

Artistic Research in Movement and Music:
How Dance Influences My Musicking

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Photo: Teemu Mattsson, 2022

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Abstract

In this inquiry I draw on artistic research approach to explore reflections that arise as musician, dancer, and pedagogue while navigating the immersive world of musicking within house dance culture and hip hop dance. To understand these intertwining phenomena and their influences on my creative output as a musician, I engage with theoretical underpinnings of somatic movement approaches, as well as three co-creative and interactive artistic processes, and finally a multimodal pedagogical approach.

I start by writing briefly about who I am, what my artistic identity and practice has been and is until this day, followed by introducing the main theme of this research.

To understand why and what has led me to study the connection between dance and music within me, which is a topic that has been studied quite a lot within many research fields for years, I will introduce my background as both a musician, dancer, pedagogue, and a multimodal artist.

Then, with the literature review, I present studies from other researchers that I feel connect with what I am trying to understand and unpack in my own research. This is followed by a section where I explain the core methods used for the research, aiming to lay a sort of base of reference for when I try to unpack my experiences, sensations, and observations.

In the next part, where the artistic process and findings of the study merge together, I will present three cases, which are excerpts from my master concert that I composed and arranged during the fall of 2023 resulting in a performance in the Music Halls' Black Box on December the 15th, 2023. Each case integrates both dance, movement, and music. All three cases were inspired by and based on two artistic projects, the first being a dance course called "Motion Laboratory" and the other a choreographed dance piece called "Something Like This".

The first case is a solo, which I composed, pre-recorded, and produced, choreographed, and performed on stage in the concert. The second case is a duet between a percussionist and me, both moving, dancing, and improvising with music and movement on stage. The third and last case is an excerpt from a dance piece I was involved in earlier that year, in which I performed as a dancer and a singer, involving another dancer. Then I contemplate the pedagogical

aspects and findings in this research and explore how I could integrate all that I have experienced, learned, and found into teachings in both music and dance in the future. And lastly, I conclude my written work, present what I have found during my inquiry – benefits, strengths, and limitations of this study.

Keywords

Artistic research, musicking, club culture, house dance, hip hop dance, somatic movement approaches, multimodal pedagogy

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CHAPTER 1: PROJECT OVERVIEW

1.1 Introduction

Working as a singer-songwriter, music composer, street dancer and -dance teacher professionally since year 2007 it has become so self-evident to me that the combination of all the experience and knowledge I've acquired from dance and music are a part of not only my artistic skill set but my artistic identity. I have worked in projects involving dancers, musicians, and actors, incorporating my skill set and artistic expression as a music composer, music producer, live musician, and dancer/performer. For years, I have been used to multifaceted working environments where the artists, or performers, utilize far more of their creative expression than what their professional title (dancer, musician etc.) may suggest – where the lines are blurred in the context of “working roles” and the intent is to create something unique. Having been involved with the hip hop and street dance community in Finland I have gained opportunities to explore my artistry to its fullest. I have an understanding that most artists would agree with me in saying that having been *immersed* (see Thomson, 2021), i.e. deeply involved in different ways of expressing and creating art has affected and even altered their primary source of artistic expression in some way, whether it has been intentional or not. However, instead of just going with my gut feeling on this matter I thought it could be interesting to research exactly how being immersed in different art forms does impact one's creative output and artistic expression. In my case, how dance and movement-based practices ended up affecting and impacting my creative output as a musician and composer. With this artistic research (see Hannula et al., 2005) I study how two dance- and movement-based projects I was involved in during the year 2023 influenced my creative processes in my master concert in December 2023.

I will analyse these processes using three cases, i.e. excerpts from my master concert – which incorporated both music and dance in various ways:

1. **Embodied:** a solo piece for my master concert encompassing both my music and dance.

This first case is a solo piece I composed and choreographed for my master concert. The piece explores the boundaries between oneself and others, contemplates and even demands autonomy from the gaze and expectations of others through improvised dance, music, and a poem.

2. **Sharing Stories:** a duet between myself and the percussionist João Luis improvising with dance, contact improvisation and rhythm on stage.

The second case, also a piece made for the master concert, looks on a collaboration between me as a dancer/composer and a percussionist. A partially improvised, partially choreographed piece in which both artists communicate creating rhythms with their bodies in their own way, exploring what connections they make and how also how movement impacts the music making.

3. **Words:** an excerpt from the dance piece “Something Like This” that combines dance and music in the form of a choreographed solo by Ramona Panula and our duet.

The third case is an excerpt from one of the above-mentioned projects which I felt needed to be a part of my master concert as well. It is a duet between a dancer and a singer-dancer, finding ways of expressing their thought and emotions through movement and music both separately and together.

To frame this inquiry, I will now provide a brief overview of my artistic background as a *multimodal artist*; a musician, a dancer, and a pedagogue followed by a literature review looking on previous studies conducted within this field of research. I will then move on to the methodology used for the research with its key concepts. The key concepts that the research primarily hinges on are *musicking* – with the notion that: “...*music lie not in objects, not in musical works at all, but in action, in what people do.*” (Small, 1998, p. 8) – and *somatic movement approaches*, with the focus on listening to the body: “...*being engaged in attentive dialogue with one’s bodily self we, as humans, can learn newly, become pain free, move more easily, do our life work more efficiently, and perform with greater vitality and expressiveness.*” (Eddy, 2009, p. 6).

Following, I will analyse the artistic processes within the cases, serving as both, a data and artistic output (i.e. findings), for this inquiry. In the final chapter I will approach the artistic research process from a pedagogical perspective and conclude with a discussion on the findings of this inquiry.

1.2 Artistic background

1.2.1 The Musician

I have been playing, practicing, and making music for as long as I can remember. I come from a home filled with music from different music traditions and genres: my father is a classical violinist and violin teacher and my mother a singer-songwriter, composer, and piano teacher in both pop & jazz – and classical genres. I started playing the drum set when I was 6 years old alongside learning the basics of how to play classical piano. I even used to go on stage to perform with my mother and my big sister, singing songs and playing the tambourine while an audience consisting of both children and adults would listen and cheer. As I turned 14 years old, I started taking singing lessons and focused more on writing songs I could sing as my own. As of 19 years old I started my studies in the Pop & Jazz Conservatory and graduated as a musician and singer with a broad repertoire in pop and jazz music. After that I continued my studies in Metropolia, the University of Applied Sciences, in a programme emphasising musical composition and song writing. Most of my musical studies are based on Western European ideas and methods and it wasn't until I got accepted to the Global Music Masters programme at the University of the Arts Sibelius Academy that I got more acquainted with non-Western approaches to music making and musical expression.

Most of my young adult life I have been very intrigued and inspired by different music traditions and genres but wasn't born into one specific musical tradition or culture myself. Because of my cultural and educational background, however, I have felt most comfortable working in more western musical traditions and contexts. Both during and in between studies I have had the pleasure of working in different projects as a singer-songwriter, music

composer-arranger, backing vocalist, music producer and even sound designer. My core interest and drive has always been creating something of my own, whether it is in collaboration with someone else or by myself, in form of structured or improvised musical compositions or just exploring how you can arrange already existing music into something a little different. Also, just playing around with different improvisational music tasks has been one of my favourite ways of learning and making music.

1.2.2 The Dancer

While I involved myself in musical activities and -studies from a young age I was always fascinated by dance. I would watch music videos on the Music TV -channel, seeing the artists and back up dancers singing and dancing. One of my absolute favourite videos to watch was Janet Jackson's "Rhythm Nation" from the 1980's and I would spend hours learning the dance routines for the songs. My sister took contemporary dance and jazz lessons from a young age and inspired by her, even I took some classes in both contemporary dances, tap dancing and hip hop. But for a long time, my interest in dance remained a past time hobby and the occasional class here and there.

However, during high school my fascination with dance (specifically street dance styles) grew stronger and I decided to take a hip hop class with a friend of mine in the dance school called Helsingin Tanssiopisto. There I was introduced to not only hip hop dance but also locking and breakdancing, which are street dance styles as well. My interest and passion for these dance styles escalated quickly and soon I found myself practicing hip hop and locking almost every day after school. My dance teacher at the time, Topi Tateishi, insisted me and my friend go practice our skills to a sports centre called Töölön Kisahalli in addition to taking classes, as hip hop is a freestyle and social dance that originally emerged outside the context of a classroom. At Kisahalli, I started meeting other street dancers practicing their craft, socialising, and dancing together. It was there I met many of the dancers who were, and still are to this day, active within the street dance scene and nurturing hip hop culture in Finland. It was the sense of community within these dances, hip hop- and club culture, that drew me in. As Le Lay describes: *"I was attracted to the energy and the knowledge produced in the*

space, as well as the implicit consensus that we were all building something together and sharing with one another.” (Le Lay, 2021, p. 1). So, while I was studying music at the different institutions, I was also developing my craft as a street dancer, travelling around the world learning about the origins of hip hop and house dance culture (which ultimately became my main street dance style of focus), competing in battles and performing in events with my friends. I soon started working as a street dance teacher in different dance schools, giving workshops around Finland and working as a dancer in dance pieces, either choreographed by the group itself or in collaboration with a choreographer.

The fact that I was a singer and musician as well as a dancer was often utilised in the context of making dance performances: I would either sing in the performance or/and even compose some or all the music for it. I would also get opportunities to perform as a singer with a live band during dance events. When I think about it, most of the work opportunities and projects I have participated in have either come from dancers, choreographers or been offered to me because I understand both the art forms of music and dance.

1.2.3 The pedagogue

I have been working as a street dance teacher for over 15 years, teaching classes and workshops on both movement technique within hip hop- and house dance culture, the history of these dances and implementing my knowledge from music studies into my dance teaching (listening to and understanding rhythms, different ways of expressing the melodies of different instruments etc.). During these years my main focus was on teaching dance and not music or singing so much, partly due to wanting to pursue a career as a performing artist and composer but also due to feeling the pressure of a keeping up the legacy of teaching music: both of my parents are successful music pedagogues in the Sibelius Academy, my mother in the Music Education department and my father in the classical department. It was only seven years ago I built up the courage to start giving singing lessons to a few students every now and then and as the years went by, I noticed that I really enjoy teaching singing and music!

When I started my master studies in the Sibelius Academy's Global Music department in 2020, I also applied for the pedagogical study package of 60 study points as a minor module.

Within these studies I got the chance to study under teachers from both the Music Education department as well as the teachers from the Global Music department, learning different approaches and methods to teaching both individual students as well as group teaching.

It was during these studies I got encouraged to implement techniques and ideas from my experiences and knowledge as a dancer and dance teacher in my practice as a music teacher, as I had intuitively been doing in teaching dance and incorporating my knowledge of musical studies. For instance, while teaching rhythms I would incorporate simple movement tasks for the singers to really feel and embody the rhythm of the music by stomping the feet on the beat and singing a vowel/a word on the back beat. I later realized that these sorts of exercises are quite common in the *Dalcroze's Eurhythmics* -methods, which I will talk about more in chapter 2. I realized that supporting and being a part of the students journey to becoming a musician or a dancer felt extremely valuable to me because both art forms have influenced the kind of artist and person that I am today... and I want to share it with my students.

Framing my pedagogical approaches further during these last years have been the participation in projects that incorporate both music and dance with a pedagogical intent/angle, such as our piece for young audiences called “Back 2 The Future”. This piece was selected as a part of Konerttikeskus¹ program/repertoire to tour around schools performing music and dance, talking about hip hop culture, and teaching the basic principles of *sampling*². Noticing the positive feedback from the students regarding our performance and what a multimodal artist like me can offer I am inspired to keep incorporating and nurturing both art forms within my own teaching methods.

¹ Konserttikeskus is an organization that enable students around all of Finland to experience different artistic performances in their own schools for free.

² taking a section of already existing audio and re-organizing it to a new piece of music.

1.2.4 The multimodal artist

During my studies to becoming a professional musician I started getting questions such as:” Which art form comes first for you, music or dance?” or “Do you identify yourself more as a dancer than a musician?”. The need for separating the two and prioritising one over the other always felt strange to me as I never preferred one over the other. In fact in many cases I found that digging into black social dances, such as hip hop, deepened my musical expression as the dance serves powerful communicative potential (DeFrantz, n.d.). Though I didn’t always have the tools to express it verbally I felt that both dance and music empowered and benefitted my musical expression. And yet, if I answered that both felt equally important and valuable to my artistic identity and practice it seemed difficult for my classmates, teachers, and colleagues to grasp, which often left me feeling inadequate and insufficient in both respective art forms for years. To this day I sometimes question whether I would have been a better or more successful artist if only I had chosen one art form over the other.

But through the years I realised that having knowledge of and being immersed in both art forms is precisely what has enabled me to take part in numerous multidisciplinary projects, contributing with my artistic expression and skills as a musician, composer, street dancer and performer. It is the combination of all these artistic aspects, skills and traits that make me... well, me.

Reflecting on my multifaceted artistic expression throughout the years I decided to research this specific connection.

1.3 Research aim, objective and question

In this inquiry, I draw on artistic research approach to explore reflections that arise as musician, dancer, and pedagogue while navigating the immersive world of musicking within house dance culture and hip hop dance. To understand these intertwining phenomena and their influences on my creative output as a musician, I engage with theoretical underpinnings

of somatic movement approaches, as well as three co-creative and interactive artistic processes, and finally a multimodal pedagogical approach.

The research question framing this artistic study is:

- **How does dance and movement influence my artistic and pedagogical musicking processes?**

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS

2.1 Literature review & theoretical underpinnings

The connection between movement, dancing and music has been studied for many years, whether from a phenomenological, psychological, philosophical, cultural or/and sociological perspective (Sievers et al., 2013; Guo, 2023). Digging into this topic stems from the notion that music institutions don't incorporate movement- and performance-based practices, exercises, and techniques in their curriculum so much. There seems to be a divide between the art forms that, from my perspective, needn't be so vast. To become, say, a concert pianist, I do realise the need to focus on requiring a specific skill set to be able to understand and play the instrument. But in means of musical expression, creative music composition, communication with the whole body I have always felt there is a depth and sensitivity that may be gained in one's musical expression when exposed to practices incorporating movement, dance and music that could benefit all musicians regardless of what their career goals or aspirations are with their artistic expression. It has been a joy then to read and find that there is much research and studies arguing for a more holistic approach to learning, making, and expressing music.

In this section, the following sources provide insights into the concepts, techniques, and methodologies for my creative process, unpacking what others have studied and what I found to be both inspirational and useful in my own research.

To start, there is the notion of **embodiment** and embodied learning and knowledge. When diving into and reflecting on knowledge of the body many researchers frame and/or base their research on the phenomenological approach of Merleau-Ponty (1908 – 1961), who's philosophy is based on going against the Western Cartesian way of separating the mind and the body and instead defending the body as an experiencing, feeling and knowing entity together with the mind (Marja-Leena Juntunen et al., 2021). Researches also talk of the *embodied cognition* approach, which aims to include experientially lived and embodied aspects, such as the background of biological, social and cultural beliefs, in cognitive science (Martiny, n.d.). Meaning that the environment and our sensorimotor and motor experiences in the physical world affect our cognitive processes. These theories, and philosophy, gave me a sort of base for how to approach and conduct my own research. I realised, that valid, meaningful knowledge stems from bodily, lived experiences and to access this knowledge I need to observe, reflect, and describe the sensations and thoughts that arise from the holistic exercises I perform in different environments.

Aligned with this notion of perception and body awareness I derived much inspiration from *somatic movement approaches*, which integrate the body and mind by becoming aware of experiences in the body through personal perceptions and reflective work. (Sööt & Anttila, 2018). As a professional dancer I can't count how many hours I've spent in front of a mirror, continuously looping a movement or exercise for a specific outcome. But in my research my intention goes towards a more holistic and conscious approach, placing weight on perception, transformation and change (Fraleigh et al., 2015).

An approach that combines movement and music in terms of embodiment and learning is, for instance, the **Eurhythmics** method by Emile Jaques-Dalcroze (1865-1950). Jaques-Dalcroze's notion lies in that practical experience and the analysis on physical sensations should come before theory (Jaques-Dalcroze, È. 1920). Marja-Leena Juntunen, an expert in Dalcroze methodology, expands on the practicality of the teachings: "*Dalcroze teaching includes exercises that combine, for example, listening, moving, singing, thinking, improvising, and imagining – a variety of mind-body involvement within a certain musical culture which aim to explore some particular musical phenomenon.*" (Juntunen, 2004). I've taken part in some pedagogy courses from the Music Education department in the Sibelius Academy, where I studied in the Global Music department myself, that utilizes the

Eurhythmics -exercises in one form or another and found some exercises very useful for my own students, both within teaching singing and dance.

In Chapter 4 I will discuss the use and implementation of Eurhythmics -exercises in my own pedagogical vision and teaching.

What I also will be referring to in this research, in the context of music and dance, is the verb **musicking** or to music. As Small puts it, “*To music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing*” (Small, 1998, p. 9). Musicking is about what we do, with whom, where we do it and for what reason. Musicking is a lot about non-verbal communication and expression, experiences you can’t put into words. Small talks about *paralanguage* in his book: “...*The languages of bodily posture, movement and gesture, of facial expression and of vocal intonation continue to perform functions in human life that words cannot, and where they function most specifically is in the articulation and exploration of relationships.*” (ibid.). In my research I want to convey that which may not be so easy to express with words through video and audio representation of my musicking.

2.2 Core methods used

The main research method used in this study is connected to approaches of artistic research. This means that I, the artist, will research the creative process of the artwork that I produced and thus I add to already existing knowledge around the subject (Hannula et al., 2005).

More specifically, I draw on autoethnographic artistic research methods, where I use my personal experience and observations to describe, analyse and critique cultural practices and experiences while practicing “reflexivity”, i.e. deep and careful self-reflection to name and interrogate the intersections between myself and others (Adams et al., 2014). Here you can see the basic formula for artistic research (Hannula et al., 2014):

Table 2.1. Basic Formula of Artistic Research

Artistic Process: Acts Inside the Practice	Arguing for a Point of View (Context, Tradition, and Their Interpretation)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Committed with an eye on the conditions of the practice ▪ Documenting the acts ▪ Moving between insider and outsider positions ▪ Preparing works of art 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Social and theoretical imagination ▪ Hermeneutics ▪ Conceptual, linguistic and argumentative innovations ▪ Verbalization

Figure 1. Basic Formula for Artistic Research (Hannula et al., 2014).

In addition to the basic formula for the artistic process and research, for the creative process of the master concert I used a sort of feedback system similar to Korthagen's 'model of reflection' which was divided into five phases: "(1) action; (2) looking back at the action; (3) awareness of essential aspects; (4) creating alternative methods of action; and (5) trial." (Korthagen, 1985).

My methods also fall under *interdisciplinary research* in so that I am investigating and integrating the knowledge that lies "in between" two disciplines through different concepts/perspectives, techniques and tools to advance fundamental understanding beyond what I could understand from the two single fields separately (Porter, 2006). With this research I will also, to the best of my abilities, try to create a 'common language' in so that I can be in conversation both in the 'in-between'/with the 'invisible' but also with you, the reader. As Coldwell puts it: "*When considering how we communicate the invisible, the terms we use and the pre-requisite knowledge that is required need consideration if we are to effectively bridge the gaps and create new approaches and ways of seeing.*" (Coldwell & Morgan, 2022, p. 5). Furthermore, I draw on hip hop-, house- and club culture for additional references due to utilizing tools and aspects of the culture in my own creative process.

In this artistic research the empirical data are excerpts from my journal writings, audio and video footage, and photos from both the two projects I was involved in as well as my own creative process in my master concert. Next, I will describe how I processed with generating and analysing the data as part of my immersive artistic processes.

My model of Reflection of the Creative Processing:

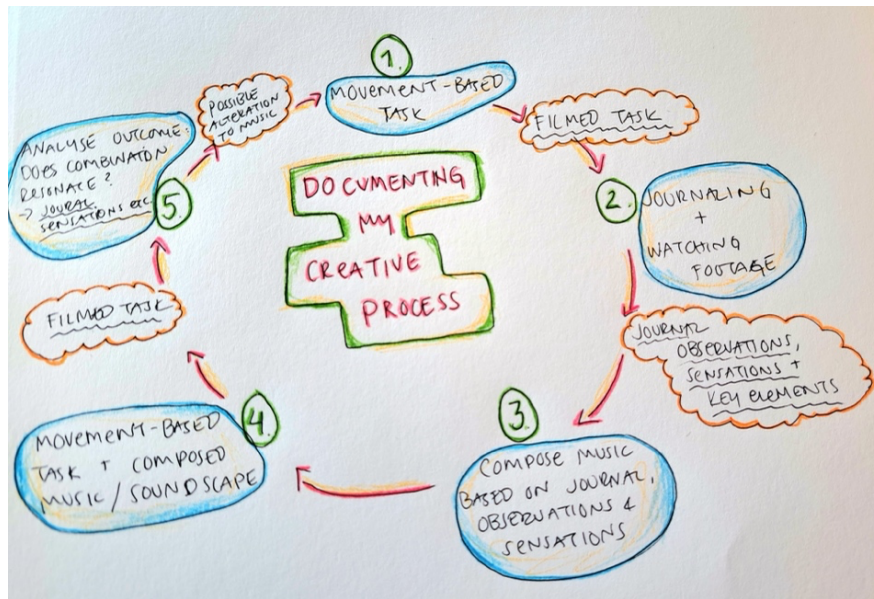


Figure 2. Model of reflection, excerpt from my journal, 2023.

Journal writings:

In the beginning, I would recall my journal writings from 2023 and reflect on what I had learned during both “Motion Laboratory” and “Something Like This”. I would try and remember the key elements and intent of the movement-based tasks, recall what was said and shared by both the teachers, choreographers, and us dancers, and try to connect the experiences and information with the upcoming creative process ahead – composing pieces for my master concert. As I would revisit the exercises from both projects, I would take breaks and write down what I experienced, observed, and sensed while performing them. It became a feedback system where I would focus on the questions: “What? Why? How? For whom?”, adding a somatic approach to the process.

Reflecting on the movement-based tasks:

Once I had chosen which exercises inspired and motivated me the most, based on recollections from my journal writings, I would start performing the tasks in a dance studio I had booked. Alone, I would explore the tasks in both silence and with music/audio. The music was selected mostly by intuition or “gut feeling”, going with whatever I felt would best enhance or serve the intent of the exercise I was about to explore. Soon, however, I chose to

perform the exercises in silence so that the music I listened to wouldn't affect the way I compose my own music too much. While performing the tasks I tried to keep my intent clear and really listen to my body, listening to the experiences I had embodied from the projects ... and then document them through journaling and creating video footage.

Audio-visual material (audio and video footage):

As I mentioned above, I would explore the exercises from both projects mostly in silence. But soon I started getting ideas for sounds, textures, and music that I felt could resonate with what the intent of the exercise and movement was. I would take turns in dancing and filming the tasks, documenting it to better recall each practice session. After each practice I would go home and watch the videos I had from the rehearsal and read my journaling, recalling key elements from the exercise. Then I would create music, different sounds, and harmonies that I felt best reflected the journal writings, video and my sensations. This also became a feedback system where I then would return to the dance studio with my newly recorded music and perform the exercise to it and then, if I didn't feel it resonating with me during the exercise, I would go back home and alter the soundscape I had created to better fit the theme of the exercise. This became my own little "musicking hub", a personal music making playground.

Interviews:

I have also conducted interviews with two artists, João Luis, and Ramona Panula, who collaborated with me in two cases, which I have first transcribed and then embedded in my written work in Chapter 3. Both interviewees were given a set of questions beforehand, formulated by me, to reflect on. The questions were tailored to each of them since they had different objectives in the collaborations. The questions were regarding the theme of our collaboration in the duets; how movement influenced the music making, what purpose and meaning dance has to their perspective artistic practice, how movement and dance impacts other aspects of your life etc. With João the interview was conducted through a video call that I transcribed on March 28th, 2024. With Ramona the answers to the questions were sent to me in written form on March 31st, 2024.

2.3 Ethics and Positionality

Ethical considerations

During this study I utilised my knowledge as a professional musician and street dancer for developing the design of this study. However, seeing that it is impossible for a researcher to approach their own work without implicit knowledge and bias, I base and reference my study on pre-existing theories and methodologies within the research field I am studying. I received mentoring, supervision, and basic principles from the Sibelius Academy of University of Arts on how to conduct, structure and publicise this written work in an honest and reliable manner. They also presented me with the appropriate consent forms to be used for if any form of collaborations or interviews should occur and be utilised in the research. During the research process I tried, to the best of my abilities, to be respectful of the cultural environments I would reference in my study, i.e. talking about house dance-, club- and hip hop culture with a sensitive approach as they are not cultures I was born into.

By informing the interviewees (João Luis and Ramona Panula) and collaborators (Alesya Dobysch) of the purpose and intent of this work I practiced accountability in publishing transcriptions of their own words and experiences. The participants were asked to review what I had transcribed to make sure I had understood them correctly. All afore mentioned participants have agreed to participate in this project of their own free will and given their consent to be named and credited for their artistic contribution. Participants were also informed that they have the right to withdraw from the study whenever they want without any consequences. This research was conducted in accordance with “The Finnish Code of Conduct for Research Integrity and Procedures for Handling Alleged Violations of Research Integrity in Finland”, also following the “Guideline of the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity TENK 2023”. (TENK, 2023).

Signed consent forms for each collaborator have been archived and can be found in the appendix.

Positionality

While diving into the realm of autoethnographic artistic research approach I emphasize that all I have written in this study is solely based on my own views and perspective. I have no

intention of speaking for anyone one else regarding similar multidisciplinary experiences. I fully recognize that I come from immense privilege having had the opportunity to study within such a fine institution as the Sibelius Academy's Global Music department, who have made possible the participation in a workshop in the Netherlands for my field trip and supporting my endeavours in exploring my multifaceted artistic identity. The fact that I draw inspiration from and get to work with dances originating from a culture I wasn't born into, yet have had the possibility to learn from, participate in and even benefit from in a myriad of ways, is also a huge privilege and I aim not to take for granted all that hip hop- and house dance -culture, and the opportunities the Global Music department, has given me.

CHAPTER 3: FINDINGS – FROM MOVEMENT TO MUSIC

3.1 Motion Laboratory & Something Like This

3.1.1 Motion Laboratory

With the intent to understand my dance and how it impacts me as a musician I decided to participate in “Motion Laboratory”: a two-day intensive course with teachers from various backgrounds, each one sharing their knowledge, approach to and perspective on dance and movement. The course was organised in the city of Eindhoven, the Netherlands, by Dutch-based dancer, choreographer, and curator Alesya Dobysch. Alesya is an internationally recognised dancer and choreographer with a special love for House dance culture and is known for experimenting with and fusing subcultural backgrounds and unconventional forms of expression with performance art, theatre, visual art, and sound art. Alesya is also a wonderful teacher and I have participated in her house workshops when she has been teaching in Finland.

Originally, I reached out to her on Instagram in the beginning of the year 2023 to ask her if she herself was to teach workshops somewhere in Europe and then she told me of the two-day intensive dance course she was going to organise.

During the two-day intensive course, we were to learn from four different dancers and teachers: a Butoh dancer/teacher, a contemporary dancer/choreographer and two street dancers/teachers. We were approximately 30 – 40 dancers participating in the two-day workshop, though some of the participants changed during the two days even if the amount of people in total remained the same per day. Most of the participants seemed to be Dutch or Dutch-based and were either working as professional dancers or hobbyists. I was a bit nervous attending the course since I had never really experienced an intensive course like this one but despite that and not knowing anybody in the course, apart from Alesya, I felt very welcomed and soon became comfortable dancing with and in front of all who were there.

Next, instead of expanding on what we did with all the four teachers, I will focus on the classes and courses that influenced my master concert the most.

Day 1, 13th of May 2023

Manuel Rodriguez

Manuel Rodriguez talked about his previous work as a contemporary dancer and choreographer, sharing themes that have inspired and concerned him during the last years. For instance, in his work “Entertainment” Manuel approach’s themes regarding identity, contemplative states and border space.

During the two-hour session we focused on an improvisational tool and exercise he had used in the creative process of this work which he called the ‘Points System’.



Figure 3. Manuel Rodriguez 'Points System' in Motion Laboratory workshop, May 2023.

The concept was that our bodies are made up from four points in our joints that want to move from one place to another in different ways varying in speed, energy, size, and quality. The task was to imagine the points in the space both within, around and outside of our physical bodies and then using different body isolations³ to explore how to move in between the points. The more abstract concept was to think of the routes between the points as portals to new states or ways of being. We alternated with working in silence (without sound/music) and then with sound/music. Some songs were more of a soundscape and others were songs in a variety of styles and genres. It was interesting to see how much the music/sound affected our movement depending on whether there was a specific song or music genre playing or if we were dancing in silence, solely to the sounds of our breath, movement, and physical energy.

To view a small video from the Motion Laboratory workshop of students performing the exercise, click [HERE](#)!

This was one of my favourite classes during the course, if not the favourite of them all. I felt it had a good balance between more abstract concepts to explore as well as physical techniques to use and approach these concepts. Although the task of isolating body parts and manipulating their movements in different ways (which was the technically we were doing), isn't new to me as a street dancer and dance teacher, I really enjoyed digging deeper into the concepts from Manuel's perspective, staying committed to the path you chose and once you arrive to a certain point/state you become something new. I noticed how important the notion of directing my perception with intention consciously (S. Fraleigh et al., 2015) became while performing this exercise, as my mind would start wondering off and start evaluating the physical movements I was enacting if I wasn't mindful about it. It was also interesting to notice how the exercise and my performance was in relation with everyone else in the space,

³ a technique where some body parts move while others either remain still or contrast the movement in terms of direction or rhythm.

I was receiving sensory information from the environment as they changed and thus my experience changed (ibid.).

At the very end of the day, we summed up all we had learned from both Manuel's and Kallis classes through freestyle exercises curated by Alesya. We were paired with a partner, dancing in turns and after a small period switching partners. This lasted for about an hour and was a nice way to process and share what we had learned both for ourselves but also with each other.

Day 2 (Sunday the 14th)

Imre Thormann



Figure 4. Imre Thormann's 'Butoh' class in Motion Laboratory workshop, May 2023.

On Sunday the schedule changed a bit from the original plan as the day started with Imre Thormann's four-hour class and lecture on the modern dance style and philosophy called Butoh⁴. We started the class at 10 am in the morning by "learning how to walk" - purposefully dropping our weight to the outer sole of the foot and rising as the weight shifted to the inner sole, trying to find a natural balance of moving consciously around the space.

While we were walking around the space performing the exercise, Imre was guiding us, alternating between giving specific

⁴ A form of dance theatre originating from Japan after the 2nd World War in protest of Western materialism by the founder Hijikata Tatsumi (S. H. Fraleigh, 2010)

instructions on the physicality of the movement and the more philosophical aspect. He would utter phrases like:

** Every step you take you are falling into the unknown*

** Every step you take you leave your standpoint forever; you leave who you are at that moment*

** Walking is the question, standing is the answer*

The underlying ideas and concepts were that when you are walking you are leaving the old behind and becoming something new. The concept of time was also incorporated in the exercise as we were to imagine a sort of ancestral lineage, dating billions of years ago from the beginning of time, observing the world through our eyes.

After we had been walking for about two hours the next phase was to “learn how to stand”. Using the same technique of dropping and building our weight up in a continuous flow we were undergoing, in Imre’s words, a sort of *Metamorphosis*, a slow transitive and continuing change (S. H. Fraleigh, 2010), served as an overall theme for Imre’s workshop as we were guided to destroy what we were doing and what we are in order to be reborn.

To view a video from the Motion Laboratory workshop of students performing the Metamorphosis -exercises from ‘Butoh’, click [HERE!](#)

Imre had a somatic approach to his teaching, which is a common component in the teachings of Butoh, as he would activate and direct our attention as students throughout the entire learning process (Eddy, 2009, p. 9). Mental images such as “Walking is the question, standing is the answer” and “I/We weight, therefore I/we are” were uttered like mantras by Imre and we were guided to feel the strain of the new awakening from the old, feel it in and

express it through our skin, spine, chest and arms, the whole body - in a constant cycle of transformation.

After the last class we again paired up with a dance partner like we did the previous day to revisit and explore the themes from both Imre's and Simon's classes. This time, however, we had the pleasure of dancing to live music and sound by musician and sound designer Max Frimout, who would improvise music through his synthesisers according to how we dance. The music consisted of synthesised sounds, textures, and rhythms which he created in both reaction to our movement but also as his own interpretation of the movement tasks we were asked to improvise with. All music was improvised and created in the moment.

At the end of the day the two last lecturers, Liza Kardani (representing the contemporary dance scene) and Andrey Grehov (representing the street dance scene), shared their knowledge about the history of both dance styles during the last century, discussing their growth separately and finding common ground between them. The first hour was in the form of a lecture and afterwards the discussion was opened up to the students where we contemplated on the future of the dance styles, particularly the direction of hip hop dance culture and how to move forward without disrespecting its origins and cultural heritage.

3.1.2 Something Like This

“Something like this”, which I will be referring to as “SLT” later on, is a piece choreographed by Sonya Lindfors and the working group together with Zodiak, a contemporary dance production house and venue who functioned as the producer of the project in 2023. This work was produced through Zodiak's ‘Zodiak Youth project’, aimed for young audiences. The performance brought the stage and hip hop-culture together through four street dance performers with diverse backgrounds and unique stories to share.



Figure 5. 'Something Like This' dance piece by Sonya Lindfors and Zodiac, 2023. Dancers (from the left); Linda Ilves, Akim Bakthaoui, Ramona Panula, Sophia Wekesa and Selma Fikherte Kauppinen. Photo: Tuukka Ervasti.

My journey with this project began in February 2023 when dancer, choreographer and activist Sonya Lindfors asked me to be one of the performers in her upcoming work. The dance piece was to go on tour around the capital area of Helsinki, performing in different venues such as theatre houses and concert halls during 2023 and 2024.

It had been a while since I had been working as a professional dancer and first time having been asked to be in a production produced by Zodiac. I felt very honoured for the consideration and accepted the offer.

THE PROJECT

The project was set up in two residencies: one in June 2023 and the other in July/August 2023. After the residencies the working group would tour with the piece around the capital area for two months in total but split into two time periods, the first month being during September and October of 2023 and the second month during January and February in 2024.

The first residency lasted for a period of two weeks, from the 5th of June until the 15th of June 2023. Zodiak provided the space for our residency in their facilities in Kaapelitehdas⁵, Helsinki. The group consisted of four street dancers: Akim Bakhtaoui, Ramona Panula, Sophia Wekesa and me, lighting designer Erno Aaltonen, sound designer Sebastian Kurtén, producer Elina Ruoho-Kurola (Zodiak) and choreographer Sonya Lindfors. Most of the artists in the group were familiar to me from either having worked together on a previous project or from being a part of the street dance culture in Finland, which is a pretty small scene.

During the first residency we got acquainted with one another within the working group, establishing the ground rules for working together and discussed what methods, tools, and themes we would be working with during the process. We explored with improvisational tools and exercises from the context of both contemporary dance and street dance culture/hip hop culture, shifting from movement-based techniques to stage performance techniques.

Some examples:

1. **Stage and Performance techniques:** activating your gaze, exploring what ‘charisma’ means in terms of presence and movement, being present vs non-present etc.
2. **Movement-based exercises:** HOT SEAT (first dancer answering questions from the audience and the second mimicking either supporting or contrasting movement with the first dancers’ hands simultaneously), Flocking (group movement working like a flock of birds/animals, synchronised movement), contact improvisation in pairs or the whole group, physically enacting either fictional or non-fictional characters or objects through dance and movement, somatic movement approaches etc.
3. **Speech techniques:** coming up with small monologues, narrating another dancer’s dance and movement whether by leading or following their improvisation, talking, or singing while dancing etc.

While exploring these different ways of expression and many more movement and dance exercises we would also reflect on and verbally communicate amongst each other what it was that we felt, observed, and thought about what we were doing. We would discuss how the

⁵ A building/complex of building built between the years 1939 and 1954 in three stages, housing a lot of creative spaces for different culture and arts use and -organizations.

things we are doing and experiencing as dancers and as a group connect to street dance- and hip hop-culture. Themes and discussions on societal issues such as anti-racism, feminism, artistic identity, and safer space -policies were present throughout the residency as well as the question regarding our own personal identity, our stories, and dreams.

The second residency lasted five weeks and began on the 31st of July until the premiere, which took place on Zodiak's stage in Kaapelitehdas on the 30th of August 2023.

The first week was similar to the previous residency as we mostly revisited the tools and exercises we had been working with during the first residency. During the following weeks, however, our work centred around collecting and framing what we had been exploring into a 45-minute dance piece. Ultimately the work resulted in a piece where each one of us reflected on questions and themes like:

- Why do I dance?
- Dance helps me connect with my emotions.
- Through dance I can be anything and anyone, even myself.
- Dance gives me a sense of community and belonging.



Figure 6. 'Something Like This' rehearsal, Zodiak 2023. Photo: Tuukka Ervasti.

After the premiere we had a one-week vacation and then set out for our first tour which lasted from the 11th of September to the 15th of October 2023. For approximately four weeks we toured around Helsinki city region in different concert halls where different schools would come to see our performance free of charge. We would acquaint ourselves with the venue the day before for a few hours, rehearsing the piece on the stage and the next day we would perform it. Our performances were usually during the morning or day, two performances a day and the age of the students ranged from 8 years to 18 years old. All in all, we would have approx. 3-5 shows per week. There were also a few performances in the evening which were

open to the public. The performance could be booked for a workshop, curated by any or all of us four dancers, to teach students about the dances we do and about hip hop-culture. Sadly, not many schools seized the opportunity for this even if it was free for them to attend the workshop. The second tour was from the 15th of January until the 15th of February and had a similar structure to the first one.

It was amazing to see the reactions of the young students, from every individual spectator to the full audience connecting with the piece, dancers, and our stories personally and in different ways. It felt like our relaxed, warm, and sincere presence on stage allowed the audience to also be themselves, to just relax and enjoy and be a part of our performance. The audience was encouraged to express themselves freely in terms of laughing, clapping, singing, and dancing if they felt like it. And sometimes they did - some kids even got up on stage to dance with us!



Figure 7. "SLT", Zodiak stage, 2023. Photo: Tuukka Ervasti.

An important aspect of the performance is bringing a diverse cultural representation on stage, through both the piece but also through the individual performers. To this day, stages and spaces reserved for art are still conveying pre-dominantly white bodies and narratives. For instance, Walker writes in her article: *"The inadequacy of existing dance narratives can be*

traced back to the historical hierarchy identifying dance produced by Whites as art and dance produced by Blacks as folk.” (Walker, 2020, p. 164). In this article she primarily discusses the narrative-question from the perspective of dance education reformations in the U.S but also as a general question of representation in the art of dance on a global scale.

Being a part of this performance has taught me a great deal about societal structures, about my own position and privileges in these cultural contexts and the experience keeps broadening my perspective and understanding every day.

3.2 My Master Concert: 3 case studies

3.2.1 Embodied: a solo piece

This piece embodies many aspects from both previous mentioned projects: from the music and its ambience to the way I chose to be on stage as it played out. It is a piece based on specific improvisational movement practices, conversations about identity and autonomy and the boundaries between oneself and others, and ultimately daring to take up space just as you are. It also touches on hip hop-, street dance- and club culture, as my dance and movement technique and knowledge stems from these cultures.



Figure 8. 'Embodied' piece from my master concert Dec 2023, Black box, Music Centre. Photo: Mikko Malmivaara.

Butoh and the Points System

The very first influence for this solo came from the Butoh class I attended in Eindhoven. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the umbrella -theme for the class had been Metamorphosis, touching on themes such as weight vs weightlessness, the strain and crackle

of bones in the constant cycle of rebirth, swimming in an ocean of time with our ancestral lineage looking through our eyes and destroying the old to become something new and so on.

The second class that influenced my solo was Manuel Rodriguez' Points System, which I expanded on in chapter one. The concept was fixing four points in our selected joints in the body (for instance the elbow or the knee) that we would move in different directions and ways both within and outside our bodies, varying in quality, speed, size, and energy of the movement.

These two classes resonated with me in the sense that both centred around the structure of our whole selves both physically and mentally, digging deeper into our bones and fluids, shifting from physically trying to manipulate the movement to just listening to how the body and mind wants to be on a more abstract note.

When I came back home to Finland after the intensive course in May 2023, I felt the need to process what I had experienced that weekend. I wrote down the exercises and thoughts that resonated the most within me from the courses and that I wanted to explore further on my own:

Bones in the ocean...

Your whole ancestral past looking through your eyes...

The inevitable yet unpredictable cycle of death and rebirth...

Resilience, strain, floating...

Moving the joints...

I soon noticed that what connected the concept of movement to my emotions, thoughts, sensations, and feelings was the notion of time, direction, and movement in space - to be explored in different ways in my dance and to be transferred into music composition. I wanted to create the notion of "moving" in the music as I felt the movement inside me. As Carroll and Moore write in their article:

“...we often describe the musical structures we hear as expressive of feelings of movement, as if we detect those movements in the music the same way we detect the movements of the tide in the ocean. These feelings can systematically be traced to central features of the music itself. Music may not move spatially in any literal sense, but it does have sonic contours that are easily understood through spatial analogues, be they rising and falling melodic lines or jagged and smooth rhythmic motives.”
(Carroll and Moore, 2008, p. 417).

They expand further on the concept of time and the sense of moving in a certain direction:

“Music is said to “unfold” or “progress,” capturing the idea that part of the essence of music is that it travels through time. We talk of time flying, dragging, and marching, just as we talk of musical notes doing these same things through time. In fact, given the close relationship between music and time, it is quite possible that the reason we perceive music as moving is because it progresses through time, and we perceive time as moving” (ibid.).

I would book an empty dance studio and try and connect to the themes and exercises, alternating the using of music/sound and not. Soon I realised I didn't want to be impacted by music of others so quite quickly I created a soundscape of my own to rehearse to. It became a feedback -system (as I mentioned earlier in Chapter 2):

- I would explore the tasks and theme with the whole body.
- Go home and recreate those sensations and thoughts to sounds and music that I felt resonated with them.
- Explore the movement again alternating between silence and the soundscape I had created and filmed it.
- Go home and adjust or re-create music to better serve the initial thoughts and sensations.
- Dance again in silence and to the music.

To see a video of me performing the ‘Points System’ -exercise to my own soundscape, click [HERE!](#)

The above-mentioned themes, metaphors and exercises led to the use of specific sounds, melodies, harmonies, and textures:

- Low, muffled frequencies with unpredictable but cyclical/looping movement in the bass to portray the physical sensations in my muscles and my skin as they fore-go “the cycle of transformation”.
- Recording sounds made with my body, for ex. my breath and fingers snapping, which were modulated, mixed, and added with additional synthesised sounds to sound like “joints moving and crackling”.
- Making the piece sound like an endless abyss through panning and a large/long reverb, which resonates with the phrase “bones in the ocean”.
- The choice of instrument for the harmony became a synth that modifies a pianos sound into reverse, so that it gives a distorted and distant sense of time which speaks to the idea that a whole ancestral lineage is looking at and observing the world through my eyes, through my lived body. The base of the harmony was a major triad⁶ with an added ninth note that shifted between being a perfect nine, flat nine or augmented nine as the music chords progressed.

For a video of me doing the ‘Butoh’ -exercise *Metamorphosis* to my own soundscape, click [HERE](#)!

In the end I decided to change the soundscape *for these reasons*:

- Since the solo evolved into a duet with the percussionist João Luis, we felt it would be interesting to have him enact the rhythmic details of “bones crackling” on top of the soundscape and so I left out the rhythmical elements from the pre-recorded soundscape and left the space for him to create the rhythms instead.

⁶ A chord that has a root, a major third and a perfect fifth note which, when played together, create harmony in major.

- As I started writing the text I noticed that my original choice of harmony gave the piece too much of a menacing quality, which was in contradiction to what I wanted to express. This is why I changed the harmony, which you can hear on the rehearsal video later in this chapter. It is also the version of the music you can hear in the master concert video, also further along this chapter. The new harmony expresses, in my opinion, a more soft and hopeful quality to it with the chords alternating between a major 9- and a dominant 9 chord with “some added spices” in between, despite the bass heavy sounds alongside it.
- To create an image of being in a club, I added a house drum loop in the beginning of the track.
- I also recorded myself citing a poem, which I will discuss more in the next section.

Much of the sound texture and musical elements were inspired by and directly connected to both Imre’s and Manuel’s classes in the Netherlands.

However, the text and movement were inspired by the choreographed piece “SLT”.



Figure 9. 'Embodied' piece from my master concert Dec 2023, Black box, Music Centre. Photo: Mikko Malmivaara.

Identity and freedom

“Hello

Welcome to Linda’s dance moment

Thank you for calling

*I am not available at this moment - I
have to dance*

*It has been a while for me to truly
connect with my body*

I may or may not message you back

*You can, however, leave a message
after the - * beep/arpeggio sound **

I would like to dance with my eyes closed

Eyes open

Looking or not looking

Seeing or not seeing

But I will try and connect: to the space,

to my feelings... to my body

This is my body

This is me

You are not me

You are not my body

You cannot tell me of my body

You cannot tell me my story for me - only I can do that

I can try and be honest... that's hard

Sometimes

And other times it really is not

It is like the universe expands when I connect

To my body, to the dance to the culture, to the movement

I am with others by myself

We are by ourselves together

This is... personal

It is also impersonal

It is social

It is for me with you - sharing at its best

It is also me at my most vulnerable... or so I try to make it

And I let you watch me, see me

At my most vulnerable, grimy, angry, silly, in love, friendly, deceiving self

I am everything, all of these things... and just me”

- Linda Ilves, 2023

As mentioned before, in “SLT”, we also experimented and explored our artistic expression through different movement -based improvisational tasks, alternating with more abstract concepts to very tangible, physical exercises. But what ultimately had a long lasting and deep impact on the text for my solo piece were the conversations we would have about both personal and social identities. We talked about feminist and anti-racist policies within society and our working environment, about what privileges we have and don’t have, what we let others see and what we hide... even from ourselves. We talked about the importance of boundaries, expressed desires within dance and life to get closer to both ourselves as well as each other as a collective. This was the foundation on which the piece, “SLT”, was ultimately built on.

Working so intimately and intensely with the same group members both mentally and physically for many weeks in a row to the point of exhaustion exposed us to a vulnerability and honesty not only towards the dance piece itself but to new friendships and perspectives on life and art - to a very personal creative process for me as an artist.



Figure 10. 'Something Like This' performance, Zodiac 2023. Photo: Tuukka Ervasti.

In the “SLT” -piece each of us had a dance solo that reflected our personal journeys on becoming a dancer/artist. My solo is about finding the freedom to be just as I am and not lose myself in other people’s expectations or views of me, setting boundaries in order to express myself honestly and authentically. In “SLT”, my solo is staged as if we were in a nightclub. In the scene I share, with the audience, the memory of being in a nightclub for the very first time with my big sister. I recall dancing to house music all sweaty and feeling the freedom of expressing who and how I was in the darkness – being in my own zone but still together with everyone there. The scene turns into a dance momentum, alternating between freestyle dance solos and house dance -routines by all of us four dancers. It is an energetic spectacle, to say the least!

In my solo, Embodied, the energy is very different, but the intent is somewhat the same. I wanted to re-create the solo from “SLT” but with a different energy and a slightly more introspective perspective. The text emerged a month after our first tour with “SLT” was over, on a day when I had just been in the dance studio revisiting the exercises, concepts, and conversations we had been working on in the project. I sat down in front of my computer, not really knowing what I was going to do or what was going to come out, but I instinctively decided to record myself talking and reflecting.

The text, as written in the beginning of this section, just flowed out of me in one take. I hadn't written anything down nor structured any specific theme beforehand... I just had a feeling that needed to come out. It was like my body started talking and my mind was observing the happening, "along for the ride". It was only after all was recorded that I realised what I had said. Without editing the content of the recording, I then started creating the sound scape mentioned in the previous partition.

To view a video of me rehearsing my solo piece 'Embodied', click [HERE!](#)

The choice to have 50% of my natural voice on the recording and the other 50% pitched a little bit lower was to purposefully create a sort of barrier between the audience and 'the dancing body' on stage. I start the text with a lighter and slightly "comic" mood, but as the text advances the mood changes into something more serious and vulnerable. The image I wanted to create was a sort of snow globe, inside which I was dancing and narrating while the audience is looking from the outside in - like how my mind seemed to look inside from the outside as my body gave birth to the text. The solo was an experiment in and exploration on me setting boundaries and wanting to be free in front of the gaze of others.

In terms of movement technique and choreography I didn't want to structure or pre-determine too much – the aim was to create a space and frame in which I could be free to do whatever I want. However, there were some moments that essentially became choreographed due to the amount of practice and rehearsing to the audio recording, such as me emphasising certain rhythms or words in the music with a physical pose or stance.

A tool I found to be useful both in terms of how to be in the space, on stage in front of others and to confront the audience was the use of my gaze. As mentioned earlier we had practiced different performance-based techniques during our residency of "SLT" and one of them was about actively using the eyes to look around the space, to really see people around you.

Another exercise I utilized in the performance was intentionally altering the amount in which I was present in the moment, for ex. being 20% present vs being 80% present and exploring how that feels in front of the audience. It was a tool I came to use not only during my solo

piece but throughout my concert. It helped me clarify and deepen my intentions towards singing, playing, communicating, and dancing.

To view the solo from my master concert, click [HERE!](#)

3.2.2 Sharing Stories: a duet with a percussionist

This duet served as an experiment in which I wanted to involve another musician to explore how movement impacts and/or affects one's musical expression.

The duet was both an evolution from my solo piece Embodied and a variation of my solo from the dance piece "SLT". It was about two people being by themselves, together - like in a nightclub. Making music, movement, and something in between both together and separately.

It was about taking space, both on your own terms as well as trying to sense the other,

become one with the other. During rehearsals João and I created a loose structure that framed our

movement and musical expression for the piece, which we then

alternated in exploring both

separately and together. A similar experiment was shared on the stage

of my master concert where, at

times, João would play some

rhythmical pattern that inspired a certain type of movement and the

other way around: my body being a sort of musical instrument for him to join, support or

ignore. This type of multidisciplinary engagement is nothing new and the tradition stems

from way back in history rooted in different indigenous cultures worldwide where music is

made by both the dancer and the drummer together. In some African languages there is no



Figure 11. 'Sharing Stories' duet from my master concert, Dec 2023.

Photo: Mikko Malmivaara.

separate word describing the movement to music, such as “dance”, because music and dance are so intertwined (Green, D. 2018).

The inspiration for this duet also came from a desire to share my experience from a more multidisciplinary perspective with someone else and so I asked João to work with me. I had a feeling that he would be open to the idea of crossing the boundaries of “just playing his instrument” but also being the instrument, being in and with the music through the whole body. He was open to it and accepted the invitation to create the duet together.

During rehearsals we would implement some of the movement- and performance-based tasks I had been working with from the previous projects. In this sense, especially during the first rehearsal we had, I briefly took on the role of a teacher as I would present and suggest certain exercises (in which I had a bit more experience coming from the world of dance) that we could explore together. We experimented with activating the eyes and gaze to clarify our intentions and practicing light contact improvisational tasks while he played his *bombo lleguero* -drum. We focused on listening and hearing each other, sensing each other in the space when not seeing each other: feeling the breath, the tension and sound of the movements. We created rhythms together that we would either support, contrast or ignore.

To view a video of João and me rehearsing our duet for the concert, click [HERE!](#)

In the video above João was manipulating the sounds of the drum himself and was therefore constricted regarding moving in the space with me. Later, however, he would explore carrying the drum with him to join me in dance, hoping and assuming that there would be a way he could do it in the concert as well. Ultimately, this was possible in the concert, and we ended up having the sound technician helping us with modifying the sound of the drum. As João puts it:

“...I had no control of my instrument. It was something that happened on that day, so that was better, actually, because I didn’t have to think about it! ...I didn’t have to control, myself, the delay, or like the technical part that would be added to my bass drum. So that freed me a lot, working with you, and then it was super nice, because I

could just be with my instrument and with you.” (interview with João Luis, March 28th, 2024)



Figure 12. "Sharing Stories", duet with João and Linda, 2023. Photo: Mikko Malmivaara.

In some ways, for me, being on stage with João was like being in a house dance -club: two people sharing the space within a circle of other people; dancing, feeling the energy, vibe, mood, and groove of one another while either complementing, adding, or sustaining the mutual dialogue with our own vocabulary. It creates a special way of sensing the other. In his book **'Do You Remember House?'** (Salkind, 2019, p. 228), Micah writes about a special kind of sensing and mentions Moten and Harney calling this quality "hapticality": *"a way of feeling through others, a feel for feeling others feeling you"* (Harney & Moten, n.d.), which resonates with my personal experience both in the club and on stage with this performance.

I feel, in essence, our performance was musicking. It was not only João and I creating the music performance but everyone else around us as well (Small, 1998, p.9). A similar notion on this matter in João's own words:

"...Everybody was feeding each other! It's like there wasn't... you were feeding me, I was feeding the audience, and the audience was feeding - it was this constant, like, synergetic thing happening there. Because a movement of mine would react on a shout from the audience, you could be reacting to that, or vice versa - exactly the

opposite, that I was being triggered by the shouts of the audience and you would be triggered by my playing” (interview with João Luis, March 28th, 2024).

I enjoyed working and exploring with João, although there was sadly not much time for us to rehearse. Then again, maybe it was for the better, allowing us to take in all the music with an open mind and being surprised by whatever happens on stage.

To view our duet from the concert, click [HERE!](#)

3.2.3 Words: a duet with a dancer

Finally, I will reflect on and analyse the outcome of the final piece entitled “Words”.

This piece is an excerpt, a scene, from the choreographed dance piece “SLT” and originally performed by dance artists Akim Bakhtaoui and Ramona Panula to music which music producer/sound designer Sebastian Kurtèn composed, and I wrote the lyrics to. As my



Figure 13. 'Something Like This', Akim and Ramona, Zodiac 2023. Photo: Tuukka Ervasti.

creative process was unfolding for the master concert, I realised this piece felt needed in my master concert and so I asked and got permission from the working group to perform a version of it during my concert. However, instead of Akim joining Ramona on stage for the duet I performed both the part of the singer and the dancer.

The concept of movement and dance for this scene originated from Ramona, Akim and Sonya as a continuum from Ramona’s solo. I asked her (Ramona) what meaning the duet had

for her and what sensations and thoughts it brought up during the creative process. She answered in written form:

“Firstly, the duet started as a tool for me to find a common ground for our friendship and trust with my duo partner and trying to be comfortable in contact impro.

Secondly, it was a continuation to my solo, where I tried to figure out what I am feeling, and how I would like to dance. Thirdly, I think for me it became a reflection of the creation process of ‘Something like this’ where I tried to always push myself to become comfortable with things first felt scary and uncomfortable.” (interview with Ramona Panula, March 31st, 2024).

While Ramona and Akim were in the middle of the creative process of their duet, I and Sebastian were to compose music for the solo (of Ramona) and the duet. As Sebastian set out to explore the sounds and texture for the scene, I started my process of writing lyrics that would ultimately end up on the back track itself but also be performed live, both in the original dance piece as well as in my master concert.



Figure 14. "Words", excerpt from my concert, Ramona's solo, 2023.
Photo: Mikko Malmivaara.

The lyrics are inspired by discussions had with and shared by Ramona and Akim during the making of the duet but as a sort of compilation of themes that we'd been discussing and reflecting on throughout the creative process of "SLT":

I can't seem to find the right words

I stutter under breath, hide under the bed

Where is it you end and I begin?

Searching for the border

Where is it I stand?

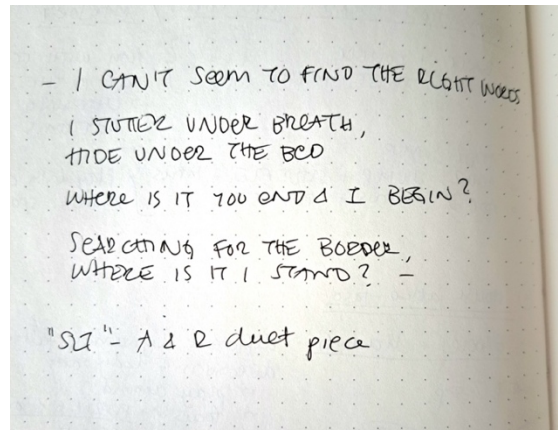


Figure 15. Journal entry for 'Words' lyrics, August 2023.

Aside from having created the lyrics for the music and, at least partially, adding to the narrative of the solo and duet I also got to experience the movement and dance-based narration as we rehearsed and framed the duet with Ramona for the two of us.

During rehearsals we would warm up with contact improvisation -exercises, navigating and listening to each other's bodies as we altered the speed, quality, and energy of movement.

It wasn't, however, just about the physicality of the movement but a more somatic approach to the whole exercise that we applied, focusing on the person as a whole with strong intent of understanding ourselves and each other (S. Fraleigh et al., 2015, p.23).

Another warmup exercise was to verbally narrate the other persons movement and dance through mental images, whether by leading the narrative or supporting the dancer as they take the lead through their own movement. Also adding speech and sounds with your body was a way to include your whole self in the creative process, opening the whole creative register to be used freely.

Although the duet contains elements of contemporary dance and its approaches on dance and movement, it must be said that the performance itself hinges on street dance- and hip hop - culture. As dancers basing our movement technique and knowledge on street dances and the culture of hip hop, our main intent was on communicating with one another with our bodies, or as DeFrantz puts it: "...talking by dancing over talking about dancing" (DeFrantz, p. 4). He elaborates further on the topic in his paper about black social dances and hip hop dance,

originating from the African diaspora, discussing the term *Corporeal Orature*⁷, which he describes: “*aligns movement with speech to describe the ability of black social dance to incite action. In this articulation, social dance may contain performative gestures which cite*



Figure 16. 'Words' duet by Ramona Panula (behind) and Linda Ilves (in front) for my master concert, Dec 2023. Photo: Mikko Malmivaara.

contexts beyond the dance.” (ibid.) This meaning that while we move, dance, and communicate within the world of street dance and hip hop culture we do so with the understanding and knowledge of the cultural and societal context of these dances and with the intent to honour and respect it.

The music and lyrics manifested in me from a different perspective now that I wasn't just singing the song but also dancing it. In this musicking, I felt as if I became the song: my body had taken a hold of the music and the music had taken a hold of my body, merging as one. When I was dancing with Ramona, moving with and in the space with everyone, I expressed my whole self through more than

mere physical movement but through embodied gestures containing messages and residue of all the facets of me to anyone who is open to experience them and understand them.

To view the duet from the concert, click [HERE!](#)

⁷ A term coined by Kenyan author and academic, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, introducing the concept in his book "Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature", published in 1986.

3.3 Summary of the findings:

Revisiting the research question framing this study, “How does dance and movement influence my artistic and pedagogical musicking processes?”, I find it influences me a great deal, and in a myriad of ways, in how I approach music as an art form. It influences the way I approach and do music in terms of performance, collaboration and composition but also how I connect and communicate with other artists, both verbally and non-verbally.

In the beginning of my journey conducting this artistic research, I had some preconceived notions to what benefits movement and dance may have on my creative output as a musician and composer. For instance, I assumed I might have gained a deeper connection to and a more embodied sense of rhythm due to street dance styles, such as hip hop and house, which rest heavily on the rhythms and pulse of the music. I concur that I do feel my sense of rhythm has strengthened during this research process, both in relation to how I use rhythms while composing and making music but also in how I hear and listen to the rhythms and pulse of the music, other musicians, and dancers around me. Another preconceived notion I had, which could be confirmed as a strength/benefit throughout the creative process of the research, was that having been immersed in the art form of dance I gained a wider range of musical expression on stage. One example could be exploring how to express different emotions through body movement – both in terms of performance but also through more somatic approaches, i.e. reflecting and observing how certain emotions and thoughts affect the way your body reacts and naturally wants to move.

New findings were a stronger sense of “spacial awareness” in terms of how my body and my music takes up space: in the space with others, the context of how and why one takes up space (i.e. for what reason, for what purpose). Also, how the movement of both music and dance are felt and perceived so similar. As Carroll and Moore expand:

“...the feelings of movement of which the sonic profiles of music are expressive, recall that the dancer can move slowly, lightly, hurriedly, carefully, smoothly, softly, weakly, forcefully, flowingly, hesitantly, firmly, tensely, quickly, abruptly, gradually, tightly, jerkily, nervously, urgently, and evenly, where all of these movement qualities, and more, can echo, underscore, enhance, or contrastively modify the movement impulses manifest in the music.” (Carroll and Moore, 2008, p. 427).

And probably the biggest “finding” for me, personally, was that there already exists a term for all the things I embody and do within my artistic expression: musicking (see Small, 1998). As I eluded in the very beginning of this written work, I have always felt like “the odd one out” when it comes to being a musician; that because of having been immersed in another art form, with an equal amount of ambition, makes me less of a musician. It resonates with me, musicking, not only because it incorporates the art forms, I love but for the deeper notion of things not being binary, i.e. divided into two categories or extremes. It encompasses a holistic sense of “music is this *and* this...” rather than “music is this *or* this...”, which is a view I welcome not only in the arts but in life in general. The combination and connection with dance and music within me makes me feel whole, and thus all I create within a musical context is somehow influenced by dance, whether by tangible concepts like rhythm and movement or by more abstract notions like spacial awareness.

CHAPTER 4: PEDAGOGICAL ANGLE

4.1 My aspirations as a music teacher

As a teacher I am keen on exploring how I could implement movement- and performance-based concepts and exercises into my own methods as a music- and singing teacher.

In my interview with João Luis he implied not having been introduced to the ideas and methods I brought forth during our rehearsals and collaboration so much before when we started. However, while conducting this interview João was participating in a multidisciplinary residency with dancers and actors in Portugal, where he was exposed to similar creative exercises and music compositional thoughts and processes, to which he refers in the transcribed section written below when mentioning “... working on my body...”:

*“...I was thinking about something when you were talking about, uh...that you are looking for the movement of the composition. I have much bigger difficulty to think about that when we started. But I have to tell you I’ve been two and a half weeks working on my body now and there’s a lot of... and I, I can totally see it now *laughs* It’s like, it didn’t*

make any sense, and I was like “Can you explain me that...?”. So, there was a thing of, uh, like how can your shape, like, the way that you move can introduce compositional thoughts or structures or creative content... stuff like that. We are just not exposed to that.” (interview with João Luis, March 28th, 2024).

As I mentioned earlier in this research, the Sibelius Academy’s Music Education department, as well as the Global Music department, implement whole body -learning through methods such as Dalcroze’s Eurhythmics. Here is an example of an exercise we did in a course from the Music Education department two years ago, which was about utilizing different tools for communication and interactions with music and movement. This video is not from the course itself but is essentially the same exercise:

Dalcroze Eurhythmics Stopping-Starting Quick Reaction with Greg Ristow

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zsROX7pQdZM&t=2s>

I would like to incorporate something like the exercise above into my own teaching methods, involving the whole body while making art, making music. When I participated in this kind of exercise myself during my studies at the Sibelius Academy I noticed, however, that most students don’t attend courses which implement multidisciplinary methods in teaching music unless they themselves are to be teachers one day. Juntunen, for instance, encourages educators and educational authorities to *“be alarmed that the bodily experiences of today’s students are only two-dimensional for the most part, that most often only the visual sense is activated, and that overall bodily knowledge is poorly developed.”* (Juntunen, 2004, p. 9). Although this article is about 20 years old, I feel it is an important point to pay attention to even today.

I am not suggesting that all studying music, either as a hobby or to become professional musicians (or something in between), would have mandatory classes in dancing or having to acquire a certain level of skills as a dancer. But perhaps being exposed to alternative ways of

“composing” or musicking from the perspective of another art form, in this case dance, could open a whole new world of ideas of one’s own artistic expression.

During my studies in the Global Music department, I have started planning a workshop that would encompass improvisational tools I have learned as a dancer and performer and modifying them to better suit musicians. As an example of what we would do in this workshop, I would conduct exercises like the one’s mentioned in “Motion Laboratory” or “SLT” and ask the students to describe the sensations and share their thoughts with one another and afterwards improvise or play something on their chosen musical instruments. The workshop would serve as an experiment to see how other musicians experience these movement-based exercises as a tool for their musical expression and whether they could find something that benefits or inspire them.

Moving forward as a multimodal artist and -pedagogue I wish to explore methods and theories on how to connect these art forms into my own teachings even further. I look forward diving into more performance-based exercises that develop dramaturgical thinking and connects different disciplines through a common language (Coldwell & Morgan, 2022). As Coldwell and Morgan expand:

“A conversation that transcends disciplinary boundaries requires a common language (both verbal and non-verbal) to explore how different approaches and conceptual constructs can be applied in non-traditional ways in different disciplines.” (ibid.).

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Discussion on main findings, strengths and limitations

Looking now at my research and the creative process over the past year several thoughts and feelings arise. As mentioned earlier, there have been numerous studies regarding the connection between movement and music within different research fields and as this was my first study within a master’s degree, I soon came to realize I might not be coming up with information or perspectives that haven’t been presented in other studies already. However, I do feel like the strength of this work is that the empirical data and observations are from my

own, individual perspective as a street dancer and professional musician, which makes “the voice” of my writing quite personal and in such it may offer something unique into the research field. For example, as I was collecting and reading journals, articles, and research I didn’t find too many sources which studied the connection between street dance and music making. Most of the sources regarding street dance culture were from a historical, social, and political perspective, discussing history and origins and representation. As Roygardner points out in their dissertation:

“...we have yet to explore, analyze, and unpack the multi-layered meaning of Hip hop dance as a cultural practice and phenomenon, let alone its sequential dance phrases, or isolated dance moves. Hip hop dance as discourse, therefore, acknowledges Hip hop dance as a narrative or language, and seeks to discursively make-meaning of the multimodal symbol system dancers use to choreograph and the cultural milieu, philosophies and cultural practices dancers utilize to develop in dance ciphers, crews, and dance communities.” (Roygardner, p. 42).

This, in the light of how these specific dances influenced my musicking, may explain that there is much yet to be analyzed and discovered. By adding my own personal journey as both a street dancer and a musician into the research conversation perhaps these cultures and dances gain more awareness of what they have to offer. Not being from or of the culture, as I mentioned in chapter 2, I don’t claim any sort of authority or ownership but merely hope to share the knowledge I have gained and present the culture in as honest a light as possible.

A limitation to this study was the lack of time in conducting the research. I feel I could’ve gone even deeper into the key concepts and utilized more of the pre-existing literature and research – both in terms of my own written work but also in support of my creative process for my master concert. Lack of time can mean lack of “in depth” -processing of the concepts you are trying to understand and uncover within your research and may result in having too many references and concepts that only superficially connect to one another, if at all. As Hannula expands, rather humorously: *“...research is not an act of filling the bags, the constant semihysterical including and attaching of a wide variety of interconnected perspectives.”* (Hannula et al., 2014, p. 23). Inexperience can also be considered as a limitation in this research. Doing something for the first time and not really being accustomed

to conceptualizing all the knowledge you are presented with was, at times, very frustrating and confusing: what is valid, what is not, how to make the connection or is there any connection to be made, can I trust my instinct, am I doing this correctly and so on and so on...

All in all, I do feel this process has developed my sense of “making sense” – I enjoyed learning how to manage and frame knowledge using different methods and theories, how and where to search for information and actively questioning my own perspectives and positionality. But most of all, this was a journey deeper inside my own artistic process, artistic identity and I do feel I have a better understanding of how dance influences my musicking.

In terms of future research, I became increasingly curious of the notion of verbal and non-verbal communication within the arts: what do we keep hidden, what do we express knowingly and un-knowingly, and what social and cultural aspects/elements support or uplift our means of communication within the arts. These are thoughts and themes I may want to revisit, expand on and research even further in the future.



Figure 17. Photo: Teemu Matsson, 2022

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APPENDIX: CONSENT FORMS

CONSENT FORM FOR AN INTERVIEW

This form confirms that I give consent for my participation in an interview for the master project by Linda Ilves as part of their master's degree in Global Music, Sibelius Academy, University of the Arts Helsinki.

The central focus of the master project is researching how experiential learning and doing affects our creative output, i.e. how being a dancer affects Linda as a musician and music composer.

The interview will be recorded and transcribed. Information given during the interview will be treated confidentially and it will not be used for any other purpose than the research concerned, and potential presentations or articles related to it. Parts of the interview may be quoted anonymously within the research. The anonymity of the interviewee will be protected, and the research data will be stored securely after the research has been completed. On completion of the project, the recordings and the codes to the interviewees will be destroyed. Transcripts of the interview will be stored securely for up to five years and thereafter destroyed or filed to an archive. The researcher is committed to follow the responsible conduct of research by the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity and the Code of Conduct of the University of the Arts Helsinki.

The interviewer has informed me on the issues above and I agree to participate in the interview and study voluntarily. I can withdraw my consent at any given time by contacting the researcher, Linda Ilves, but the data collected up to the withdrawal may be utilized in the research. In case I have any questions concerning this interview or the research, I can also contact Linda Ilves by e-mail (linda.ilves@uniarts.fi) or phone (+35844 0633393).

In the case of the interview being conducted online, consent is given by replying to this email.

The researcher has provided me with sufficient information on the research and the use of personal data and I have had a chance to ask for details on any issues.

Place and Date

12/05/23

Interviewee Name and Signature

Alesya Dobysh



CONSENT FORM FOR AN INTERVIEW

This form confirms that I give consent for my participation in an interview for the master project by Linda Ilves as part of their master's degree in Global Music, Sibelius Academy, University of the Arts Helsinki.

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In the case of the interview being conducted online, consent is given by replying to this email.

The researcher has provided me with sufficient information on the research and the use of personal data and I have had a chance to ask for details on any issues.

Place and Date

Helsinki 16.05.2024

Interviewee Name and Signature

João Luís Matos Lopes

CONSENT FORM FOR AN INTERVIEW

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The central focus of the master project is researching how experiential learning and doing affects our creative output, i.e. how being a dancer affects Linda as a musician and music composer.

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In the case of the interview being conducted online, consent is given by replying to this email.

The researcher has provided me with sufficient information on the research and the use of personal data and I have had a chance to ask for details on any issues.

Place and Date

Helsinki 02.04.2024

Interviewee Name and Signature