Financial Secretary John Tsang Chun-wah (財政司司長曾俊華) went to see the World Cup qualifying match between Hong Kong and Qatar at the Mong Kok Stadium and was thrilled.

A video uploaded on Facebook showed him with hands clasped as he watched the home side press forward. He then threw his hands into the air and cheered. He was probably stomping his feet too. We can describe Tsang’s behavior as “手舞足蹈” (shou3 wu3 zu2 dao3).

“手” (shou3) is “a hand,” “舞” (wu3) is “to dance,” “足” (zu2) is “a foot,” and “蹈” (dao3) is “to step.” Literally, “手舞足蹈” (shou3 wu3 zu2 dao3) is “hand dance foot step,” or “hands dancing and feet stamping.”

Children often do an impromptu (即興的) dance when they are excited. Adults are more reserved but will do the same when they are ecstatic (狂喜). So the idiom “手舞足蹈” (shou3 wu3 zu2 dao3) means “to dance with joy.”

Not all idioms that involve hand-foot movements are as joyful. The idiom “拳來腳往” (quan2 lai2 jiao3 wang3) is, in fact, quite deadly. Literally, it is “fist come foot go” with “foot” referring to vicious kicks.

When two people “拳來腳往” (quan2 lai2 jiao3 wang3), it means they are fighting. Tsang is always a gentleman, so it’s hard to picture him “拳來腳往” (quan2 lai2 jiao3 wang3) with anyone. But you probably don’t want to be “拳來腳往” (quan2 lai2 jiao3 wang3) with him because he is known to be a Wing Chun kung fu (詠春拳) expert.

Terms containing the character “舞” (wu3) include:

- 跳舞 (tiao4 wu3) – to dance
- 起舞 (qi3 wu3) – to rise and dance in a happy mood
- 鼓舞 (gu3 wu3) – to feel encouraged
- 舞龍 (wu3 long2) – dragon dance