

3. Kayo Hosomi, Drama Teacher and Reminiscence Director

Kayo is a theatre professional who has worked with Noriko Kato and Mr Ichihashi at the Reminiscence Centre in Kitanagoya. She also teaches at the Ryukoku University in Kyoto and runs her own reminiscence projects at Atelier Gekiken in Kyoto, with theatre as her main medium. I had not heard about her work before, but Noriko was very keen that we should meet, as Kayo had developed reminiscence theatre projects with her on her return from her attachment to the Age Exchange Reminiscence Centre in the UK. So that evening, I met Kayo and her translator, Tamami Yamada, at my hotel in Kyoto. Tamami is a community dance expert, so she joined the discussion as well as translating.



An impromptu lap-top session on Reminiscence Theatre in UK for Kayo & Tamami



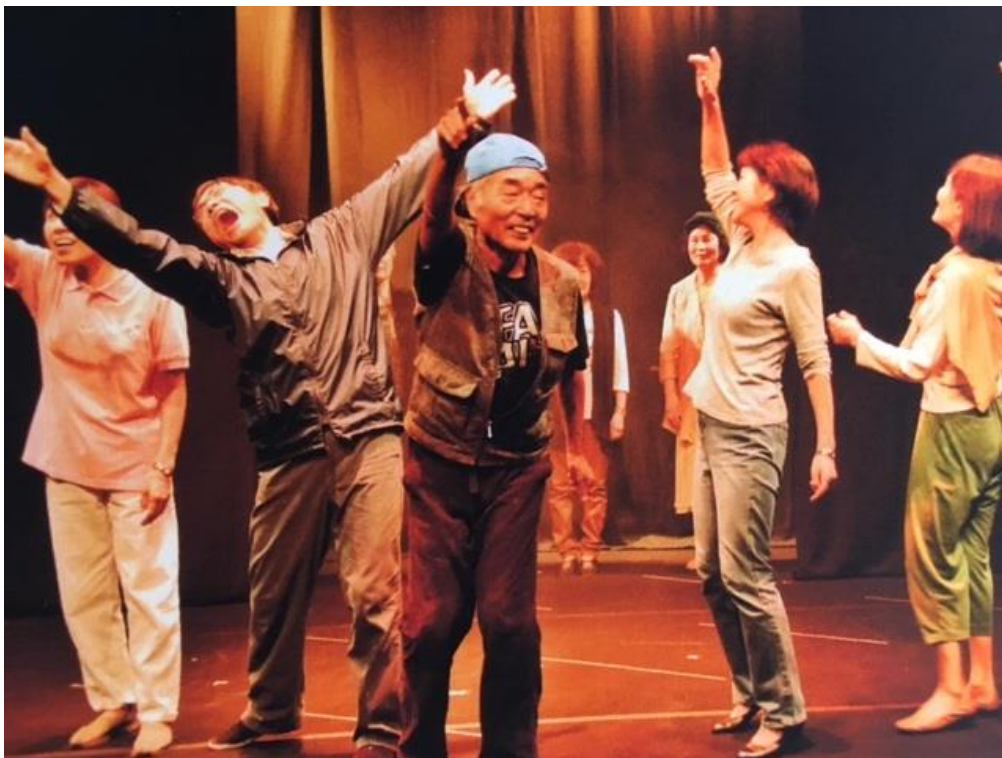
Left to right: Tamami Yamada (translator) Pam and Kayo Hosomi

It was a huge pleasure to learn about Kayo's brilliant work with reminiscence theatre and intergenerational projects over the last ten years, and to hear how she had adopted and adapted the Age Exchange approach. She showed me photographs of shows performed by people over 60, which were clearly finely

choreographed and dramatically effective, with simple but imaginative staging. Kayo showed me examples of exhibitions and books of memories, and many intergenerational projects, all involving older people in highly creative ways, and all based on true stories about their lives. In 2013, Kayo and Noriko Kato had created a play with older people from Kitanagoya based on the elders' life stories and performed for the community and for students who were aiming to be museum workers. Another interesting "narrative project" was called "Showa 20th". That is how people in Japan refer to 1946, that is the 20th year of the Emperor Showa period. Kayo writes about this project:

"Kyoto City West citizens activity centre has been engaged in activities to record older people's stories from this period. 19 people from 27 to 93 years old participated as narrators and listeners in a programme of memories of the end of Second World War. The listeners expressed their reactions to the stories and the story-tellers. All were recorded for a brochure exploring the feelings of the generation living in Showa 20 and the people of later generations. I hope this booklet will be a small opportunity to think about future times."

Kayo puts the old people and their memories at the centre of her work, and is constantly developing new ways to share and tell old stories. For her, the art of theatre is a means to an end, rather than an end in itself. Of all the workers I met in Japan, she was the closest to my heart, both in what she did and how she did it.



Kayo Hosomi's reminiscence theatre production with Sorairo Senior Theatre Company, 2016