

GROOVENT ARTICLE

For two years, I was supported by Province Gelderland and Beeldend Danstheater Telder, which gave me the opportunity to develop my artistry on a specific trajectory.

This is a sharing of my journey; the development of 'Groovement' as a physical therapeutic complement for my injuries, how it manifested itself as my choreographic signature and as a movement method that can serve a broad variety of bodies. I hope it will inspire you!

How I discovered Groovement

My dance formation at the National Conservatory of Dance in Lisbon and ArtEZ Dansacademie in Arnhem allowed me to develop a vast spectrum of skills and qualities on both the classical and contemporary dance styles. Unfortunately, the combination of my anatomy limitations, overuse and misuse of my body, led to labrum tears and consequent operations in both my hips. During and after my full recovery, I have taken several movement workshops such as the GAGA technique that was developed by Ohad Naharin, the choreography style of Hofesh Shechter and his dancers whose sharings were a very important contribution for my development during and after my recovery. In their physical languages, they relied on improvisation to find liquidity and totality in the body, the movement material was often approached on a low deep level in the legs and this allowed me to efficiently strengthen my core and the muscles around my pelvis and legs. Surprisingly, while I expected that this work could overload my hips, it actually helped its recovery by adjusting the needed effort and relocating the muscles that needed to be engaged in order to support those deep motions in the legs.

From these influences, I selected what served my body and my movement interests the most and developed a sustainable practice that could enrich my physical skills without overloading the body and that could sustain me for a long term career as a dancer. Feeling the urge to indulge deeper in this research, I continued a regular training by myself based on improvisation; in this training, I gave myself different tasks, exploring ways to use the floor, to support the motion with the breath, to find balance in challenging motions and to absorb and control landings after being out of balance. I recorded the sessions and after analysing them, I reworked the tasks to enrich the use of space, dynamics, amplitude of the movement and qualities. Through these registrations, I observed the characteristics and patterns that constantly arose in this ongoing and evolving method.

I named this method *Groovement*, a fusion made up out of the words 'Groove' and 'Movement'.

Initially, I associated the word *groove* with music genres such as Blues and Funk but later, I embodied it as an inner-rhythm that travels through the body and creates a fluid total body motion. When I think about *grooving*, I get a feeling of relaxation and groundedness that supports challenging shifts of weight which are possible with a balanced combination of muscle engagement and softness. Curious about how this approach can be communicated and shared with others, I took part in the pilot ArtEZ Summer Residency (July of 2017), where I explored with the students of ArtEZ Dansacademie the elements of Groovement. From then on, I developed my method during an Artistic Development Trajectory with coaching from choreographer Paula Walta and Jolanda Keurentjes from Beeldend Danstheater Telder. I learned how to transmit this practice to others in a clear way, investigating if it can also serve other movers, and how to make choreographies with it. Groovement now is ready for spreading out!

What is Groovement and how do I transmit it

Groovement features my individuality, movement quality and choreographic style. In Groovement, the predominant characteristics are groundedness, three-dimensionality, softness and articulation.

Groovement is a movement practice that has a vast and layered toolbox to support the approach of these characteristics. It initiates by focusing on the core and it builds up from details and isolations to a full use of the body. The attention starts inwards to stimulate our body awareness and once this is established, it expands to the outside with accumulation of input to generate different qualities, levels of speed, density, intensity, amplitude and use of space. The method is shared by verbalizing and showing set physical tasks and improvisation derived from visual references; the use of our imaginary is an invitation to tune the body into a specific sensation, quality and dynamic - rather than a shape or form - and the physical guidelines steer the movements into a determined mechanic.

This practice includes the use of breath as a medium to centre our bodies and support our motion; it gives focus to all body parts in order to create space and volume in our whole body and in all directions, with consciousness and precision.

What is the purpose of Groovement

Groovement is a method that can be passed on and performed in several contexts such as:

a training practice - to energize, improve fitness and condition, open the body, raise awareness and connection between body, mind and spirit;

An artistic technique - to enhance one's physical skills, to help find one's natural movement identity, quality, creativity; to stimulate a working/artistic process (suitable for any artistic field, be it performatively physical or not)

A promoter of well-being - to focus in the here & now; to find relaxation, availability and freedom in the body and mind; to generate new energy and inspiration;

Approaching the body in this way, Groovement aspires to create and increase control, elasticity and totality of the body, to help find one's natural movement identity, to break patterns and enrich one's own vocabulary.

For whom

The content, approach and purpose of Groovement varies and is adaptable to serve different ages, backgrounds, experience and working fields.

I use Groovement as a warm-up, as a playful improvisation that spices my coordination, renews my patterns and inspires me for the movement material of my creations. Groovement allows me to connect with myself, using the body to express emotions, thoughts and sensations.

Groovement is an individual practice that is meant for any body, since every task is applicable to everyone. It is a process focused on the individual, instead of the group, so one can focus on his/her own discoveries, born in his/her own interpretations of the physical tasks and images, to encourage each one's natural flow of movement and find his/her organicity. Groovement does not aim to create a frame of shapes and forms; from the conviction that **everybody can move**, awareness is raised to the respect for each one's anatomies and capacities. Every *body* has the freedom to apply the tasks

to its own anatomy. The input that calls out for our imaginary allows everyone, regardless of their previous experience, to embody the tasks according to their possibilities. Therefore, the individual is encouraged not to copy what he/she sees from the rest of the group and instead, focus on how it feels.

The practice doesn't necessarily promote isolation. By projecting the focus onto the space and in tasks that the participants cross the floor two or three at the time, they can support and inspire each other by sharing energy, curiosity and presence while observing their similarities and differences. This is also an existing characteristic that comes back in my creations - the emphasis of the qualities of an individual within a universal task.

This practice can be shared with different target groups. The content, approach and purpose of the practice varies and are adaptable to serve different ages, backgrounds, level of experience and working field of the participants.

Groovement can help a dance student getting in touch with his/her own individuality; it can serve a professional dancer to enrich his physical skills and change his/her movement patterns; it can support students of different artistic formations to get out of their minds and into their bodies, to develop body consciousness and release tension, to boost creativity for their artistic process; it can help a performative artist becoming more aware of his body and hence, his presence on stage; it can give inspiration to fine artists to integrate experiences from Groovement onto their artistic work; it promotes well-being to people by connecting and creating space in the body, mind and spirit and let go of unnecessary tension, be it physical, mental or emotional.

Groovement as my choreographic style

I like to use the elements of Groovement in my choreographies and create movement phrases where articulation, groundedness, softness and three-dimensionality are present and visible. I encourage dancers to use their full range of motion, to embody the material in a way that feels organic and respectful towards their anatomy. As the dancers mostly represent people in the creations, I give importance to how they use their breath and expressivity.

As a choreographer, I find my inspiration in body languages, postures, external influences in one's daily-life and consequent reactions, both subtle and obvious. It fascinates me to observe the impact that the surroundings create on the individual and vice-versa. In my work, I like to share my personal views on the social and psychological behaviours of a living being responding to its environment. Resistance, acceptance, adaptation, transformation, cooperation and separation are reactions that I highlight and bring up in the form of movement.

This is how I created *Round Is A Shape* (2015), *To React Upon* (2015), *Suppressed Dialogues* (2016/2018), *Hallelujah* (2017) and *Set Setting* (2018).

In Their Bodies (work-in-progress) is the embodiment of a movement language, a feeling/sensation, an image, a character. This is learned to *bodies*, at times in the form of an invitation and at other times as an imposition, which causes in return a resilient and/or an unwilling reaction. The *bodies* switch between mere instruments and living beings who are at times considered for their qualities and personalities and at others not. What does this do to them? Through this work and *their* bodies, I want to express the conflict-balance that specific happenings, circumstances and actions might

trigger in oneself. *In Their Bodies* is a reflection about the subtle and/or obvious differences between power, freedom, humility and submission. Are we responsive or reactive?

During my second residency at ArtEZ in February 2018, I created a first sketch of *In Their Bodies* with 6 beautiful dancers: Romanna Delauw, Enrico Meijer, Gabrielle Emily Aidulis, Myrthe Bokelmann, Jesse Swarts and Jade Stenhuijs. Rosine Langbroek was the seventh member of this artistic work, who composed the music and performed it.

For this creation, I literally use Groovement as a structure to explore how different bodies react to the movement propositions and transform it into their bodies, where their willingness lies when fatigue wears them off and when they play with different characters.

During another research of *In Their Bodies*, with the fantastic Julia Heider, Bart Biermasz, Mirthe Dokter, Aida Guirro Salinas and again Rosine Langbroek, I focused on what does embodiment mean. This we experimented by copying each other, observing what stays ours and how far we step into the body of the other. I was curious to see how we can approach embodiment in space, time, form and quality separating these elements or altogether and how they make choices as a collective group and as an individual.

This was shown in October 2019 during the presentation at Uurtje Oost in Theater aan de Rijn.

Get in touch

If you wish to stay in touch, get together to experiment, research, develop, collaborate and/or create, you can reach me to [**groovementdanceproject@gmail.com**](mailto:groovementdanceproject@gmail.com). This is also the right address if you want to contact me about performances, ask me for workshops, masterclasses, regular teachings or choreographies and want to publish an article.

Check the Facebook page [Groovement Dance](#) and follow the Instagram account [groovement.dance](#) to stay up to date with the activities and where you can experience the method Groovement with your own body.

Fernanda Silva, July 2020

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