



Dr. Nanako Nakajima (中島那奈子)

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR,
DANCE SCHOLAR, DRAMATURG



Dr. Nanako Nakajima (中島那奈子) is a dance scholar and dramaturg. In 2017, she received the Special Commendation of the Elliott Hayes Award for Outstanding Achievement in Dramaturgy from the Literary Manager and Dramaturgs of the Americas. She has worked with festivals, theatres, and museums, integrating her research on ageing into dance. Her roles include jury member for the 2022 Keir Choreographic Award (Australia), Valeska-Gert Visiting Professor at Freie Universität Berlin (Germany, 2019–20), faculty dramaturg in dance at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity (Canada, 2022–25), and keynote speaker for the symposium “Echoes of Age” at Universidade Católica Portuguesa, (Portugal, 2025). She is currently an associate professor in Dance Studies at Waseda University, Japan. Her publications include *The Aging Body in Dance* (Routledge, 2017) and *Oi to Odori* (Keiso Shobo, 2019), and Nanako serves as an issue editor for *Performance Research*, Vol. 23, No. 7: ‘On Ageing (& Beyond)’ (2018). She also launched a bilingual website on dance dramaturgy (www.dancedramaturgy.org) and initiated Japan’s first dramaturgs’ meeting in 2024.

Negotiating Dance Dramaturgies of Aging

Monday, February 23, 2026

5:00-6:00 PM PT / 8:00-9:00 PM ET

Summary: Dance is an art form deeply shaped by age. In many Euro-American theatrical dance traditions, performers are deemed to peak professionally by their mid-30s and often retire in their early 40s, making performance in later life rare. Conversely, in Japanese performing arts, age reflects accumulated experience and does not necessarily signal diminished creativity. This study revisits four of my dramaturgical works in professional contemporary dance across Japan-US, China, Thailand, and Japan-Singapore-Germany to examine how intercultural dance dramaturgies of aging negotiate divergent age cultures. From my perspective of an aging female Japanese dance dramaturg, aging is a process through which embodied history informs performance aesthetics. Dance dramaturgy serves as a comparative framework that historicizes dance culture and culturalizes dance history, enabling dialogue between contrasting age paradigms.

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