

BOOK REVIEW

STEPPING TOWARDS THE FUTURE OF AN EMERGENT FIELD: CONNECTING DANCE AND MUSIC THROUGH TRANSLATION

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Music, Dance and Translation, Helen Julia Minors (ed.), London, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023, 216 pp., £28,99 (paperback), ISBN 9781350371606, £26,09 (e-book) ISBN 9781350175747

Readers of *Music, Text and Translation* (2013) will be delighted to learn about the publication of *Music, Dance and Translation* (2023), an edited collection that extends Minor's previous work on intermedial translation to include, and indeed prioritise, the relation between music and dance, observed and theorised through the lens of translation. This original volume follows the footsteps of recent research engaging with the challenges posed by multimodal theory to the field of translation and interpreting studies to examine the relationship between dance and music as a form of intersemiotic or intermedial translation. Grounding itself in multimodal theory and adopting Gunther Kress' (2010, p. 15) "satellite view of language", the volume represents a timely intervention in the field, further consolidating the nascent subfield of intermedial translation studies by bringing together nine scholars from diverse areas of expertise to investigate translation as a "process of communication across artistic media, between artists and across cultures" (Minors, 2023, p. 6).

Starting from the position that translation is "crucial in all forms of artistic creativity, collaboration, and performance" (Minors, 2023, p. 3), the book is divided into 4 sections. *Translation and Dance* sets the theoretical basis for the chapters to come and features an introduction and an interview with choreographer Millicent Hodson and art historian Kenneth Archer, both authored by Helen Julia Minors. In the former, Minors positions the book at the confluence of the translational turn in the arts and culture and the performative turn in translation studies, and enumerates a number of conferences, articles, volumes, and PhD theses that indicate growing interest in this area of studies. To those, we could add Bennett's articles (2007, 2008), Aguiar's thesis (2013), McCormack's (2018) and Montesi's monographs (2024), Tsiakalou's article (2018), as well as a number of edited collections emerging from Shakespearean studies (McCulloch and Shaw, 2019; Klett, 2019), and Klein's work on dance and cultural translation (2014, 2019). After a brief explanation of the intermedial theoretical basis of the volume, Minors returns to her previously formulated

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lens of language, senses and culture (2019) and her seven ‘myths’ (2022), before moving to the interview. This features extracts from a conversation with choreographer Millicent Hodson and art historian Kenneth Archer, whose collaborative work to restore lost twentieth-century masterpieces of dance and design, including choreographies by Nijinsky, Balanchine, and Börlin, is widely acclaimed. Showing rather than explaining, Minors selects and italicises parts of the conversation where dance reconstruction is described using words, expressions, and concepts that are recurrent in translation studies (to name but a few: equivalence, responsibility, authenticity, open-ended process). While this method is original and highly effective for a readership conversant in translation scholarship, a reader less aware of current debates in the field may find themselves struggling to make the necessary connections. Nonetheless, the first section leaves us with a clear understanding of the positionality of editor and contributors and a wide vocabulary of terms that will reappear throughout.

Gestures between Music and Dance includes case studies that explore the points of contact and negotiations between music and dance from the perspective of musicologists and choreo-musicologists. Zbikovski’s *Points of Contacts: Basis for Translations Between Music and Dance* argues that the equal development in time of music and dance enables the latter to become a form of music visualization. Zbikovski offers analogy as a tool to conceptualise and analyse this relation. Exploring moments where the movements of dancers correlate with series of pitches sung by the sopranos, the author’s detailed analysis shows the mapping between music and dance to be complex and multi-layered. If the excess of meaning thus produced leads the author to caution against the use of translation beyond its verbal-based tradition, it must be acknowledged that perfect equivalence has been proven to be unachievable also in interlingual translation, and that “gains and losses” have been considered part and parcel of interlingual translation processes as well as intermedial ones. While Zbikovski focuses on time development as an element shared by music and dance, Schroedter’s chapter adds the dimension of space, positing music as “closely connected to space because it expands in it and constitutes it acoustically” (2023, p. 50), and poignantly asking us, “can we understand music as movement?” Through a concise yet insightful summary of how different choreographers have “arranged time artistically through rhythm” (p. 51), including layering, collage, and immersive sound-spaces, Schroedter demonstrates that movement and music can enter into a constant mode of interaction whereby translation “unearths passages which were only implicit in the original” (p. 52). This is further exemplified by reference to an experimental contemporary performance asking dancers and musicians to continuously react to each other’s delayed propositions and make choices in the moment, and a much more detailed analysis of four works by Anne Theresa De Keersmaeker: *Violin Phase* (1981), *Piano Phase* (1982), *Drumming* (1998) and *Rain* (2001). The latter are the highlight of the chapter, brilliantly exposing De Keersmaeker’s compositional methods and signature style, and exploring how music, movement, and visual patterns are made to emphasise, compete, and interfere with each other in subtle yet mesmerising ways. This section is closed by another chapter written

by Minors, this time dealing with the collaboration between Cocteau, Massine, Satie, Picasso and Diaghilev on the occasion of the Ballet Russes' 1917 choreography *Le Parade*. Utilising methods developed in Genetic Translation Studies, this chapter draws on letters, postcards, and personal notes to illuminate the collaboration between these acclaimed figures as one of constant negotiation and analogical thinking, requiring them to "translate each other's intended meanings" and "think in terms of each other's forms" (Minors, 2023, p. 61). The chapter demonstrates how translation theory and methods of enquiry can be useful in analysing not only straightforward translations but also artistic processes displaying "a translational dimension" (Maerlaert and Marais, 2023, pp. 1, 4). Its most fascinating feature, however, lies in revealing the centrality of the lesser-known Valentine Gross and Misia Sert (the real mediators of the situation) in enabling the creative process, ensuring its financial viability, and acting as a bridge between the famous male artists, thus restoring these women's roles as creatives, producers and mentors.

The third section, *Translation through Music-Dance Performance* looks at the role of music and translation in the production of dance performances. Juliette Loesch highlights the importance of musicality in Maurice Béjart's choreographic work and explores "the dancer's body as the mediator and translator of music, Béjart's revisiting of his own body of work, and finally the ensemble's body, the corps de ballet, as yet another body created by Béjart" (2023, p. 99). This is done by analysing choreographic works that are based on, evoke, or portray the figure of Salomé (a recurring concern in Béjart's choreographic oeuvre), unearthing the importance of transmission in Béjart's work. Reflecting on the time-space focus in the second part, Leslie Main envisions translation as making sense of a map made of disparate elements (Labanotation, embodied knowledge, musical arrangements, recordings, pictures) as she describes the restaging of Doris Humphrey's *Passacaglia* (1938) and *With My Red Fires* (1936). Intermedial translation is therefore described as a navigation process informed by *the discovery of direction/directions of discovery*" (2023, p. 108). This text is followed by Anna Pomareva's exploration of the possible paratextual sources of Cranko's ballet *Onegin* (1965), with a particular focus on the use of mirrors, which she suggests comes from Nabokov's and Hofstadter's translations and prefaces to the original Russian texts as well as their correspondence. Mirrors, argues Pomareva, are used in the choreography to highlight the idea of symmetry inherent in Pushkin's text, allowing to bring out similarities and differences between the characters and simultaneously suggest what has already happened and what will happen. Although the analysis of the work is fascinating and revealing, adding the subcategory of style to the ideational, interpersonal, and textual subcategories of the functional style approach moves the chapter away from the intermedial approach generally proposed by the volume and would necessitate more contextualisation.

The last section, *Institutional Representation: Notation, Archives and the Museum* concentrates on the movement from dance to documentation (and back to dance), touching on issues of collective agency, memory, negotiation, and adaptation. Heili Einasto's chapter on two Estonian ballet translations of *Coppelia* highlights how changes in what

Lefevere would call 'poetics' and 'patronage' (Lefevere, 1985) affected these two renditions of Hoffman's *Sandman* into dance. After linking the text and its balletic translations to the concept of cultivated nature as visible in the geometric shaping of gardens that became popular around the time the text was written, Einasto criticises the lack of engagement with meta-criticism and self-censorship that made both choreographers ignore the way in which ballet similarly moulds bodies and presents itself as shaping culture out of nature, which ends up weakening the feminist critique they could have delivered. Denise Merkle's following chapter offers another contribution to the burgeoning area of Shakespeare and dance, focussing on the transmission of Cranko's *Romeo and Juliet* (1964) through the dancers' muscle, memory, Benesh notation, and videos. The author then explores the influence of music and collaboration with musicians as being at the basis of Ratmanski's version (2011) of the ballet using the same musical score as Cranko's. The section closes with Mary Wardle's chapter *Movement Notation as a Form of Translation*, an in-depth discussion of dance notation, touching on what it comprises, why it is still to be considered useful and how it intersects concepts that are central to translation studies, before asking the question: what is the identity of dance? In recognising that notation systems are not neutral objects but rather instruments that privilege particular aspects (e.g. end positions in Benesh, movement and transition itself in Labanotation) and need to be interpreted by users, Wardle assimilates notators to translators. While this hugely informative article concentrates on the use of notation in dance, the reader might also be interested in recent discussions on the use of Laban's work and notation systems to maximise workers efficiency and productivity, showing a less romantic view of these tools, and the collusion of art and capitalism in the factory worker's body (Jeffrey, forthcoming).

In conclusion, while the works explored remain prevalently Eurocentric and inclusion of contemporary dance works could have increased the reach and diversity of the collection, Helen Julia Minor's edited volume is a much-needed, thought-provoking contribution to the fields of choreomusicology, translation and dance studies. In gathering texts from authors based in different countries and fields of expertise, the editor manages to convey the richness and potential of this growing area of research, consolidating its value, connecting some of its actors, and indicating its future directions. This book is both a building block of a subfield in development and a springboard for future investigations.

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