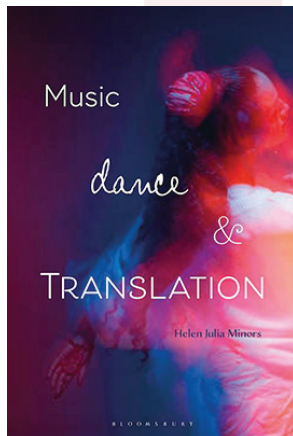


# Translation in music and dance: Insights and interdisciplinary perspectives

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Helen Julia Minors (ed.)

## Music, Dance, and Translation

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In today's globalized world, the concept of translation has widely expanded to include all forms of multimodal communication (cf. Kress 2010). As Minors underlines (p. 3), "in an increasingly globalized and digital world, we communicate across cultures, across nations and across all forms of perceived and physical borders, as well as across languages." Hence, "[t]here is a place, between the arts, in the creative process, within the trace of the work, and within the reception of the work" (p. 13) that is yet unexplored. The notion of translation now includes several practices and modes, thus finding itself being applied in several disciplines (Marais 2022). This decades-long gradual transformation into something more performative and multimodal is worth further examination.<sup>1</sup>

This leads us to *Music, Dance and Translation*, a new volume edited by Helen Julia Minors that probes the interrelationship between music and dance in various contexts, genres, and artistic forms and delves into the concept of translation as it is used in the realm of dance. Coming as a sequel to the previous book,<sup>2</sup> also edited by Minors, which explored translation in relationship to music, the present volume questions the

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<sup>1</sup> Also see Petrilli & Li (2023) and Minors (2023).

<sup>2</sup> Also see Minors (2013, 2016, 2019).

dialogue between the arts of music and dance during the performance and in the collaborative and interpretation process (pp. 3-4). Bringing together theoretical and empirical research, a critical question is discussed – a question at the core of the book's investigation: “[D]o music and dance offer us further insights into translation, and can translation offer us further insights into the relationships between music and dance?” (p. 5).

The book comprises four parts and eleven chapters, in which theoretical proposals and practice-based research alternate. Part One, “Translation and dance,” begins with the introduction, which situates the concept of translation within the disciplines of music and dance and moves towards the proposal of a theory of translation within these fields of study. The next chapter – Chapter 2, “The role of translation in the practice of dance reconstruction,” discusses dance reconstruction as a process of translation and gives essential insights into the processes Hodson and Archer use to establish their reconstruction works. As Minors asserts, “[t]o start the process of making a reconstruction one *starts with deconstruction*” (emphasis in the original, p. 19). Diverse modes across multiple decades and cultures must be analyzed to reconstruct the given cultural text.

Capturing the words of Hodson and Archer, who have shared a creative partnership for over three decades, Minors notes that while reconstructing a ballet, they look at as much evidence as possible: “*we look at everything, music, design, the choreography, and everything around it, everything connected, all the contemporary magazines*” (emphasis in the original, p. 19). She suggests that the question of authenticity is of pivotal importance in dance reconstruction and goes on to explain that “Translation, like dance reconstruction, is creative, but we *translate in a different way [...] to ensure everything is dancer friendly*” (emphasis in the original, p. 21). Thus, the target audience, as well as those involved in said reconstruction, are of paramount importance.

Part Two of the book, comprised of Chapters 3 through 5, “Gestures between music and dance,” showcases the point of contact between music and dance and presents case studies from musicologists and choreomusicologists. Chapter 3, named “Bases for translations between music and dance,” written by Lawrence M. Zbikowski, investigates how music and movement are connected and how meaning-making in these media emerges through analogy. The author delves into the work of choreographers Mark Morris and Twyla Tharp and outlines how these choreographers reconstruct and reimagine the resources that music offers. The following chapter, “Interactions and correspondences between music/sound and dance/movement as permanent negotiations of translation processes” by Stephanie Schroedter, explains that translation is a process of continuous negotiation and explores whether sound creations initiate movement or vice versa. Chapter 5, the conclusion of Part 2, “Collaborative ballet dialogues in translation and creating *La Parade* (1917) in Paris,” written by Helen Julia Minors, seeks to address the process of translation as a collaborative process. It outlines how all the parties involved

in the creative process (composer, choreographer, designer, and librettist) used translation as a way “to mediate and interpret each other’s contributions” (p. 10).

Part Three, “Translation through music-dance performance,” looks into translation as used in producing the performance. It starts with Chapter 6, “Maurice Béjart’s variations in Wilde’s *Salome* and kinetic translation of words and music in *La Mort subite* (1991) and *Boléro* (1960)” by Juliette Loesch and captures the ongoing interactions between dance and music. The author assumes that “[T]hough Ravel’s piece was not inspired by *Salome*, it has become a variation [...] via both Rubinstein and Béjart, up to *La Mort subite*” (p. 96). In Chapter 7, “The music has the movement in it,” Lesley Main examines the role of translation in staging a dance work. It studies examples that reveal the relationship between music and choreography and their impact on the other. Translation, seen as a communication process, investigates the impact on a work from various perspectives, including that of the director, the performers, and the audience (p. 99). Main infers that “translation creates different platforms for engaging with a work [...] and, thus, creates the potential for new meanings in a work to be discovered that may not hitherto have been apparent through more established staging practices” (p. 114). Chapter 8, “Cranko’s reinvention of Pushkin’s text in his ballet *Onegin* (1965),” by Anna Ponomareva, displays a strong connection between Pushkin’s text and Cranko’s *Onegin* through the framework of intersemiotic translation. Ponomareva underlines the importance of maintaining stylistic features of the original text in the target translation version, which is expressed not in words but in other semiotic systems.

The final part of the volume, “Institutional representation: Notation, archives and the museum,” begins with a chapter written by Heili Einasto. Einasto inquires into a case of intersemiotic translation, a literary text translated into a musical-choreographic form. As the author suggests, ballets show characters’ emotions “via imagery that has its roots in bodily sensations” (p. 133). Einasto shows how Bingonzetti interprets the ballet and how he transforms the production within contemporary settings. Chapter 10, “Fruitful intersemiotic transfers between music and choreography in the national ballet of Canada’s *Romeo and Juliet*,” illustrates how the choreographer transforms music into narrative dance. As Denise Merkle argues, “[n]either the exchange between music and dance, nor creativity and interpretation operate in isolation; they are all interconnected and nurture one another to produce the final intersemiotic cultural product” (p. 161). The final chapter, “Dancing symbols. Movement notation as a form of translation” examines how dance notation translates “physical movement into a form of written documentation,” recording several elements such as the parts of the body that are involved, the speed, the positions, the dancer’s gaze, etc. (p. 163). Mary Wardle concludes that when we expand the field of translation to include “the transfer from movement to dance notation and back,” we can enrich the ongoing debate (p. 177).

The book also features a very extensive bibliography on music, dance, and translation, which will be particularly useful for researchers in these disciplines. Through various case studies spanning diverse genres, media, and cultures, the volume prompts the audience to expand its consideration of translation and broaden its applicability to the sound and movement arts. Written in an accessible style, the book will appeal to readers interested in translation and intermedial studies as well as the arts of music and dance.

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