

***Haneto* Dancers**

The enthusiasm of the *haneto* (festival dancers) maintains the high energy of the festival procession and the crowds. Their name comes from the word *haneru* (to jump or bounce), which has a double meaning in this context: it refers both to the dancers' lively movements and their role in sending misfortune flying far away. Each float committee has its own dancing team, with the largest of these having up to 2,000 members (including free participants). The *haneto* pass by the crowds chanting "rassera," which is an invitation to the audience to join in the fun. In time with the *hayashi* musical ensemble drumbeat, a lead dancer shouts through a megaphone or a microphone and the rest echo back the cry.

Sometimes the dancers perform a practiced jig, but it depends on the *haneto* leader and the group. Much like the float conductor, the leaders have whistles that signal to the *haneto* dancers to take various actions such as dancing, running, or bouncing in unison. Anyone can participate as a *haneto* by wearing the requisite costume. Participating is the best way to get a close-up view of the floats and an in-action perspective on the festival.