore

2-3. Moments from the workshop in Maizuru

Timeline

Attempts to Convey with Words in 2023–2024

● Summer 2023 <Travel to Singapore>*1

August 8, 2023: Introduction session and lecture for caregivers

An introductory talk and lecture on workshop creation were conducted for caregivers. One participant commented: "I have experience in dance, so I feel I can understand how the creative power of dance and art can support older adults living with dementia."

September 7, 2023: Workshop for artists

After an introduction to Totsu-totsu Dance, the four key elements that compose the practice—"breathing together," "measuring distance," "making eye contact," and "touching" explained. Participants then engaged in practical exercises based on these elements.

● End of 2023 <Activity Report Exhibition>*2

December 3, 2023: Talk session

Audrey Perera, the local coordinator in Singapore, was invited. The discussion focused on the current situation of dementia care and art in Singapore and expectations for Totsu-totsu Dance.

● Summer 2024 <Workshops in Singapore>*3

August 12, 2024: Lecture-style workshop for emerging artists

A lecture was conducted based on the four key elements of Totsu-totsu Dance. Michael Cheng, an educator involved in the development of the toolkit, participated for the first time.

August 13–15, 2024: Workshops at Thye Hua Kwan Active Ageing Centre

A three-day workshop was conducted for users of the centre. Five participants from the August 12 lecture joined as facilitators, creating opportunities to deepen both practice and learning through implementation.

August 16, 2024: Reflection with emerging artists

The three-day workshops were reviewed, and participants presented new ideas for the future Totsu-totsu Dance workshops.



*1 See Totsu-totsu Dance 2023 Activity Report, p. 6–7

*2 See p.17

*3 See Totsu-totsu Dance 2024 Activity Report, p.13

Activity Report 2025

We developed a “toolkit” in collaboration with Michael Cheng, a participant in last year’s workshop, and Audrey Perera, the coordinator in Singapore. We will introduce the domestic and international developments that led to its creation.

Singapore



Workshop for staff at Kwong Wai Shiu Hospital

● July 30

A workshop was held at Kwong Wai Shiu Hospital for staff members who facilitate activities for the elderly. Michael Cheng led the introduction. Participants experienced the five core elements emphasized in Totsu-totsu Dance, such as “making eye contact” and “walking slowly.” (Participants: 16)

● August 1

A meeting was held at Aliwal Arts Centre with a mixed team from both Japan and Singapore. Michael led a workshop, and through an exchange of ideas regarding the draft structure, the chapters of the toolkit began to take shape. Later, a workshop for residents was held at Kwong Wai Shiu Hospital. Including wheelchair users and care staff, participants engaged in exercises such as “breathing slowly,” “greeting with the eyes,” and “connecting without touching.” (Participants: 31)

● August 2

We shared the objectives of the toolkit, the ideal profile of a facilitator, and the types of support required.

Maizuru

Michael visited Japan. Together with the creative team, we visited Maizuru -the birthplace of Totsu-totsu Dance. While conducting workshops at local facilities, we refined the details of the toolkit



Workshop at “Graceville Maizuru”

● September 16

We visited the special elderly care home, “Graceville Maizuru.” After a meeting regarding the “Toolkit,” a workshop was held for the residents. The session included improvising and performing “Jareo-san’s Song.” (Participants: 8)

● September 17

Jareo and Kamimura participated in the day service activities for the elderly held at “Graceville Maizuru.” (Participants: 21)

Visited the special elderly care home, “Shinai-no-ie Kotobukiso.” Two separate workshops were held: one for residents requiring higher levels of care and another for those with relatively lower care needs. (Participants: 53)

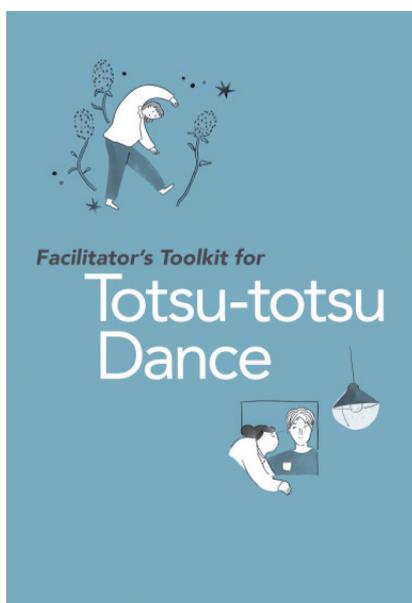
● September 18

We revisited “Graceville Maizuru” and conducted interviews with the facility director and staff regarding the impact Totsu-totsu Dance has had. Afterward, a workshop was held between Jareo and the participants using an old rotary telephone found on the floor. (Participants: 3)

Facilitator's Toolkit for "Totsu-totsu Dance"

This toolkit was developed for dancers and care facility staff members who wish to practice Totsu-totsu Dance. Rather than merely conveying its philosophy and methodology, it aims to communicate the "lived texture" underlying these approaches in a careful and nuanced manner. The publication includes texts that explore the core elements of Totsu-totsu Dance and their evolution over time, drawing on interviews with the director and staff of Graceville Maizuru Special Nursing Home, which served as the starting point of this project. Instead of functioning as a conventional manual, the toolkit is designed to act as a "close companion" for its users.

Facilitator's Toolkit for Totsu-totsu Dance



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We interviewed Michael, the author of the toolkit, and Audrey, the editor, to discuss the background and objectives behind its creation.

Q&A with Michael

Toolkit author

1 ● Please tell us about the circumstances that led Michael to create the Totsu-totsu Dance toolkit.

I first encountered Totsu-totsu Dance through collaborations with choreographer Osamu Jareo and

Torindo, particularly through workshops held in Singapore from 2023 onwards with people living with dementia, caregivers, and fellow artists. What struck me deeply was not the form of the dance, but its ethos and the expression of its values. There was structure but within the structure that was rooted in values, there was space to improvise and to respond to participants in many different ways. The expression of the activities opened meaningful and sometimes playful moments of connection and presence.

In my work as an applied theatre practitioner across disability, education, and community contexts, I have long been concerned with dignity, power, listening, and human connection. Often,

the questions are about how we accompany, listen, and dialogue, rather than lead and instruct. Many care and arts practices, even when well intentioned, can become overly directive or outcome driven, relying heavily on verbal instruction and cognitive ability. Totsu-totsu Dance offered a different possibility. It created space for connection that did not depend on words, memory, or physical competence, but on shared presence, breath, distance, and optional touch.

As I reflected on my experience, the potential became quite clear, as did the challenges. Totsu-totsu dance is an impactful relational act of care. At the same time, how can I continue this practice with respect to its roots and values, and be confident in facilitating it on my own? Torindo's invitation to work on the toolkit provided me with an opportunity to dive deeply into the dance, and crystallize the values and pedagogy needed for potential facilitators. I accepted this task wholeheartedly.

The toolkit was never meant to standardise the practice, but to hold its values clearly, and to illustrate its openness. A key moment was Torindo's invitation to visit care facilities in Maizuru, Kyoto, where Totsu-totsu had its origins. The visit and the time spent with the facilitators helped me better understand how this art of care came to be. I hope the toolkit managed to find a way to translate a relational, tacit practice into something shareable, without losing its gentleness and playfulness.

2 ● Please share the thoughts and intentions you put into the toolkit.

From the beginning, my intention for the Totsu-totsu Dance toolkit was to protect the spirit of the practice while making it accessible. It was also important for me to respect values and thoughts of the originators of the form, while giving voice to my own perception and interpretation. I was clear that this should not become a technical manual or a fixed set of exercises. Totsu-totsu Dance resists rigid structure by nature. It is rooted in invitation rather than instruction, and in relationship rather than technique. The toolkit therefore needed to communicate a way of being, not just a way of

doing.

Dignity was a central guiding principle. Throughout the toolkit, there is a consistent question, how do we honour the person in front of us? This applies to people living with dementia, caregivers, facilitators, and ourselves. Consent, for instance, is framed not as a one-time agreement, but as an ongoing, moment to moment process of listening to verbal and non-verbal cues. Touch is always optional, specific, and reversible. Hesitation or refusal is treated as meaningful communication rather than resistance.

Another strong intention was to support facilitators who do not identify as artists. Many care workers shared their anxiety about not being expressive or creative enough. The toolkit repeatedly affirms that any movement, including stillness, is already valid. At the same time, I recognised the need for scaffolding. This is why the toolkit includes guiding principles, reflective prompts, and notes for facilitators, rather than prescriptive lesson plans.

Cultural sensitivity also shaped the work. As Totsu-totsu Dance moves across different countries and care contexts, the toolkit avoids assuming shared norms around bodies, space, or touch. Facilitators are encouraged to adapt the practice to their environment, participants, and cultural realities.

Ultimately, I intended the toolkit to be a companion rather than an authority. It invites facilitators into a practice of gentle attention, encouraging them to slow down, remain curious, be playful, and trust the encounter as it unfolds.



Michael Cheng

Michael is an applied drama practitioner and educator whose work bridges care, community, and creative practice across diverse contexts and communities. He designs and facilitates programmes grounded in therapeutic forms and participatory arts, supporting groups to strengthen wellbeing, deepen reflection, and build relational awareness. His practice spans schools, community organisations, arts institutions, and intergenerational settings, and he has collaborated with partners across

Asia and beyond. With a background in special education, community arts, and story work, Michael creates grounded and welcoming spaces where people reconnect with their inner resources, listen with empathy, and explore new perspectives together.

Q&A with Audrey

Toolkit author

1 ● What did you discover, or what new challenges did you identify, through creating the toolkit?

I had always realised that TTD appeared to be deceptively simple, and yet philosophical and deep. But since reading the toolkit written by my colleague Michael Cheng, I have come away with a deeper understanding. Seeing the method articulated in written form made it so much clearer for me.

Fundamentally, it is about creating the space for individuals to connect with each other at an emotional level. It is about recognising that people respond differently to stimuli, and that there is no right/wrong response. I learnt that no matter how fleeting these moments of connection are, they are what makes us human, and what make us feel. Yet the challenge within this simplicity is the execution/facilitation of TTD. If the philosophy is not understood in its fullness, the execution risks diminishing the practice into just another “activity for seniors with dementia”. The facilitator, his/her understanding, state of mind, frames of reference, patience and openness will determine the outcomes.

2 ● What kind of people do you hope will use the toolkit, and how do you envision them using it?

I hope that professional and family caregivers and care staff will use this toolkit with those they care

for. While it would be ideal for those who use it to be led to a deeper understanding before they use the method, it is still possible for it to be used as a springboard to learning how to connect and as an idea generator. Positive outcomes can still be achieved, if used consistently over time.

I envision people using it to try out the ideas, and also as a tool to gain deeper insights into different ways to create moments of connection, and to formulate their own ideas, based on their practice. The e-toolkit will be made accessible to everyone who is interested to learn more, wherever they are in the world. This open and free access is a gift of such significant generosity by TTD producer, torindo, and Osamu Jareo, creator of the method.



Audrey Perera

For over 30 years, Audrey has been an arts producer and editor, evolving from world music to a focus on inclusive arts and performing arts as therapy. I directed the True Colors Festival from its 2018 Singapore debut through 2025, producing events across live and digital platforms. Since 2023, she has collaborated with the Totu-totsu Dance team to introduce their method to Singapore. This journey has included organizing workshops for seniors and caregivers, training local arts practitioners, and editing the facilitator toolkit now launching in partnership with LASALLE College of the Arts.

Singapore, Gentle Play, Dance in the Twilight

Takao Asano

We arrived in Singapore in the midst of summer.

At Changi International Airport for the very first time, I was surprised that one only had to submit to face recognition in front of a screen to clear Immigration, without a need to show a passport. Passengers entered the country, one after the other, as easily as passing through the turnstiles of a subway. Not having to queue in front of an immigration officer was certainly convenient, but I felt slightly insecure at having my “face” appropriated by the surveillance technology.

We got into the waiting vehicle and arrived at our accommodation. The city was still bright despite it being after 6pm. Looking outside the window, the humid air had dispersed the sunlight to cast a reddish tint on the scenery.

Since there was a hawker center nearby, I had a Malay dish called *rendang*, beef and vegetables stewed with spices and coconut milk. Afterwards, I strolled the city at night. My body which had stiffened during the long journey loosened up and I started to sweat profusely. I finally felt that I was in the monsoon belt by the equator, a nation at the tip of the Malay peninsula.

I had come to Singapore to participate in a Totsu-totsu Dance project led by Osamu Jareo, a choreographer and dancer, and the team.

Totsu-totsu Dance is a dance workshop and performance that Jareo had begun with the elderly residents and staff of a nursing facility in Maizuru, Kyoto and the local community. They had expanded their area of activity in recent years to dementia facilities overseas, and work was progressing in Singapore on an

English workshop manual (Toolkit). I had joined them on this trip having worked as an editor of Jareo’s book, “Totsu-totsu Dance”: Created at a Nursing Home.”

The next day, I participated in a three-day Toolkit meeting at the Aliwai Art Centre in the historical district of Kampung Glam. From Japan were 5 members of the Totsu-totsu Dance team led by Jareo plus myself; from Singapore Audrey Perera, an art producer; Michael Cheng, an applied theatre facilitator and actor; and Ms N, the interpreter.

The issue at hand was how could we translate Totsu-totsu Dance into English.

How could the practice of a physical communication that is both like and unlike a dance and caregiving be understood in another language, culture, and society? We started talking, groping about in the dark.

First, there was a need to consider what “understanding” meant fundamentally. Jareo begins communicating during Totsu-totsu Dance by taking cues from physical senses rather than words. Like responding to an invitation one cannot hear, the way he narrows the distance between himself and the dementia patient or the elderly is less about “communicating” but more about being drawn to the “joy of non-communication” (*Tonari no Ninchisho* (Dementia Next to Me) by Masaru Nishikawa).

If the English language Toolkit is being created for the purpose of introducing the Totsu-totsu Dance method to care facilities outside of Japan, its core value of “not understanding” has to be translated into something can be “understood.”

Singapore is a multilingual society with English, Malay, Chinese, and Tamil as its four

official languages, and people of various cultural backgrounds live together. Citizens, young and old, lead bilingual lives and English is the main language in public settings. During our stay we visited the Chinese nursing facility of Kwong Wai Shiu Hospital, and discovered that many of their caregivers were from neighboring Asian nations who spoke some English.

Unspoken understanding which is possible in a heterogeneous Japanese setting will not work here. To make a Toolkit that is functional in a multilingual, multiethnic nation like Singapore, it was necessary to explain Totsu-totsu Dance in simple English so participants could start off from a common minimum baseline.

“How about switching “Totsu-totsu Dance” to “Gentle Play?”

Micheal spoke out loud as he stood in front of the whiteboard in the conference room. “Gentle Play.” Taken in the context of what Michael had said thus far, was he inferring “a calm and gentle play that respects the other person’s dignity”? Everyone silently nodded their heads.

I remembered “Deep Play” which I had learnt about in a university cultural anthropology class. A term used by Clifford Geertz in his analysis of Balinese cockfighting. The Balinese cockfights was said to reveal the power and conflict dynamics of a village community where in the heat of the festival people not only gambled outrageous sums of money but put honor and social status on the line. For Geertz it was not just a wager but he saw it as “Deep Play,” a symbolic expression of world view in Balinese culture.

It seems interesting to consider what differences or continuity may exist between Deep Play and Gentle Play. It would also be good to search for examples of Gentle Play that have been traditionally practiced by various cultures. To compare and contrast the different forms of “play” that appears historically and spatially

may help reveal new meaning in the activities of Jareo and others.

Seeing Michael’s friendly smile, it felt as if a ray of light had illuminated the way forward to translating Totsu-totsu Dance and I was elated.

Something odd happened.

It was during the Totsu-totsu Dance workshop for the elderly and staff held at Kwong Wai Shiu Hospital.

After Jareo had led the participants through pair exercises such as “synchronizing breath,” “measuring distance”, and “making eye contact,” I noticed Megumi Kamimura, the other dancer, start dancing with an elderly person seated in the circle.

Something had clicked between Kamimura and the old lady in a dress, and they would playfully draw close to each other then separate, lock eyes and then look away. Eventually Kamimura positioned her face close to the face of the woman sitting in a chair. For a while they gently touched cheek to cheek, head to head, and when Megumi eventually turned toward me I was so startled that I let out a gasp.

It was just for a moment but Kamimura’s “face” looked like the elderly woman’s “face.” It was not just the elderly lady’s facial expression but the wrinkles etched on her face, the luster and dryness of her skin, the way her bangs swung slightly appeared to have been accurately recreated on the surface of Kamimura’s face.

A gentle play where a “face” is transcribed on another “face” within the context of a light-hearted non-verbal interaction with nothing to hide rather than an intense face-to-face in which each bare their soul to each other. The dancer’s physical action of transforming her face to match that of her partner, as if switching masks, was magic. It may have just been my imagination. But I was certain that I had seen something that was in direct contrast to the

face recognition technology I had experienced at the airport.

On my last day in Singapore, after taking care of work, I decided to do some laundry in anticipation of my next trip. We were scheduled to head to Penang Island, Malaysia, the next day, to witness the Totsu-totsu Dance performance at the Georgetown Art Festival.

Just as the sun was glaring down from the west, I walked to the laundromat located at the apartment block near our accommodations with my laundry. Inserted the tokens into the machine, place the laundry inside and shut the door, selected weight, temperature and wash cycle, and then started. A barefooted uncle and auntie were having a conversation in the waiting area.

I decided to just wait till it finished, doing nothing, in the inner courtyard of the apartment block. The scenery was once again tinted slightly red and there was a pleasant ocean breeze. People returning from work passed by, some senior citizens were exercising, and children were whizzing by on their bicycles. Is that tall tree a raintree? Looking up there was a black bird on a branch singing at a high pitch. Some poet had written, "Dusk is a good time, an incredibly gentle time" but it certainly was.

After about 30 minutes I returned to the laundromat. The barefooted uncle and auntie were still sitting on the bench, talking to each other in the exact same position as earlier.

When I looked carefully, the uncle's "face" was a spitting image of the auntie's.

I thought, here are 2 practitioners of Gentle Play as well. The sight of the two elderly persons sitting close to each other as they chatted at the laundromat in Singapore; it was a dance in the sunset that I wanted to keep watching forever.



Takao Asano

Editor. Born 1975. In addition to being an editor at Saudade Books, also works in the areas of literature, humanities and social sciences, and art. Author of *Chiisana Koe no Shima*, among other works.

Convey Through the Body

In 2025, torindo participated in Malaysia's George Town Festival to re-examine Totsu-totsu Dance as a form of physical expression. By performing with local dancers, artists, seniors, and caregivers, we created a space where diverse bodies could intersect.

This chapter reflects on the evolution of Totsu-totsu Dance -from its origins as workshops for seniors to its current focus on physicality. We also outline past initiatives and report on this year's efforts to communicate the essence of the project through the body and performance.

Reason Behind Attempting to Use the Body (Performance) to Communicate

Is it possible for a dancer who is not Jareo, or an artist, caregiver, or even an elderly dementia patient to be the facilitator for Totsu-totsu Dance? If so, how should they communicate? The first thing we did together with Jareo, was to try and verbalize the essence of Totsu-totsu Dance, no matter how imperfect it may be. (The task in 2022). This then gave rise to the question, "How do we share it with others?"

One of the answers that Jareo and the Totsu-totsu team came up with was "performance" in front of an audience. With what has been verbalized at its core, create a performance using the body together with diverse participants. Then the resulting outcome, the essence of Totsu-totsu Dance, would have been shared by not just among the participants but the audience.

In order to discover the suitable "shape", we worked with Megumi Kamimura who had been involved since 2022, to present a work in progress in Tokyo in 2023, and based on that a performance in Osaka in 2024. And now that it had a "shape," we were able to debut this most recent incarnation at the Georgetown Festival, Malaysia.

Verification of its effectiveness is the next job but for now we have given "shape" to the idea of "using the body to communicate."



1-3. Rehearsal scene with dancers at the George Town Festival

Timeline

Attempts to Convey through the body in 2023–2024

● **Summer 2023 <Travel to Malaysia>*1**

August 3-4: Workshops at an elderly care center

Workshops were conducted for elderly adults.

Video documentation from this period was later used in the Osaka performance and the Malaysia performance in 2025.

August 5: Creation and trial workshop with Malaysia-based artists

A workshop was developed and tested together with local artists. Chloe Tan, who later appeared in the George Town Festival performance, joined for the first time.

● **End of 2023 <Activity Report Exhibition>*2**

December 2–3: Performance presentation

A work-in-progress performance was presented in Tokyo.

The program centred on a physical performance by Jareo and Kamimura.

It also incorporated a reading by Okui Lala, who had participated in the Malaysia activities, and a spoken narrative by Tomoya Ishida, who had joined the Kagoshima visit.

● **Summer 2024 <Workshops in the Kanto Region>*3**

July 21: Workshop for artists in the greater Tokyo area

This workshop explored how the activities of Totsu-totsu Dance could be expanded and shared, aiming to foster practitioners and strengthen networks.

September 17: Workshop at a senior housing facility in Tokyo

Kenji Osako, who had participated in the July workshop, and Juri Nishioka, who had previously joined a performance by Osamu Jareo, participated as facilitators.

● **Summer 2024 <Visit to Kagoshima>*4**

October 31 – November 2: Residency at Home Hospice Amma no Ie

Nishioka accompanied the visit and deepened her understanding through exchanges and practice in a care environment.

This experience was later shared in the Osaka performance.

● **Early 2025 <Travel to Malaysia>*5**

January 4–5: Participation in a retreat program organized by Bagan Specialist Centre

Workshops were conducted for people living with dementia and their care partners.

A diary written by Ms Tan, who participated in the workshop, was later read aloud by the author during the George Town Festival performance.

● **Early 2025 <Performance in Osaka>*6**

January 25–26: Performance presentation in Osaka

Osako, Nishioka, and Ishida appeared on stage and participated in the creative process together with Jareo and Kamimura.

The performance included scenes in which Osako and Nishioka, who had not known the time, “recreated” exchanges between Jareo and a former workshop participant who has since passed away.

It also featured a scene in which Ishida read a text reflecting on Totsu-totsu Dance from his own perspective, grounded in his own experience and bodily perception.

Through these elements, the work expressed forms of Totsu-totsu Dance that emerge through the workshop process.

*1 See Totsu-totsu Dance 2023 Activity Report, p.4–5

*2 See p.16

*3 Totsu-totsu Dance 2024 Activity Report, p.13

*4 p.10

*5 p.6

*6 p.14

Activity Report 2025

Penang Performance at George Town Festival 2025

Date: August 6 (Wed) and 7 (Thu), 2025

Venue: Hin Bus Depot (Penang, Malaysia)

Performers:

Osamu Jareo (dancer / choreographer)

Megumi Kamimura (dancer / choreographer)

Chloe Tan (dancer)

Silver Yee (dancer)

Kamal Sabran (sound artist)

Participants from the Elderly Care Centre of Bagan Specialist Centre and members of the Urut-Urut Project, among others

Audience: Approximately 250 people

The Georgetown Festival is an annual international art festival held in Penang, Malaysia that straddles diverse art forms such as dance, music, film, and photography. Totsu-totsu Dance, a reconfigured version of a performance which debuted the previous year at Osaka, was invited to this Festival. A young dancer Chloe Tan who had participated in the Kuala Lumpur workshop 2023, and Silver Yee, also a dancer, were involved in its creation through numerous discussions and joint development.

Based on the Osaka performance, at Georgetown Chloe and Silver “recreated” the exchange between a now deceased workshop participant and Jareo captured in the Maizuru workshop video as a physical expression. Furthermore, it incorporated a scene of Ms Tan, a participant of a Malaysian workshop, reading aloud what she had written about her own experience in caregiving, to create a structure where memory and relationships could be presented in the voice of an individual. In addition to Festival attendees, many Malaysians who had cooperated with the

project thus far also came and there was an active discussion after the performance about the show and how workshops could be conducted.



Chloe Tan and Silver Yee reenacting a scene from a past Totsu-totsu Dance workshop.



The final scene, in which a live camera follows the performers as they leave the stage, projected onto the screen.



The performance attracted a large audience.

Photo by Thum Chia Chieh, courtesy of George Town Festival.

Interviews of performers

Interviews were conducted with dancers Chloe Tan and Silva Yee to gather their reflections following their performance at the George Town Festival.

Chloe's comment

1 ● Impressions or reflections after taking part in the performance.

I felt a strong sense of care, respect, and trust within the project and among the team members. And naturally, the same spirit and energy were also shared generously with Silver and me. I remember talking to Silver about how we were both so impressed and had so much respect for the way the whole team worked together, each person gave their best in their own part/role, with clear communication from the beginning to the end of the production.

On the other hand, I truly appreciate the open discussions and exchanges throughout the whole process. Jareo and Megumi always try their best to answer/share so truthfully and sincerely. They made space for curiosity and questioning and encouraged us to follow what made sense to our own bodies. This support helped me greatly in entering the work and the performance. While it was important that we studied the previous staged version, I was also able to trust what felt truthful and present in my own body.

2 ● Whether and how the experience connected to or influenced your own expression or artistic activities?

Before this experience, I had considered working with the elderly population during my Dance/Movement Therapy practicum but never had the opportunity.

This experience has reminded me of the beauty of connecting through the body and movement, and of being fully present with another being. Though

it may appear simple, these moments can be deeply moving, essential and powerful. Even in the presence of language barriers and cultural differences (among facilitators, online participants, and the live audience) connection was still possible. This reaffirmed my belief that the body speaks a universal language, one that transcends words.

Connecting through embodied listening, sensing and attuning has been at the heart of my practice. Being able to experience and witness the way Jareo and Megumi practice these qualities with Totsu-totsu was truly inspiring and encouraging. I feel very grateful and continue to cherish this experience of being part of a performance that beautifully weaves together art and care; rooted in Jareo's enduring commitment, practice, and years of experience working with dementia patients. As a movement artist and practitioner, this experience was rich and gratifying on many levels: artistically, relationally, and professionally. It has deepened my trust in embodied listening, affirming the power of movement as care. It has also helped expand, clarify and further reinforce my interest in exploring opportunities/platforms to work with dementia patients and the elderly.



Chloe Tan (Dancer)

Chloe Tan is a movement artist trained in dance (ASWARA, 2014) and dance movement therapy (Dance Therapy Training Aotearoa, 2023). With curiosity and embodied listening at the heart of her practice, she is drawn to works that explore the stories the body carries and the quiet power it holds.

Silver's comment

1 ● Impressions or reflections after taking part in the performance.

Overall, the working experience was very lovely. The three online rehearsals prior to our in-person meeting in Penang were especially helpful. Despite being conducted remotely, the Totsu-totsu team communicated their ideas clearly, particularly around using movement as a way to connect with people living with dementia. These sessions established a strong foundation for our face-to-face rehearsals.

During the production week in Penang, I deeply felt the entire team's dedication to the work. I also felt very well taken care of, which I truly appreciated. The sense of attunement and the shared energy during rehearsals and performances are moments I continue to cherish.

I am particularly drawn to how this work offers the audience an accessible entry point through both online and on-site workshops, before leading them into a deeper exploration of connection through the different segments of the work. I also appreciate how the work embraces multiple facets of people living with dementia. I could feel the invisible connections are established with care and truthfulness, and the segments derived from real stories were thoughtfully crafted and translated into artistic form.

For me, this has been a deeply valuable performing experience, as it demands great sensitivity in listening and a heightened awareness of presence.

2 ● Whether and how the experience connected to or influenced your own expression or artistic activities?

Listening, attuning, and sensing through movement have always been essential to my artistic practice. As I incorporate these qualities into my own dance work, I am also gradually learning how to engage with bodies from various communities.

This process can be intimidating at times, especially when differences are brought into an encounter.

During the performance, I was deeply drawn to how simple movement experiences were offered to the audience. It immediately felt as though we were sharing the same language, which inspired me to prioritize connection and embodied experience, before attempting to make sense of anything with the thinking brain.

I am reminded that meaning does not always have to be linear or literal. It can be felt directly through embodied engagement with the world.

I also appreciate that the work is neither preachy nor romanticizes people with dementia. The negotiation between care and art is something I find especially compelling—particularly questions around boundaries, such as where respect meets experimentation.

It would be a dream to one day perform and dance with people living with dementia on stage. Until then, I recognize that I still have much to learn about how to connect with them through movement, a process that requires ongoing participation, action, and practice.



Silver Yee (Dancer)

Silver Yee is a movement-based artist whose work spans contemporary dance, dance theatre, site-specific performance, and dance film. Her practice is rooted in collaboration and a curiosity about the body in the process of becoming. Through movement research, she explores how embodied practices shape personal and collective meaning.

“Words” and “Physicality”

Totsu-totsu Dance 2025 Sharing & Reflection Gathering

Date: January 24-25, 2026

Venue: Suissei (Nakano-ku, Tokyo)

Number of Participants: Approximately 80

On the first day, a workshop was conducted using the “Toolkit” developed in collaboration with a team from Singapore, with actor Kenji Osako serving as facilitator. Following the workshop, a café-style dialogue session was held, providing participants with an opportunity to share their reflections.



Art space -suissei- in Nakano City, Tokyo



Scene from the Day 1 workshop using the Toolkit



Actor, Kenji Osako, who joined in last year’s Osaka performance

On the second day, dancer and choreographer Ema Yuasa, who is active both in Japan and internationally, was invited as a guest. A talk session featuring Yuasa and Jareo was held.

On both days, a networking session was organized after the event, offering participants an opportunity to continue conversations. Many attendees remained at the venue, engaging in lively and thoughtful discussions.



A talk guest, dancer Ema Yuasa



Scene from the Day 2 talk event

To Maintain the Sense of Not Knowing

Tomoya Ishida

I believe “comfort level” and “dialogue” were the two key phrases of the 2025 Totu-totsu Dance Screening and Talk. “Comfort level” does not necessarily equate to fuzzy warmth. It refers to creating a relationship that also includes the possibility of surprising or perplexing someone. (Which must be why Totu-totsu Dance is accompanied by the phrase, “Like Art, Like Care”). Jareo says, “I’m always slightly on the edge at these workshops with dementia patients and their caregivers,” and guest speaker Yuasa also commented, “creating a small challenge within the safe confines of the workshop environment and experiencing shivers down the spine is like building resilience for when one ventures outside where relationships are tougher.” To reexamine one’s relationship with the person in front of you based just on their body language might also be one of the roles of this “Dance.”

On the first day, Kenji Osako conducted a workshop using the Toolkit, the outcome of the year’s activities. It went like this. Everyone sat in a circle to do a round of self-introductions. Next was stretching with each participant sharing an idea to which Osako would make a comment as the bodies moved. The ideas included things like tapping the body, facial expressions that should not be shared with strangers. And it continued on to the second, then third exercise; gather tightly together, find a comfortable place, play with a piece of tissue paper. These exercises were done with the participants split into 2 groups, and after the break they shared their thoughts using various analogies: “Kotatsu (heated low table) and tangerines”, “Children coming to play in a playground with no play equipment,” “Couldn’t take off the armour”, “Flowing

river (dance) and pebbles”. I could sense the rich scenery that had unfolded in front of their eyes.

One participant had come without any knowledge of Totu-totsu Dance, and left without comprehending a single thing. But he said, “I’d like to come again.” Workshops and symposiums like these often have an “issue-resolution format” and attendees also come hoping to gain some new insight. On the other hand, Totu-totsu Dance values the idea of maintaining a sense of “not knowing.” Programs looking at relationships with people of different physical conditions or culture often get categorized as “societal issue.” Some things do become apparent when a matter one had not been conscious of is identified as a “social issue.” However, I want to note that viewing something as an “issue” or “problem” creates an odd dynamic between the parties concerned and can result in a disjointed “comfort level.”

On the second day there was a talk session with Yuasa and Jareo. “Dialogue” in a setting where a certain degree of “comfort level” is guaranteed also has the possibility of unintentionally encroaching on a person’s “pain.” It is a common question not limited to dance but also encompassing various artistic expressions, and by extension also relations with others in daily life. When a person who is not a professional care giver comes across someone’s pain, how should they respond? Yuasa commented, “Perhaps the time spent grappling with the question is of value,” while Jareo said, “One method would be to share a common space where everyone can think together and continue questioning.” One should be careful to avoid the ineptness of lumping people’s experience of “pain” in one category but maintaining the

sense of “not knowing” and the presence of someone who can resonate with you would provide a sense of “support.”

As someone who makes use of daytime service provided by care givers, having someone that one can have a relationship with other than the person who assists with bodily functions like eating, relieving oneself, or sleeping is heartening. To have a connection and be able to converse with a third party other than family or dependents. Gradually share about each others’ experiences and to progress into a “dialogue.” The sharing of individual specific “recounting” which cannot be categorized as general attributes is where true diversity exists, brimming with differences. I hope more spaces like nosmosis research* and Totsu-totsu Dance where “dialogue” and “dance” can come and go will come to exist everywhere.

*nosmosis research:

Began in 2022 under the leadership of Ema Yuasa, it began as a research activity that examines the process of discovery that happens from physical expression and dialogue with people of diverse backgrounds. Regularly conducts dance workshops and performances, video production.

Tomoya Ishida

Film director. Uses an electric wheelchair due to muscular dystrophy. Masters in Contemporary Psychology. Introduced to the iPad in junior high school as a learning tool, he developed an interest in filmmaking after creating a short film. An executive committee member of the Barrier-Free Film Screening, a volunteer group that plans and organizes film screenings. His directorial debut, “Henshin!” won the Grand Prix at the 2020 Pia Film Festival’s PFF Award.

What Totsu-Totsu Dance Conveys via the Body

Megumi Kamimura

I've had the chance to visit various places in Japan and abroad during my involvement with Totsu-totsu Dance over the past 4 years and I and the opportunity to go to Maizuru, Kyoto this September. It was mainly for a meeting related to the Toolkit and to visit Graceville Maizuru, a special nursing home for the elderly and the birthplace of Totsu-totsu Dance.

Graceville Maizuru is located in the middle of a tranquil farmland about a 10-minute drive from Maizuru city. The mountain ridge visible from the window was beautiful. After the meeting, it was decided to hold a workshop for several of the residents in the multipurpose space located on the ground floor. For some reason Jareo promptly removed his shoes and sat down on the floor in front of the elderly who were sitting in chairs and wheelchairs. He inched closer to them by massaging their hands. He wrote his name on the whiteboard to highlight the uniqueness of his surname. To help them remember his name he created an impromptu song and got everyone to sing along. It was similar to our usual workshop but there was something reckless about the way he proceeded and his energy level. It was like a child trying to get his mother's attention by throwing a tantrum

I thought it was more like a battle than a workshop. To get the other person to acknowledge him, and to create a dance where there was none. It dawned on me that for Jareo and this team, Totsu-totsu Dance started as an effort to create a new form of expression off the mainstream of art, where one battled to create a position with no name and survive, and it continues to be so today.

Jareo's frantic gestures were also movements of resistance from slipping away from the other person's consciousness and society's framework. I believe that dementia patients participating in the workshop sensed and resonated with that energy of resistance rather than the reassurance of being cared for. Once I recognize this battle stance and passion that flows at the heart of Totsu-totsu Dance, I feel like I'm discovering something new in what at first glance appears to be a peaceful workshop interaction.

Megumi Kamimura

Megumi is a choreographer and dancer who has presented works internationally since 2004. She frequently collaborates with visual artists to create performances that transcend conventional dance definitions.

Her practice focuses on how the body responds to and is moved by specific environments and contexts. In 2022, she established an independent studio and collective in Tokyo, producing multidisciplinary works and research series with various artists. A recipient of a major artistic fellowship from 2021 to 2024, she has also been a key participant in the Totsu Totsu Dance project since 2022.

Totsu-Totsu Dance 2025: Toolkit Journey

Osamu Jareo

This year we came to create a Totsu-totsu Dance workshop Toolkit with Michael Cheng, a practitioner of Playback Theatre and educator from Singapore.

We had a total of 3 face to face meetings with Michael last year; January in Osaka, August in Singapore, and September in Kyoto but on the last occasion we also visited Graceville Maizuru, the special nursing home in Maizuru where Totsu-totsu Dance was born. The workshop at Graceville was the first since just before COVID in February 2020, so it had been five and a half years since our last visit. Although it had been a while, it relaxed us to be in the familiar and comfortable space. The lobby was spacious and filled with a scent unique to Graceville and it brought back nostalgic memories of the people who had been involved with Totsu-totsu Dance and interacted with us.

The Director of the facility, Ms. Yukiko Awaji, was still a force of nature. When Michael asked her about Totsu-totsu Dance, she recounted her hesitation at the beginning as well as the change she observed not just in the residents but herself as the workshop continued. Listening to her I thought back on the time I had spent with her and how impact her energy had been to giving birth and shaping Totsu-totsu Dance.

The Totsu-totsu Dance workshops at Maizuru continued post-Covid in an online format but it had ended in March 2023 and one of the staff who had been deeply involved, Mr Yusuke Uraoka, had started a program called Hidamari Club. We went with Michael to observe. Uraoka had always supported and assisted our activity from the other side of the

screen when the sessions had gone online. A former junior high school art teacher, we found him singing songs from the Showa period (1920s to 80s) as he skillfully strummed along on his guitar, and conducting exercises using a ball, all done in a leisurely and unrestrained manner reminiscent of Totsu-totsu. When he heard of our impending visit, he arranged for 3 daytime users of the facility that he thought were suited for the workshop with me. Although we were meeting each other for the first time, the workshop at the lobby of Graceville Maizuru was extremely enjoyable and Megumi Kamimura, who has been involved as an assistant for 4 years, was also dancing joyfully next to me with the participants.

The next day, together with Michael, we visited a former nurse of Graceville, Narumi Nakai, who had since moved on to another facility. Nakai had often participated in the Totsu-totsu Dance workshops since pre-Covid and had also supported us online like Uraoka. Perhaps because of that background, she had been put in charge of recreation activities at this new facility despite being a nurse and organized a Totsu-totsu Dance workshop for our visit. Afterwards, she talked of how she wanted to make use of her experiences at Graceville and do something similar to Totsu-totsu Dance at this new place.

Thanks to this Maizuru visit triggered by the Toolkit project, we managed to reconnect with Awaji and others whom we had worked with, and realized that remnants of the Dance had been handed down and continued to exist in an altered form.

A short while later, a draft proposal for the Toolkit arrived from Michael. It accurately

reflected our thoughts and philosophy toward this work and used language that was empathetic to the reader. We immediately had Kenji Osako, a dancer who had taken part in the Osaka performance last year, do a trial workshop using this Toolkit. The resulting Totsu-totsu Dance workshop was faithful to the Toolkit's guidance but also different from ours, and it was an expression of Osako's unique world view.

A new Totsu-totsu Dance, the altered version at Maizuru as well as future ones that will be created via the Toolkit produced through Michael's eyes. With the Toolkit journey concluded, I recalled the poem shared by the artist Nobuaki Date at the very first Totsu-totsu Dance performance:

"Between the unsorted past and the future we fumble toward, there is a now that can only be drawn through pointillism. Totsu-totsu, the sound of it being drawn."

I'm sure Totsu-totsu Dance will continue to metamorphose, as the past encounters the future.

Osamu Jareo

Osamu is a choreographer and dancer whose practice is rooted in the belief that illness and disability are natural transformations within life. Since the early 1990s, he has developed works through extensive research and dialogue with diverse communities, including elderly residents and people with disabilities both in Japan and internationally.

His work extends beyond the stage to collaborations in film and participation in major arts festivals. He is the author of a significant publication exploring the intersection of dance and nursing care. Currently, he serves as a university professor, focusing on body expression and cinematic arts while continuing to create works that emerge through shared human experience.

● **Participating Artists**

Osamu Jareo, Megumi Kamimura,
Kenji Osako, Chloe Tan, Silver Yee,
Kamal Sabran, Urut-Urut Project (Malaysia),
Michael Cheng, Takao Asano,
Tomoya Ishida, Ema Yuasa

● **Stage Manager /**

Lighting Designer (Penang Performance)
Yasuhiro Fujiwara

● **Sound Technical Staff (Penang Performance)**

Eric Teh, Brayden Low, Ahmad Harith

● **Technical Staff (Reflection Gathering)**

So Ozaki

● **Interpreter**

Mio Nakano (Singapore),
Harumi Yamaguchi (Malaysia),
Mana Suzuki (Maizuru)

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

Tetsu Kubota

● **Photography**

Tetsu Kubota, torindo

● **Translation**

Moe Ishii, Akiko Kume

● **Coordinator**

Kyoko Kugai, Cecilia Chan (Malaysia),
Audrey Perera (Singapore)

● **With Assistance from**

Masaru Nishikawa,
Kwong Wai Shiu Hospital Active
Ageing Care Centre, Aliwal Arts Centre,
Okui Lala, Hin Bus Depot,
arts-ED, Yusuke Uraoka,
Graceville Maizuru Special Elderly Care Home
Shin-ai no Ie Special Elderly Care Home /

Kotobuki-so

BSC Eldercare Centre (Bagan Specialist Centre),
-suisai-

● **Executive Production Manager**

Takeshi Toyohira

● **Production Managers**

Sayo Yokota, Mafumi Wada

● **Public Relations**

Megumi Seki

● **Organized by**

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