

Sim Eng Kiat Jeremy, Bboy Jeremaya, Freelance Breaking Instructor, Freelancer, SEA Games 2019 Bronze Medallist

IG: @haimerejay



Photo credits: Jazpar Photography

## Keeping street dance and breaking safe.

Introduction to Project Breakalign and methodology.

Reina Teh, March 2021

In our previous article [here](#) we spoke about injury occurrence in street and breaking which covered topics such as cause of injury, common injury occurrence as well as considerations to reduce injury risks. Having to address injury occurrence, we too should address issues such as how to integrate safe dance elements and performance enhancement without deviating from the history and origins of the art form.

So how can we promote the concept of dance science, incorporating safe dance elements and performance enhancement within the street and breaking environment while addressing injuries?

We would like to introduce an international research project group started in year 2013 called Project Breakalign which started by looking at injury prevention for breakers and now expanded into research for hip-hop dancers. This project is led and founded by breaker Nefeli

Tsiouti (Bgirl sMash). Today the team consists of medical professionals, health and dance science specialists and physiotherapists who are b-boys as well.

So what is Project Breakalign and the Breakalign methodology all about? Read to find out!

## Introducing Project Breakalign and their methodology

Based on research studies, hip-hop dancers and breakers sustained more injuries in comparison to other dance styles<sup>1,2</sup>. The Breakalign methodology is a progressive conditioning programme derived from research and analysing the physical demands of breaking. The method



Original Project Breakalign Team (London, 2013)

Photo credit: Project Breakalign Facebook

aims to educate dancers about their bodies, physicality, its possibilities as well as limitations allowing the dancers to execute movements and reducing the risk of injuries.

Although the Breakalign methodology was originally created for breakers, it is also applicable to other dance genres such as house and hip-hop. Beyond the method, the team from Project Breakalign is also providing the free online injury advice service, workshops as well as lectures in addition to hip-hop specific research in physiology, biomechanics, nutrition and injury epidemiology.

## Inspiration and difficulties

Project Breakalign is inspired by the desire to problem solve the founder - Nefeli's personal experience of pain and injuries occurred from breaking training, this led to frequent hospital visits, surgery and subsequently the inability to perform as a professional dancer and lecturer in the early 2000s.

As the project focuses heavily on safe dance practice, it is not something that was easily understood by the hip-hop and breaking scene. This is because the dance genres are developed socially and safe practice was not directly represented in the culture at the time.

So how did Project Breakalign manage this? With research and evidence-based practice and the involvement of specialists, as well as practitioners such as b-boys, b-girls, physiotherapists, dance scientists and medical doctors (refer to reference for list of

individuals who were involved in the project) they were able to gradually introduce the concept and gain the scene's trust and support.

## Where has Project Breakalign been and what are the response?

The project and the method has been to numerous places world wide as well as nationwide in the United Kingdom, for example

- Breakin' Convention, United Kingdom (2015-2020)
- International Association for Dance Medicine & Science Annual Conference (2016 – 2020): Hong Kong, Texas, Helsinki & Montreal.
- The Notorious I.B.E in Holland, Netherlands (2015 – 2016) :International hip-hop and urban\* dance festival.
- Red Bull BC1, United Kingdom (2015)
- Catch The Flava Breaking Camp and Outbreak in Slovakia(2015-16)



Soul Mavericks, Dj Renegade, Nefeli Tsiouti – Cardiovascular fitness research study  
Photo credit: Project Breakalign Facebook

Participants who have been through the method and project also gave positive feedback on how it helped them to understand their bodies and avoid injuries.

## Where can you find and learn more about Project Breakalign and the method?

The most immediate access is via their website which you can find [here](#), they are equipped with videos, educational articles as well as scientific publications upon request. Unfortunately, the method is only physically available after the end of the pandemic.

So what does this mean for our readers? We are working closely with the team from Project Breakalign to share and provide you with more resources and knowledge to incorporate them into your daily practices. We also hope to work closely with our local street dancers, breakers and Project Breakalign to gradually bring in workshops and introduce the ideology of integrating safe dance practice in the local context.

## Note from Nefeli Tsiouti (Bgirl sMash) founder of Project Breakalign



*The largest problem relating to injuries and recurrent injuries is that dancers gather information about their bodies from unfiltered sources. It is important to filter any knowledge and get advice from hip-hop dance science specialists, who are acquainted with these dancers!*

Nefeli Tsiouti, Founder of Project Breakalign

Photo credit: Anna Motou

We also would like to take this opportunity to thank Nefeli and the Project Breakalign team for sharing the information and journey with us, as well as contributing to the street and breaking related research. Read Nefeli's latest publication [here](#).

End



Graduated with an MSc in Dance Science from Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, Reina is currently volunteering to write for the programme \*SCAPEdance Science as she hopes to share the knowledge and concept of dance science in Singapore. Reina was also a graduate from LASALLE College of the Arts, Diploma in Dance and has experience in teaching adolescents, youth as well as adult in ballet and creative movement.

## Reference

1. Ojofeitimi, S., Bronner, S., & Woo, H. (2012). Injury incidence in hip hop dance. *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine Science in Sports*, 22(3), 347–355.
2. Ursej, Eva, et al. "Investigating the Prevalence and Predictors of Injury Occurrence in Competitive Hip Hop Dancers: Prospective Analysis." *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, 2019, [pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31484349/](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31484349/).

## Individuals who were involved in Project Breakalign

- Aline Soyer (Project Breakalign's Administrator 2015-2017 from France)
- Anna Toombs and David Robinson (Barefoot Running UK)
- B-boy Kidd Keir (Medical Doctor and Dance for Health Researcher)
- Bboy Storm (Bboy, Popper, Teacher, Choreographer from Germany)
- Bboy Spin (Sports Scientist & Soul Mavericks UK)
- BBoy Hawkz (Physiotherapist & Soul Mavericks UK)
- Bboy Mouse (Philippines/UK)
- B-Girl Sun-Sun (B-Girl, Choreographer, Fitness instructor and Teacher)
- Bboy Bonez (Sports Therapist)
- Cali Nelle (Stuntman, Martial Artist & Skilltown Academy owner)
- DJ Renegade (DJ, Coach, B-boy and Popper)
- Erin Sanchez (Dance Scientist, Manager of One Dance UK's Healthier Dancer Project and former dancer)
- Mark Archer (Dance Physiotherapist)
- Nefeli Tsiouti (B-girl, Choreographer, Dance Scientist, Researcher, Sports Massage Therapist and Physiotherapist)
- Sarah Needham-Beck (Dance Scientist and Manager of One Dance UK's Healthier Dancer Programme)