

Flow DOT Research documentation



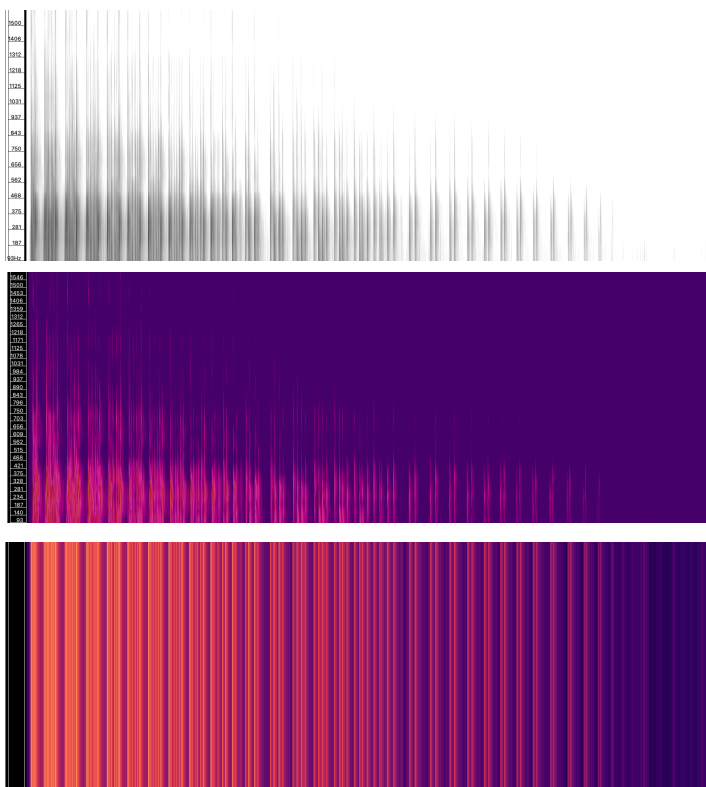
BACKGROUND

'All the movements are hijacked by genre, style, technique and classes. We have to swim through the sea of definition and separation, to arrive at a deeper place where everything has not yet been contaminated.'

The inspiration comes from a charonia tritonis, a kind of big sea snail. When one lays it on a flat surface, give it a tip, it will release repetitive sound patterns that change their length, speed and quality smoothly over time. The Nature (form, weight, size) of the snail and the way of Manipulation (angle, effort) determines the 'performance' together.

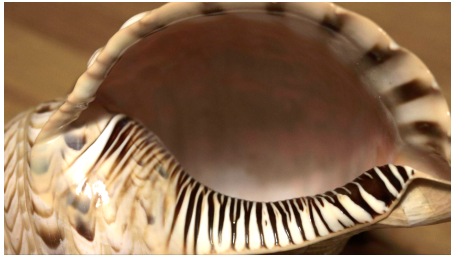
[Hear sound track here](#)

Here are some spectrograms from the sound in vertical and horizontal layout.





As we look closer, the growth of the snail happens also in a repetitive/transformational way. Each stage left a mark, always in the same position, but each mark extended the size of the snail. One can feel the growth of the snail, almost like the sea waves, bit by bit, grooving into new forms and brushing forward to create more.



When we look even closer, the lips of the snail have the same pattern.

The sound track, the graphic of the sound and the appearance of the snail share the same principle of repetition and transformation.

Later on, some other scientific resources came into my intellectual environment, from a notion that 'space and time is not fundamental.' Through a deeper research, I found important writings about this philosophy: *'In a process based philosophy, physical properties, particles, and fields do not have intrinsic being. Rather, they are a process of becoming. Hence, motion, not property, is fundamental. There is no "thing" moving. There is simply moving.*

David Bohm was perhaps the greatest champion of this approach to physics in the 1950s on with his theories of implicate and explicate orders. Moreover, quantum physics contrasts to classical in just this way because nothing is truly separable into distinct entities. Particles are only relatively stable aspects of the underlying structure. Thus, there is no such thing as an external cause to an event. Rather, all events are simply modes of a single structure dynamically reconfiguring itself...

...While this approach to quantum gravity and ultimately solving the problem of where space and time come from is still in work, it offers a powerful alternative to theories in which space time is either fundamental or some underlying intrinsic and independent mechanism is fundamental. Rather all emerges as the result of process. It is the nature of that flux that determines what emerges. ¹

Here are a few very fundamental and crucial elements that triggers my hunger of movement research:

1. Manipulation
2. Repetition and transformation
3. Self-sufficiency

I asked myself: who/what manipulates our body? Why does repetition bring transformation? Is it a self-sufficient, automatic process of making dance possible? From there, I started the movement research with two dancers.

Practice Part 1: Movement Education

¹ 'Space and time may be illusions' by Tim Andersen, Ph.D.

'The lesser distance between body and mind, the better.'

Our starting point is the awareness of the 'bodily connection':

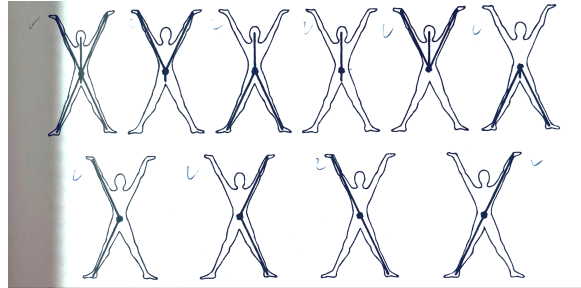
A. Core-distal connections:

*'Core distal' connections are available to us expressly, since they have already been explored and strengthened in actual movement while in utero.'*²

B. Basic body connections:

Head – Shoulders; Eye – Hands; Hand – Torso; Scapula Anchoring; Oblique Muscles; Pelvic Floor – Diaphragm; Heals – Sitbones; Psoas – Inner legs

*'The connections between the joints who are 'close to each other' could not only be generated by the muscle around them, but more importantly, from the fascia.'*³



Why do we start from these bodily connections?

- Preborn movement patterns and fascia movements are less triggered by the intention and effort from the conscious mind and muscle memories.
- Provide an economic way of moving.
- 'Bodily connection' as creative 'body image', for movement exploration.
- The essence of dance lies in the 'transition'. Being aware of bodily connections is being aware of the transitions.

Then, we 'charge' the body into movement, by some duo improvisation:

A. Practice the bodily connection, with five degrees of manipulation. The dancers take turns to be the manipulator and the mover:

1. stroke and hold the end body part of a connection
2. stroke the whole bodily connection
3. block the end body part of a connection (counterpart)
4. tip the connective body parts
5. saying the bodily connection

The manipulation serves here as a tool of security and regenerates the awareness of bodily connections. Almost like a dialog, that the wall of the uterus gives feedback to the movements of the little fetal. The stroke and the block release a fascia chain reaction for natural movements. Meanwhile, we can see that the five degrees of manipulation are getting more and more conceptual, the distance between the manipulator and the mover is getting bigger and bigger, the brain needs to produce more and more supplement to rationalize the command, therefore, according to the feedback of the dancers, the most difficult task to do is the 'saying the bodily connection'.

B. Practice the bodily connection in repetition, use manipulation to trigger the transformation:

1. transform by touching another bodily connection
2. transform by sounds
3. transform by saying some other body parts

² *'Making connections–Total body integration through Bartenieff Fundamentals'* by Peggy Hackney

³ *Bartenieff Fundamentals Coding Sheet* by Antja Kennedy.

4. transform by synchronization with each other

Starting from a very short repetitive motif that stresses one specific bodily connection, the mover who gets manipulated should transform the intention of the movement gradually and slowly, until the next manipulation comes. The manipulation serves here as a tool of guidance, suggestion and feedback.

Both exercises are having great pedagogical impacts:

- the education of movements consists of preborn movement patterns, fascial and anatomical chain reaction, and bodily connective process: quite different from the conventional way of ‘position, muscle work, flexibility and add-on musicality.’
- the exchange between two dancers as a small group, is perceiving and self-correcting. Perceiving in a way that the manipulator has to be aware with her eyes, even have to move with the mover: which bodily connection is not present enough? Which bodily connection should I help the mover to high-light, in order to achieve more vitality right now? In this way, she self-corrects her manipulation, in an active feedback system.
- The manipulator and the mover are becoming one, an autodidacticism is cultivated. Somatic empathy is trained.

The exercises have great aesthetic and artistic impacts as well:

- They sharpened the intuition and sensibility of the anatomical and physical ‘Nature’ of each individual body, as the reaction to each manipulation is unique.
- ‘Character’ and ‘expression’ are one with the functionality. So the brain does not have to produce another layer of ‘character’ on top of the body, it can be at rest. A real ‘character’ coming from the subconsciousness arises.
- such ‘character’ is the prerequisite for the automatic writing in space and time.

They have political impacts too:

If we replace the words ‘manipulation’ in the above texts with the word ‘government’, ‘manipulator’ with ‘politician’, ‘mover’ with ‘people’, and imagine the ‘movements’ in the society, we will have an embodied, self-sufficient democracy.

Practice Part 2: Movement Composition

‘Here, movement composition and choreography is not a result, but a method of research.’

We started the choreography with a short repetitive movement pattern: head and shoulders connection. It is the shoulders circling forward one after the other, resulting in the head’s soft reaction. We compare this initial point as the tip to the snail.

Afterwards, me as the choreographer, the only questions I asked the dancers were:

- How do you feel? What does your body need next?

The only question I asked myself was:

- How can I arrange the movement in space, so it best serves the observation of the transformation, not only the movements of the individuals, but also the relationship between two dancers?

The dancers answered me with their movements directly, according to their own personal physical needs. Say, a tiny little weight shift from the feet, or slightly less effort on the left shoulder, or look one degree more to the left. Gradually, after a few repetitions, the small intentional change had a huge impact on the movement: a new form was created. But the form never stays. The repetition itself is abstracting the form, and preparing for the next transformation. I answered my own question by proposing: ‘one turn to the left so

you can be face to face'; 'walk slowly towards each other'; 'look at each others' eyes gradually'...These proposals added another layer of meaning, notion and sensibility to the process for the observer: the name 'flow dots' stands for the non stop flow and the temporary appearance of forms. Change expands growth, growth pursues change. 'Feeling' somatically is the theme itself: revealing existence, is a new way of making and perceiving dance. We become what we experience, again and again. The dance creation becomes a charger of the 'force', and the perceiving of such dance becomes literally the 'charging'.

As the choreographer, I regard this process as 'slow choreography'. The making of movements were never so slow and careful, not even a single idea, jumped over the 'now' status could work. As soon as I try to conceptualize the next move, or try to have different movements pasting one after the other, the choreography seems flat and unnatural: I see clearly the magic and true meaning of transformation – it is like a fountain, constantly pouring new forms out, unfolding something from the very core, something unknown is revealed, something passive becomes active. If I do not listen carefully, I can not see the proposal of the thing itself, and the status of now.

The dancers are like magicians, acrobats, athletes or simply the game players, what they are 'playing' is the simple plain 'craft', nevertheless, with such concentration and carefulness. It's like drawing a mandala with the body, under the piousness and quietness, there is a huge power. This is a dialogue between the tangible body and the invisible force.

Only in a compositional process, we would have to solve problems and ask questions that we would never be confronted with in improvisation and theoretical investigation:

- 'How to agree on one thing, if my body needs something else than yours?'
This question comes up always when we have to decide together, how does the choreography go on. By applying the two exercises in the education section, we grew empathy for each other. We allowed minor differences in form, but unison in movement intention, so that we could continue the choreography on a common ground.
- 'How do we agree on the numbers of repetition?'
At the end, the number of repetition is also decided by the dancers themselves, not because of music or a conscious design, but from the natural phrasing of each movement themselves. The transitions take time. So do we take time by repeating.
- 'How can we avoid 'mechanization' when the movements are remembered by the body?'
Not like automatic painting and automatic writing, the product is already on some material thing that can be spread. Choreography must be reproducible. We found out: the more clear and basic an intention is, the more space for experience it gives. So we fix only some fundamental things: bodily connections and intention. Then the dancers could still live the 'performance': transitions still need their full attention, some even surprises them every time.
- 'What is the reason for transformation?'
We have used the sound waves of the snail and the pattern on its lips, as a choreographic notation, to apply the regularity directly to movements, say, speed up the repetition, or do the movements gradually higher or lower, gradually bigger or smaller, stronger or weaker, we are confronted by a lot of physical restriction of the human body, extra muscle strength and extensive mental control has to be applied. Rather, we have found out, 'weight sensitivity' is the fundamental fuel back there, to enable each natural change, from an organic living human body. When our anatomical intelligence finds a creative balance between weight and mobility, we experience joy and ease.

There are a few questions that we see coming, but not yet have time to solve, thus will be our next stage of research:

- 'What else can be the fuel of transformation?'
Among intensive repetition and subtle change, too complicated proposals, such as speed, rhythm, spatial intention, could not happen from outside manipulation. But what if we are aware of some other automatic systems on the body, such as heart beats, breath, sense of hearing and balance? Will we be able to be more rhythmical, inspired by our heart rate, or breath pattern changes? Will we find other forms, if we are aware of the liquid in our ears and the need of balancing our body in proportion?
In general, this is a need for more diversity and expressiveness in our movement composition.
- 'How does 'automatism' look like in spatial traveling?'
Since the eyes are still our major organ for coping with the environment, the task of synchronizing in high speed repetitive movements for the two dancers is still challenging. We will find exercises, along the way of what we already have, to be more confident in maintaining the relationship with each other, thus creating diverse travel patterns in space.
In general, this is a desire for mobility with each other, in space.
- 'How can we stop?'
The body, like a charged motor, has always a tendency to be faster and faster. We wish to build some pauses in between, as a new form, a new transformation; to enjoy the silence and stillness within, even when the movements are having great sway.
In general, it is a prolong for a spiritual status of being the manipulator and the mover at the same time, within one body.

Practice Part 3: Visual research and nature observation

'Inside and outside are interlaced'

Based on the movement sensations, we make paintings, take photos and videos of the environment, as well as notate those daily movements that have been changed by the environment and change the environment. These materials will then serve as a part of the presentation, as well as the inspiration of creative tasks.