

What does *Groove* mean in (contemporary) dance?

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1 Introduction

Groove is a term with various definitions and meanings. Searching for the term in scientific literature, there are many sources found defining the term in similar ways. "Wanting to move some part of the body in relation to some aspect of the sound pattern" (? , ?) or "Musical quality that makes us want to move with the rhythm or beat" (? , ?). It is also linked with sensations like entrainment and pleasure (? , ?)

The scientific literature researched for this thesis is written in the context of ethnomusicology or psychology (for example ? (?), ? (?), ? (?), etc.). There is less information available about the term Groove in the context of dance or, more specific, contemporary dance.

At the same time, when watching contemporary dance performance or practicing contemporary dance, "Groove" is a term which is regularly used to describe movement quality or a certain 'feel' of a performance or movement. This thesis aims to collect and analyse the definition of Groove in different fields and add possible definitions for contemporary dance. Literature research as a base will be supplemented by interviews with contemporary dance practitioners. The goal is not to end up with a definite answer of what Groove is, but what Groove can be seen as by different people in different fields. While there are recurring themes found, the focus and context is very much european-centric and on the definition in the chosen fields and in the current time. The exact definition of the word Groove varies wildly in the different contexts it is used in, therefore this is a limited collection of meanings, scoped on the fields close to contemporary dance and others which appear to be connected in some way.

As it is an artistic-scientific thesis, the knowledge and investigation will be continued in a physical practice and showcase, a process which will also be documented in this thesis.

2 Groove in Different Fields

Searching for the term Groove in dictionaries, "Groove" is mostly used in music slang, however it is also a word for "a long narrow channel or depression" [in a landscape] (? , ?). It is also defined as "A long, narrow cut or depression in a hard material." or "An established routine or habit" (? , ?) or, as the term "groovy" as a subjective for "settled in habit; limited in mind". (? , ?)

2.1 Groove in History and Music

In music, it is a relatively "new" word. It started to be mentioned in the 1930ies with the coming of Jazz and the associated jazz slang. (? , ?)

There are multiple ways how Groove was used in the context of Jazz music:

1. In the swing era "to be in the Groove" was used to describe an inspiring solo improvisation of a Jazz musician:

Glossary of Swing Terms [...] In the Groove: When carried away or inspired by the music, when playing in exalted spirit and to perfection. (? , ?)

2. Similar with "fall." or "settle into a Groove" you could mean a rhythmic and engaging swing ensemble play:

Take any of the great bands of today; whether they are known as swing bands or not and you'll find that the rhythm sections are swinging in the Groove every minute. A prearranged Groove that every man knows and gets into with the very first note. If you should silence all other instruments except the rhythm, nine out of ten dancers would continue to dance, which proves that it is only human to dance to rhythm. (? , ?)

3. Jazz also uses "Groove" as a state and rhythmical matrix where musicians can improvise and interact with each other:

Among all the challenges a group faces, one that is extremely subtle yet fundamental to its travels is a feature of group interaction that requires the negotiation of a shared sense of the beat, known, in its most successful realization, as striking a Groove. Incorporating the connotations of stability,

intensity, and swing, the Groove provides the basis for "everything to come together in complete accord". (?, ?)

4. Since the 1960 years, "Groove" describes a structure ostinato-rhythm and rhythm-melodic pattern. This is used in various pop music styles and has drums and base as central role:

In conversation among fans, music with a good Groove tends to be music users can relate to easily. For musicians, the Groove is more particularly the pattern laid down by the bass and drum kit. [...] Technically, it has a very precise meaning, beats being identified as a series of accents formed from the perception of a (normally) regular pulse within the music's rhythm; however, colloquially, 'beat' is often indistinguishable from 'Groove'. (?, ?)

5. It is also a word used to describe an affective and motional mode of reception and the tangible and felt quality of music:

Instantly perceived, and often attended by pleasurable sensations ranging from arousal to relaxation, "getting into the Groove" describes how a socialized listener anticipates pattern in a style, momentarily able to track and appreciate subtleties vis-a-vis overt regularities. [...] "Getting into the Groove" also describes a feelingful participation, a positive physical and emotional attachment, a move from being "hip to it" to "getting down" and being "into it". (?, ?)

There are multiple references on how the word "Groove" first entered as vocabulary in a Jazz context. From an etymological perspective, two possible origins were found. One explains Groove as coming from the grooves on a vinyl plate, for example relating it to the musicians playing well enough for a recording:

"In the Groove": Play which is finished and of such quality as to be suitable for recording (?, ?)

One other possible origin comes from a more suggestive expression:

In the 1930ies the expression "in the Groove" became popular, with its obvious reference to a man's delight as he joins a woman, as he " . . . gets in the Groove," (?, ?)

That the word Groove is used for many different contexts interchangeably, can easily be seen also in more recent publications, for example in "How to DJ right : the art and science of

playing records", written by Frank Broughton, Bill Brewster (Published 2003), covering many of the meanings described above:

The needle, or "stylus," is a sharp diamond that rides along the groove of a record and vibrates on its tiny bumps. (?, ?, p. 36)

Usually the drum and the bass lay down the groove - a repetitive rhythm - while the melody and vocals ride over the top doing something more doodly. (?, ?, p. 43)

If you get it right, the two records will groove along within the same structure, and their musical "events" will be synchronized. (?, ?, p. 66)

"I'm dancing with this girl, trying to get my shit off, but the DJ's fucking my groove up. The whole party'd be like, Yahhh, what the fuck is that...? Why you took the record off there? The shit was about to explode. I was about to bust a nut.'" – Kool Herc (?, ?, p. 82)

Good DJing is about keeping a constant groove while throwing in plenty of changes - balancing the expected with the surprising. (?, ?, p. 134)

One interviewee also connected the word Groove to a special rhythmical composition of music:

I would say I perceive it [Groove] as something that comes from music and something that underlines music and makes it really connected. So you have the main melody and the main rhythm, which is often really clear. In the background, the intricate and complex and enjoyable thing to listen to, is the Groove. An underlying theme/rhythm or melody, that often counters the main thing. But that's the interesting play or game, that you get out of the main thing. And then there are kind of sub layered things that are going on. And it's the same, I think, in dance. As in rhythm, as in music. So Groove brings additional content, that makes everything more complex and more intricate. It is not only about something that contributes or counteracts the main rhythm or melody, it's also something that brings consistency. That keeps the music or the rhythm in a track that everyone mostly unconsciously is able to follow. See Chapter 6.3

Therefore, the distinctive meaning of the Word "Groove" has either to be taken from the context it is used in, or the meaning has to be exactly defined. From a personal point of view, it seems like every person using this word has their own interpretation and feeling of what it means. From the interviews and my research about it, it boils down to the definitions found and explained in the thesis. But at the same time, the multiple contexts in which it can be used makes it very hard or near impossible to infer the distinctive meaning when used in a conversational manner. However, the different meanings seem anchored in many people who are familiar with the creative context or art in general. With the meanings being close enough, it seems common to use the phrase in conversations without confusion by the listener. As a common denominator every meaning seems to be connected with something considered nice, good, pleasurable or even some sort of ideal, with a possible connection to music and rhythm.

2.2 Research in the Field of Music Psychology with Groove

Empirical scientific work in the field of Psychology solves this problem of multiple meanings by clearly defining how the word is used in the current context. One of the Definitions is "A Musical Quality that makes you want to move" (Slobin, 1973), (Slobin, 1973), (Slobin, 1973), a Definition which is used somewhat consistently throughout the field. In this context, different things were researched empirically. It should be considered that following are just short excerpts and examples of such studies to show the range of research. There is general context information missing and while the excerpts are created with extensive care to show relevant information for this thesis, they are created from a personal viewpoint without providing extensive background in statistics and psychology, therefore being inherently subjective and without claim for completeness.

In Slobin (1973), people were recorded doing a simple task with different kind of music, and then counted the movement of the different body parts moving (tapping the foot or nodding with the head for example), in accordance with other form of data collection, which was then statistically analysed. During this they confirmed the idea of the sensomotoric coupling with the music and the positive effect, showing that perceived Groove is related to a sense of enjoyment.

Slobin (1973) documents a study, where people were given short examples of music and then asked to describe the appropriateness of 14 descriptors:

Covariance patterns among the 14 rated words indicated four prominent factors, which could be labeled regular-irregular, groove, having swing, and flowing. Considering the wide range of music examples used, these factors are interpreted as reflecting psychological dimensions independent of musical genre and style.

Slobin (1973) found similar challenges about the definition of Groove, with its multifaceted meaning in different contexts. Based on literature research and their own survey, they propose following working definition for Groove in the field of Music Psychology:

Groove is a participatory experience (related to immersion, movement, enjoyment, and social connection) resulting from subtle interaction of specific music- (such as time- and pitch-related features), performance- and/or individual difference-related factors.

They furthermore propose to differentiate between "perceived" and "induced" Groove to distinguish between the perceived musical features and the induced effect on listeners.

2.3 Groove as a human feeling

As seen above, Groove is continuously described as a subjective feeling. This can be seen in the chapters above and was additionally highlighted in the interviews.

Also the interviewee describe Groove as feeling:

I feel that we all identify with the word Groove in our own particular way, it's a very personal thing. It's about how we perceive the world and how we connect to life and our own environment. Additionally, for me this is very much to do with our upbringing, the things that have affected us or influenced us the most, things that we hold on to and things that we have to let go of. For me that was about getting out of the suburbs and pursuing larger things in London and beyond. Music largely, very much informed this for me and the kind of music I listened to informed my social – political views. That's a Groove, getting down to the nitty gritty, to the root of our fabric, the very thing which binds us to each other and to the earth. Like Joan Didion's writings 'things fall apart' like an inherent pull, only to get put back again, the centre will not hold', Groove is ultimately about struggle and what we do with those struggles. *See Chapter 6.1*

[..] One, that there is a certain experience when watching dance performances, where I feel as a audience member, I have a physical response to what I am seeing, so I feel impacted by what's happening on stage almost, as if I were in some way participating as a body to what is happening. So maybe in some way in contemporary dance, this would be something that is a very early experience, that was part of the reason on why I got interested in dance. Having this very corporal experience. When that happens to me in a piece that I see, I am always super happy and it's something I am definitely looking for in my work. *See Chapter 6.2*

From the information collected above, the question arises, how culture specific the word "Groove" is and what elements of it could be considered as a shared human phenomenon. There are multiple challenges to this. Firstly as described in 2.1, the word was created in a specific cultural context and history. Other cultures may face the same feelings in the same contextes, as described with Groove, but they may use different words (which is obvious especially when different languages are used). The feeling may also more be connected with the strong influences of Jazz music and inspired music styles and may or may not be present in the music which is more common in the specific cultural area. Words which possibly describe

something similar, but may not have an exact match with the feeling of Groove. Just as an example: In Swedish, the closest synonym of the word Groove, according to ? (?) is 'svängig'. But this also refers more to 'having swing', a quality in music which can be related to Groove, but obviously does not match it completely.

? (?) investigated the feeling in the context of Japan. While the study found, that the term "Groove" is understood and related to rhythm, it was also focused on data from the 2000s and suggested more studies to investigate the developing spectrum of the word:

More recently, the term 'groove' has come to refer to a wider spectrum of concepts in Japan. The meaning of groove has diversified as the term itself becomes more recognisable in Japan. Future studies need to explore how the term 'groove', a new foreign term for music, has spread and changed its meanings or remained unchanged. (?, ?)

It also concluded that in Japan there is the word 'Nori', which has some relation to the word Groove, but because of the different way the languages are structured, there are different ways on how it is used. Regarding similarity, participants of the study revealed following acoustical characteristics, which were statistically related to "Groovy". Following table shows the correlation coefficient between groovy and other descriptors: (?, ?)

	r	p
You feel a sense of unity	.881	<.001
Blithe	.868	<.001
Your body feels rhythm	.778	<.001
Nori is good	.761	<.001
Good performance	.725	<.001
Wavy	.553	<.001

But feeling a sense of unity, rhythm or just moving to rhythm seems like a very human phenomenon. Where is the research regarding this across multiple cultures? The answer could lie in the description of this feeling. Groove is one descriptor, but the same thing is possibly researched under different vocabulary. One other avenue which explores this feeling is military literature. ? (?) describes the feeling of drill in the army with following description, using the phrase "muscular bonding" to describe the ritual of people moving together and getting a pleasurable feeling out of it:

Words are inadequate to describe the emotion aroused by the prolonged movement in unison that drilling involved. A sense of pervasive well-being is what I recall; more specifically, a strange sense of personal enlargement; a sort of swelling out, becoming bigger than life, thanks to participation in collective ritual. [...] Obviously, something visceral was at work; something, I later concluded, far older than language and critically important in human history, because the emotion it arouses constitutes an indefinitely expansible basis for social cohesion among any and every group that keeps together in time, moving big muscles together and chanting, singing, or shouting rhythmically. "Muscular bonding" is the most economical label I could find for this phenomenon [...]

This observation in this kind of work was also in combination with music:

Have them march in cadence. There is the whole secret, and it is the military step of the Romans [...] Everyone has seen people dancing all night. But take a man and make him dance for a quarter of an hour without music and see if he can bear it [...] Movement to music is natural and automatic. I have often noticed while the drums were beating for the colors, that all the soldiers marched in cadence without intention and without realizing it. Nature and instinct did it for them. (?, ?)

This kind of phenomenon is also studied, but it does not seem to be named as Groove. ? (?) refers to this as "entrainment" to evenly paced stimulus (isochrony):

Wherever human beings live, and however they may organise their affairs, they gather from time to time to sing and dance together, often in a ritual setting. In doing so they synchronise their voices and bodily movements to a shared, repeating interval of time, the musical pulse, beat or tactus. We take this capacity to "entrain" to an evenly paced stimulus (isochrony) so much for granted that it may come as a surprise to learn that from a biological point of view such behaviour is exceptional. [...]

Both isochrony and entrainment are terms which are again used with multiple definitions in different fields. As Entrainment is also heavily used in ? (?), this seems the most relevant neighbouring term for contemporary dance and will therefore be investigated further in the next chapter.

3 Entrainment

Entrainment seems to be one of the basic concepts surrounding Groove. While Groove includes the concept of Entrainment, Entrainment can also occur without Groove.

Entrainment describes a process whereby two rhythmic processes interact with each other in such a way that they adjust towards and eventually "lock in" to a common phase and/or periodicity. (?, ?)

Entrainment is a concept present in many different natural science fields. You can find it in physics, a phenomenon first explained by Christiaan Huygens, a dutch scientist, in 1666. Huygens invented the pendulum clock and noticed that the pendulums of two clocks mounted on a common board tend to synchronise. A phenomenon which was reproduced in further research and can also be found in numerous other physics applications. (?, ?)

The concept is also observed in biology, a field which can also be found under the name "chronobiology". It collects various aspects of biological rhythms, see for example ? (?):

- Sleep-Wake Cycles
- Hormonal and Metabolic rhythms
- Photoperiodism, Seasonal Cycles, and Annual Cycles

One simple example of entrainment would be the entrainment of the Sleep-Wake Cycle to natural Day-Night Cycle. (?, ?)

There is a common way of explaining entrainment in all these different systems: (?, ?)

1. There must be two or more autonomous rhythmic processes or oscillators:
 - "Autonomous" is the key difference between synchronicity and entrainment. Two processes which oscillate on their own with their own internal source of energy. Resonance for example, is not entrainment. The sound of a tuning fork making a box oscillate, is resonance. Taking away the tuning fork, the box stops oscillating. This is important, because just because we observe synchronised behaviour does not imply entrainment.
2. The oscillators must interact:
 - The interaction can have many different forms and strengths. If we take the two pendulum clocks for example, they interact because they are mounted on a common board. Most of the time, in entrainment the interaction can be considered weak. Strong coupling can quickly become a strong limitation on the oscillators and they lose their individuality.

These definitions also can match somewhat with the relation of moving bodies in space and their interaction with each other. It feels like they could be used to describe certain improvisations in contemporary space, as well as other contexts where bodies are moving in space to music, with some kind of rhythm. Therefore, the word in this context will be looked at further in the next chapter.

4 Groove in Contemporary Dance

The relation from Groove to Movement or dance can already be seen in the last chapters. In this chapter, the concrete relation of the word in the context of dance and contemporary dance will be explored. To find out what meanings exist for this concept, interviews with contemporary dance practitioners will be used, as well as other written sources using the term Groove. Quotes from the interview will be used to complement meanings from other sources, the complete transcripts of the Interviews can be found in the next chapter.

Also in Contemporary Dance, Groove is described as an internal feeling inside the body. One example of this is the choreographer Hofesh Shechter, who describes Groove as one of the 4 principles of his movement language:

The urge to move to music is essential to developing our musicality as dancers. 'Feeling the groove' is finding the most natural, harmonious and positive way of moving - movement that is led not by order or by force, but by pleasure and enjoyment. Always come back to the simplicity of connecting to the groove and the music if you get lost... it means you are re-connecting to your body's instincts.
(?, ?)

As movement quality, bounce and rhythm are words used in relation to it. See this review of Trisha Browns "Groove and Countermove" (2000) (?, ?):

Mr. Dougla's music had an attractive pulsing rhythm and Ms. Brown's dancers moved to it in a loose-limbed easygoing manner. Sometimes they would freeze as if turned to statues, only to snap back to life. Droopy movements were contrasted with crisp ones, finicky steps gave way to bounces. [...] And both this finale and [...] as a whole were groovy. (?, ?)

? (?) attributes multiple different qualities from the world of dance with the word "Groove". A big part of his research is attributed to Groove in the context of Club Dance. One way, he used this in contemporary work are following concepts: Gestural imitation and synchronicity is something seen in Club Dance, where gestures or movement gets copied by another dancer or multiple other dancers. Especially inside "Challenge circles":

Occasionally, an informal contest or challenge began between dancers. One performed a phrase of movements, and the next picked up their dominant or last

moves, or complemented it, and developed it through their own phrase. Each playfully seemed to try to outdo the other. (?, ?)

This concept was used by him in his Choreography of "Danserye", where two dancers stand in front of each other and have a structured improvised dialog between each other.

In the same piece, a second concept of Groove, Bounce and Entrainment is used. Entrainment is described from multiple sources, from where the entrainment is happening. On the one hand the audio entrainment, based on the music, the physical entrainment, based on the movement and the social entrainment, from the social environment:

In social entrainment, mechanisms capable of sensing rhythmic sensory stimuli are activated by cues from the social environment in ways that generate coordinated behavior and can potentially lead to complex feedback loops between rhythmic information production and detection. (?, ?)

For his piece "Danserye" he developed the movement System "BB", which is derived from the movement interval of the Step-Touch move, with the goal to create a movement system similar to the bounce with a self containing rhythm.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

From my literature research and interviews, there is one main thread which spans through everything: Groove is not a static definable concept, but a word which received a relation to music and movement in Jazz and has evolved and changed into different meanings throughout time. To further research it would be interesting to investigate, in which different dimensions Groove means something similar, or if certain meanings can be attributed to certain generations or cultural circles. This multifaceted definition of Groove is something which is also shown when looking at the different understandings of the concept in the field of dance. There is also no common/singular understanding of the word Groove in Contemporary Dance, but the understanding of the word is very similar to other fields. In Contemporary dance, the definitions are more investigated in terms of body quality as well as personal feelings. Going into this research, my understanding of Groove was very well summarised by this following answer in the interview by Ian Kaler:

Q: As a next question: How would you describe Groove in a bodily quality? If you would have to describe someone grooving, how would you describe the body?

A: Maybe some kind of in syncness without judgement. Possibly qualities like enjoyment, pleasure, breath, something like a pulse. Groundedness definitely. See Chapter 6.2

The context of the origin of Groove adds cultural context to the word and the feeling surrounded by it. Its definitions in the field of music adds technicality, of understanding musical properties and listening to music, especially to rhythm.

One thing that I came to ask myself during this research is the usage of the term Groove in the context of humans gathering in collective entrainment to music in instances like club dancing. As far as I understand club dancing evolved out of Jazz, so the usage of this term to describe the bodies moving inside this context (as Sebastian Matthias describes it). But if one looks for example at a metal concert, with people headbanging or being in a mosh pit, this seems similar in concept, albeit a little bit more physical and brutal. Is this also considered groove? For a long time, I could not find these concepts combined in context. Groove is used to describe drum and rhythm in metal. And the people headbanging in the concert are clearly in an entrainment with each other and the movement, similar to club dancing. Finally, one single paper surfaced, creating the connection between metal, headbanging and its roots, the African american music styles, describing headbanging as Groove:

The rhythmic patterns of metal music, the physical movement patterns of headbanging, and the generic expectations surrounding groove and physical engagement in metal all have clear antecedents in African American culture. But these components cannot be studied separately. The kinetic framework of groove in metal music inextricably integrates dance movement and musical rhythm; the rhythms of metal are not groove without embodied feeling such as headbanging movement, and the headbanging movements of metal are inappropriately out of place when metal rhythms are not being heard. These components form a rhythm culture in which dance, sound, and social codes each are fundamental in the others' construction and basic functions. (?, ?)

What about Folk Dance? Also here, Groove can be used to describe the experience. ? (?) investigates Groove in Irish Music Sessions, while also giving the original Irish Name for this phenomenon:

At this particular Boston session, the musicians, the dancers and the audience all experienced groove — a phenomenon not conventionally associated with folk music traditions. In Irish traditional music, this phenomenon is termed “lift.” When a music session achieves “lift,” the sound raises up the spirits of the musicians to produce a social high.[..] In my experience, “lift” is: - floating melody above a pulse, - oscillating motion between downward and upward physicality, - effortless adherence to meter, driving synchronicity.

It makes sense, that Irish Folk Dance has its own name for this "Groove" Phenomenon, given that the concept of Groove was probably culturally introduced later than folk dance. Future starting points for further research would be to investigate the different Folk Dances around the world and compare their own understanding and description of this concept. Is it all the same as Groove? Are there differences?

Groove is a word which evolved over the centuries. Before the Jazz era just being used to describe a certain landscape feature, and people being closed minded, it developed do being used to describe qualities in music, creation of music and also a certain feeling for people listening to music and bodies moving together, 'entraining' whith each other and the music. This multitude seems also to be the way, as it is used in contemporary dance, as the descriptions match, while the focus is naturally more on the bodily quality and the feelings involved.

6 Interviews

To get a better understanding of how Groove is used in Contemporary Dance, I interviewed multiple Contemporary Dance practitioners about their usage and interpretation of the word. The people were selected by personal connections in university context, choosing people who use the word in their artistic practice. Goal of the interview is to get a better understanding about how the word Groove is used and perceived by dance practitioners. The interview is designed to be short (6 Questions, should take 10-15 minutes) to be able to get many different viewpoints with the available time resources. Following Questions were used:

- Can you describe yourself in the context of contemporary dance in two minutes?
- How would you describe the word Groove to yourself?
- In relation to contemporary dance, does the definition change? Does it change on different contexts (Watching dance, creating, teaching or self practice)
- How would you describe Groove for a bodily quality?
- Is it possible to have groovy movement without music?

6.1 Esther Balfe

Note: This interview was not done in person, but the questions were sent via Email and replied in full via text.

Q: Can you describe yourself in 2 Minutes?

A: Currently, I don't wish to ponder on myself, but I will share part of a conversation between two colleagues (Moscow, summer 2021) over email. I think it sums things up: "Hi — just about to fly back to London. Ariodante has gone very well! Ultimately the Bolshoi dancers got into the spirit of the thing (within reason) and have been great to work with. Esther was a brilliant choice, relentless, resilient and really nice! a good combination. The conductor is a live wire and really pushed the music and singing much further than anyone before, very exciting.. "

Q: How would you describe the word "Groove" for yourself?

A: I feel that we all identify with the word Groove in our own particular way, it's a very personal thing. It's about how we perceive the world and how we connect to life and our own environment. Additionally, for me this is very much to do with our up bringing, the things that have affected us or influenced us the most, things that we hold on to and things that we have to let go of. For me that was about getting out of the suburbs and pursuing larger things in London and beyond. Music largely, very much informed this for me and the kind of music I listened to informed my social – political views. That's a Groove, getting down to the nitty gritty, to the root of our fabric, the very thing which binds us to each other and to the earth. Like Joan Didion's writings 'things fall apart' like an inherent pull, only to get put back again, the centre will not hold', Groove is ultimately about struggle and what we do with those struggles.

Q: In relation to contemporary dance, does the definition change? Does it change on different contexts (Watching dance, Creating, teaching or self practice)

A: In contemporary dance.. perhaps the meaning of Groove doesn't change but it is either acutely highlighted or surreptitiously concealed. For example; in some processes, music might not be a central component but plays an underlying part. Let's say if we choose to negate the audible sound of the music or extract it entirely, one can always chose to work off score with that built in metronome. Again, it's a very personal thing. Perhaps it's safer to use Groove as an expression of the self, an epistemology of the self. I suppose, if the investigation is coming from an honest place, then you're always leaving yourself open (vulnerable) for new things or

influx to take place. This to me is both contemporary and groovy at the same time.

Q: How would you describe Groove for a bodily quality?

A: If we think of Groove as a sensation or the way something makes you feel or move then this is both anthropological and cultural. Part of being human is wanting to know more, wanting to investigate and seeing as the word groove, from its very etymology, means; 'the part in between two things, the thing that we want to get in-to' then a physical sensation may possibly arise from that. It doesn't leave much to the imagination.

Q: 5. (if there is time left): Is it possible to have groovy movement without music?

A: Mentioned in question 3.

6.2 Ian Kaler

Q: First, can you describe yourself in the context of contemporary dance in two minutes? I feel that it is important to not only have your bio from the internet, but also the context on how you see yourself at the moment.

A: Usually I refer to myself as a choreographer and performer/dancer and image producer ("Bildproduzent"). When I think in terms of how I got to dance, I started studying Visual Arts in Vienna and that was a little bit my entrance to anything performative. I started dancing in my early twenties only and did not have any prior dance or gymnastic training or anything in particular sporty. I think that somehow, choreography as a concept gave me something to hold on, before I had the technical or somatic tools to work on movement. So "choreography" as in how bodies/movement act in space and in different media, as well as the time in which it happens.

Q: As a first question related to the theme: How would you describe the word Groove to yourself, just the word without any other context?

A: I guess the first thing that came to my mind was that Groove is a feeling. Because, since you have asked me to have this conversation, I thought about my feeling of being inequipped to talk about it, but I am willing to try. Also, because I think identity politics comes up for me immediately, you know being a white trans guy and not being very musical in the first place. So I feel like, over the last couple of years, Groove is maybe something that for me is, I wouldn't say so much a physical practice, but more a physical feeling and something I have tried to get more acquainted with.

Q: What do you mean with "acquainted with it"?

A: To feel it more within my body and also, if I want to relate to music on that level. I think my approach is more through softness. I think my tendency would be to generally move more rigid at times so I feel like, especially in the last couple of years, my focus was to amplify softness and see what else is oscillating and anatomically possible for me. Through "Peeps" (Stephane Peeps Mou, Dance Artist), who I was talking about to you, is someone who massively helped me with understanding Groove.

Q: As a next question I would be interested in: If you put the word "Groove" in relation to contemporary dance, for example watching a performance, dancing for yourself or guiding a practice, in these different contexts, does the word mean something different? For example if you see something you say "ah that's Groove", how would you describe it? And does it change when you do it yourself?

A: Two things come to my mind: One, that there is a certain experience when watching dance performances, where I feel as a audience member, I have a physical response to what I am seeing, so I feel impacted by what's happening on stage almost, as if I were in some way participating as a body to what is happening. So maybe in some way in contemporary dance, this would be something that is a very early experience, that was part of the reason on why I got interested in dance. Having this very corporal experience. When that happens to me in a piece that I see, I am always super happy and it's something I am definitely looking for in my work.

Q: That is great, because that is one of the definitions of Groove that I found is exactly that. So it's nice to see that coming together. And for yourself, when you are doing dance, which feeling would you relate to with Groove?

A: I think actually it is the "bliss" feeling that I connect to. It is when I don't overthink it anymore. So when I start noticing that my body is in relationship to movement with music, where it is just a unison in some way. Not unison in terms of: It has to be the same; but in terms of: I don't have to intend a quite specific relation anymore, it's just happening. But there is also a certain autonomy in terms of my moving that can change.

Q: As a next question: How would you describe Groove in a bodily quality? If you would have to describe someone grooving, how would you describe the body?

A: Maybe some kind of in synch without judgement. Possibly qualities like enjoyment, pleasure, breath, something like pulse. Groundedness definitely.

Q: As a last question: Because I found all this stuff that Groove is heavily related to music: Do you think grooving is possible without music? How does it change to it being done without music? Can it happen without the relation to the music?

A: Probably it could. But what I imagine would be a group of people working together to create it together in some way. Not necessarily in making music, but something which is musical in its togetherness. At least for me, since I don't play any instrument, I don't have the ability to very easily in my mind continue something music so I think for me it would be quite limiting, because without music I am not sourceful enough.

Q: That's a great answer, that's it, thank you for the interview!

6.3 Valentin Alfery

Q: To start the interview: Can you describe yourself in the context of stage dance and theatre dance, who you are and what you do in two minutes? Just so I have a perspective of who you are and how you perceive yourself in this world.

A: My name is Valentin Alfery. I am a dancer and choreographer, coming from the field of breaking or from the field of hip hop and hip hop culture. From the very beginning I accidentally slipped into the theatre world when I started to do breaking. I had two friends who were involved in an acting/theatre company and somehow I got pulled along. After some time and experience in both worlds, dancing and, I would say the world of stage in general, I started to combine those two. I started my company (Hungry Sharks) and do stage pieces, using every possibility that was given or found.

My goal is to dive deeper into not only dance, but choreography, which is a rare choice in the urban dance field - most dancers are focusing on dance and bringing that to a high level. To me, it was also important to achieve a level of choreography that matches the level of dance, so a level of choreography that is also really high. Just as a bad example: You can see great great dancers doing a lot of shows that are, I would say, choreographed poorly, where the approach is just about movement and unisono and certain kind of drama. In the urban dance world we see this repeat and repeat over and over. It's basically everything that happens. And for me that was not enough, so I started to dive into choreography, like: What does it take, to make watching an hour of dance interesting? As opposed to just 3 Minutes.

Q: The first question regarding the theme is just: How would you describe the word "Groove"? Just the word?

A: I would say I perceive it as something that comes from music and something that underlines music and makes it really connected. So you have the main melody and the main rhythm, which is often really clear. In the background, the intricate and complex and enjoyable thing to listen to, is the Groove. An underlying theme/rhythm or melody that often counters the main thing. But that's the interesting play or game, that you get out of the main thing. And then there are kinds of sub layered things that are going on. And it's the same, I think, in dance. As in rhythm, as in music. So Groove brings additional content that makes everything more complex and more intricate. It is not only about something that contributes or counteracts the main rhythm or melody, it's also something that brings consistency. That keeps the music or the rhythm in a track that everyone mostly unconsciously is able to follow.

Q: If we get more specific in relation to dance, would you say your definition of Groove changes? For example if you watch someone dance, or if you teach, or if you dance yourself or if you are building choreography, are there different definitions for Groove or these specific contextes? Does it change or is it the same?

A: My first thought is that it's always the same. Because to my feeling and perception it stays the same. But I have experienced other artists that are using the word Groove differently, especially in dancing or in stage work. There, it can also be used for a certain kind of mood or vibe. So sometimes, as part of a dance cast, I have heard the phrase "Ok stay in the Groove together", but that does not mean that we have a rhythm that we have to keep with our bodies which is underlying the main dance thing or main choreography. It often means, from other choreographers, to stay in the same mood, in the same feeling, in the same perception of time. But I would use different words for that. So for me, the definition stays the same.

Q: As a next question: How would you describe Groove as a bodily quality? Like if you see someone and say they Groove, is there a specific quality in the body that you connect to it?

A: I mean, in general it is a movement that's also like underline and that's something you have to get, you have to achieve as a dancer or a dancing person. It is also underlying in the way of what you are thinking about during dance. If you have to think about Groove actively, you are not having it. You have to be able to render the Groove to a certain unconscious, to be able to free your thoughts for other things. Of course you can always choose, like Groove is your topic, like its really nice when people do that. It has to be something that is like, I think, it has to be more automated than other things. It has to be there just there and serves you just as an underlying feeling. Mostly in dance, breaking, where I come from, it is mostly a connection to the music. Of course in stage work it changes.

Q: So it is never the main thing, but it is something that ties other things together?

A: I think it ties things together and it's mostly not the main thing. Or let's say it like this: You should be able to not make it the main thing. There are a lot of dancers I know, they thrive a lot from Groove. It is a really strong factor in the urban dance world. When you start to dance, you connect to the music and you are really emphasising on the connection and you let yourself thrive to do something else. But you should be able to render it unconscious and just have it. And that takes a lot of training. It becomes an element that you can play with in your dance. But if you have to think actively: I have to Groove and what else do I have to do? If you have that thought, when you are not that experienced, and your body and mind are not so much schooled, you should practice it to have it in your back. It is an underlying quality to me.

Q: As a last Question: If you take Groove, it is always connected with music. Most people say, also in literature, that Groove always has some connection to music. So, if we reduce it to just dance, is it possible to have dance, which is Groovy, but without having music. So is it possible to just have the body Groove without the music? What do you feel? How would that look like, or do you feel that it's not possible?

A: I think yes of course it's possible and I think it is a really strong tool as well. Coming from breaking and from urban dance, the musicality and the connection to music is generally really strong. And that's something I like a lot. But in theatre or stage work, this musicality is not always necessary, because most of the time, it says a really specific thing. And when you want to get rid of always saying the music and the movement are together, then you have to break this up. I think Grooving makes sense, even if there is no music and I think it can be an inner Groove that you have just for yourself, kind of a metronome, that's just for you and that makes sense just for you. In theatre there are a lot of situations, when the dance cast is holding on, not synchronising to the music, to a specific rhythm. A lot of times, it is about getting the rhythm or the tempo or the timing from each other. So there arrives a Groove that is not hearable but feelable. I was working a lot with that in my last piece "Beton Brut" and its a pain in the ass.

It is much harder than to have music that provides you with a Groove or rhythm or timing. But it is also really hard to get, if you work with five people, the five people have to feel the same Groove and the timing and that takes a lot of rehearsal time. But when you have that, when you drive from each other, it is even more magical than when you have it from the music. Because, everyone can hear the music in the room, the audience can listen to this Groove. They can see the connection, they can enjoy it and it's pretty clear. If you don't have anything, if it is a felt Groove, that the group together has, then it is more mystical, more mysterious. The audience is more challenged. Questions arise: How are they doing this, how are they so synchronised, how are they moving together? So there are magic times if you Groove without music or move without music to a Groove.

7 Practical Work

The thesis will be presented as an artistic presentation. In the following section, all material regarding this presentation is collected.

7.1 General concept

As a structure for the whole thing, the concept of lecture performance was chosen. This decision was mainly made because of personal curiosity about the format and the wish, to find some way to blend a lecture performance format with a regular performance. So in short - a (lecture) performance. To give more possibilities of interaction and ease the load of conveying textual information from the dancer, the performance will also consist of a narrator who will give the main main content and textual explanation. The narration is created throughout the rehearsal along with the rest of the movement.

7.2 Rehearsal Diary

This section contains a copy of the rehearsal diary. It is mainly meant for documentation and traceability of the rehearsal process with no claim on presenting it as understandable, consistent or complete content. Note for Current Review State: As the diary has to be transcribed from paper, this will only be finished shortly before the presentation. The current content is just an example, so one can see the structure.

6.4.2022

"It is a framework for improvisation"

– Humanhood practice (Hopping) as framework and base

Relation to voice?

– Neutral? Or is there a relation from the beginning?

Splitter from hopping

– Curve with the head back

– Jump with arms in second - Create Ball which is consequently destroyed

– Floorwork to travel to jump to stumble to tumble to roll

Spine and head feel very static

- It is hard to manipulate these things in hopping

Internal feeling:

- Inviting to
- Busy to
- Distracted to
- Cooperation to
- Opposition to
- Emancipation

Notes for next time:

- Connection between music and body
- Does a direct translation from the drum/Bass into body movements work? Could be investigated with, with concrete drum/bass samples which are looped and movement developed to it
- How is control passed between voice and dancer?
- Hopping as Baseline

1.7.2022

To investigate more into the physicality of the different groove possibilities, a daily practice should be established

- Humanhood Hopping for 15-20 Minutes
 - The Basic concept is simple, grounded, flowing, steady
 - * Changing between the 4 directions in the room, otherwise stay on the spot
 - But it still feels very versatile
 - Could be developed into many different flavors (Coming back to "Framework")
 - It feels great when stopping the hopping. Being grounded again is incredibly satisfying

- Basic Hip Hop grooves, train one body part at the time for one song
 - Head Groove
 - Upper Body Groove
 - Knee/Wavy Groove
 - Stepping Groove
 - Learn some random Hip Hop move, to build inspiration

I feel like i would like to have a floor practice too. Trying stuff did not yield something satisfactory. Not yet sure what could fit the theme, maybe more investigation will open something

7.3 Performance transcription

This section contains a transcription of the concrete performance, split into the various sections with the text, the music, and the movement being described.

Note for Current Review State: As the Performance is being developed continuously, this will only be finished shortly before the presentation. The current content is just a placeholder, so one can see the structure as example.

Prequel

The dancer will start with the humanhood hopping practice 15-20 Minutes before the performance starts. As a background soundscape, a Button clicking Compilation by RaffyTaphyASMR (<https://open.spotify.com/track/2OMXtaKXu8S3JYUlcVud8Q?si=07f171bfbb804e82>) will be used, with the recording altered to not include voices. The ASMR makes the whole thing atmospheric, the clicks have a random rythm. The soundscape will continue into the next chapter. The door is open for the people to come in. People who come in will be greeted by the dancer and also smalltalk is possible. For the frame of a Bachelor presentation, it feels the most natural to take a normale human relation to the audience. This gives the possibility to also change the relation to go farther away from "normal human relation" during the rest of the piece.

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KÜNSTLERISCHE PROJEKTE

LABYRINTH

FLORIAN DECKER & CHIARA APREA

In diesem Projekt wurde damit experimentiert, Bewegungsmaterial in eine digitale, narrative Video Erfahrung zu verwandeln.
<https://youtu.be/bdvMOIX5ehw>

ANDERES

3 JAHRE CHOR ERFAHRUNG
(TENOR, POP/KLASSIK)

ERFAHRENER BALLROOM TÄNZER
(STANDARD/LATEIN)

GRUNDLEGENDE ERFAHRUNG IN
HIP HOP
UND VERWANDTEN TANZSTILEN

MITWIRKUNG AN DANCER,
EINEM TRANSDISZIPLINÄREN
FORSCHUNGSPROJEKT VON
H.A.U.S (TU WIEN), IN
KOOPERATION MIT DER MUK

REGELMÄßIGES TRAINING IN
DIVERSEN WORKSHOPS/CLASSES
(IMPULSTANZ, URBAN WIDGETS,
PERFORMING CENTER AUSTRIA, ...)

PERFORMANCE ERFAHRUNG

SHARE FESTIVAL | OF OTHER SPACES

März 2022 | Choreografin: Esther Balfe (in Zusammenarbeit mit den TänzerInnen)
<https://www.vsmu.sk/hf/podujatia/festival-share-performance-2/>

ARTICULATION

März 2022 | Choreografinnen: Esther Balfe, Manfred Aichinger, Ian Kaler, Eva Maria Schaller
<https://muk.ac.at/veranstaltung/articulation-2022-01.html>

HABITAT / PANDEMIC VERSION

September 2020 | Choreografin: Doris Uhlich
<https://www.dorisuhlich.at/en/projects/habitat>

HABITAT / HALLE E

Oktober 2019 | Choreografin: Doris Uhlich
<https://www.dorisuhlich.at/en/projekte/habitat-halle-e>

DRIFTING #1 - AUGARTEN

Juni 2019 | Choreograf: Alberto Franceschini
<https://www.albertofranceschini.com/driftingaugarten>

EMBODIMENT 2019 / 2020

Februar 2019 / 2020 | Choreografinnen: Marijke Wagner, Virginie Roy, Christina Medina
<https://muk.ac.at/veranstaltung/embodiment-3.html>
<https://muk.ac.at/veranstaltung/embodiment-6.html>

TANZAUSBILDUNG

BA ZEITGENÖSSISCHER UND KLASSISCHER TANZ

2018 - Juli 2022 | Musik und Kunst Privatuniversität der Stadt Wien
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8 Ehrenwörtliche Erklärung

Hiermit erkläre ich, dass ich die vorliegende Arbeit selbstständig verfasst, noch nicht anderweitig für Prüfungszwecke vorgelegt, keine anderen als die angegebenen Quellen oder Hilfsmittel benutzt sowie wörtliche und sinngemäße Zitate als solche gekennzeichnet habe. Ich nehme zur Kenntnis, dass die Arbeit einer Plagiatsprüfung unterzogen wird.