



## FANTASIES OF ITO MICHIO

By Tara Rodman

Born in Japan and trained in Germany, dancer and choreographer Ito Michio (1893–1961) achieved prominence in London before moving to the U.S. in 1916 and building a career as an internationally acclaimed artist. During World War II, Ito was interned for two years, and then repatriated to Japan, where he contributed to imperial war efforts by creating propaganda performances and performing revues for the occupying Allied Forces in Tokyo. Throughout, Ito continually invented stories of voyages made, artists befriended, performances seen, and political activities carried out—stories later dismissed as false.

*Fantasies of Ito Michio* argues that these invented stories, unrealized projects, and questionable political affiliations are as fundamental to Ito's career as his 'real' activities, helping us understand how he sustained himself across experiences of racialization, imperialism, war, and internment. Tara Rodman reveals a narrative of Ito's life that foregrounds the fabricated and overlooked to highlight his involvement with Japanese artists, such as Yamada Kosaku and Ishii Baku, and global modernist movements. Rodman offers "fantasy" as a rubric for understanding how individuals such as Ito sustain themselves in periods of violent disruption and as a scholarly methodology for engaging the past.

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"By insisting on staying with the contradictory and fantasy aspects of Ito, Rodman helps us see precisely why he has presented such a problem for the canon, and at the same time, why he is such a crucial figure to attend to. Her consideration of fantasy as a structuring logic for Ito's life, and therefore as an important methodology for grappling with it, is a promising model for future scholars."  
—Rosemary Candelario, University of Texas at Austin