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# Music and Multimodal Translation

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## INTRODUCTION

Music pervades everyday experiences for most of us (DeNora 2000): we hear music on the radio and television, it is used as our ring tones and notifications on our mobile phones, it is used in shops, restaurants and bars, and in films and video games. Satie's once revolutionary idea of furniture music (music which a spectator did not stop to actively listen to, but which acted as a kind of wallpaper to other activities) for the piece *Musique d'ameublement* (1917) went from a performance stunt to a way of life. As Simon Frith has remarked, in contemporary society, "music is much more important in the emotional ordering of everyday life than is usually acknowledged" (2004: 1).

Translation is not limited to an act of language transfer alone, if and when we consider the transfer and exchange of meaning beyond an interlingual and intralingual exchange to a more holistic, even corporeal (Klein 2020: 335), approach to communication. Translation in what follows refers to the process of how meanings, content and senses are transferred from one medium to another. It recognises there is a distinction between the language translation of inter and intralingual translation and that of translation as a concept, which in some ways is used as a metaphor of a process of exchange and transfer (Minors 2013). In a globalised, increasingly digitised and mediatised world, communication relies on various modes beyond spoken and written words, such as sound, music, images, film and so on. As Boria et al (2019: 1) ask, what is meaning within this broader multimodal context? In a creative context, where the exact transfer of content is not always possible, nor is it always the central aim, why and how is translation a subject of relevance? It enables a reassessment of how we form collaborative dialogue, how we interpret each other in the process of creation, let alone how we interpret a piece as a spectator. The process of translation is one that occurs from the moment the work is instigated right through to its repeat performances and broadcasts. Each act of interpretation in some ways relies on a process of translation (Minors 2013: 1) as we seek to interpret meaning delivered to us by someone or something else. The act of forming one's own response, interpretation or understanding requires a process whereby the receiver

pieces together the different texts, so that “meaning is emergent” and the receiver is responsible for constructing it (Cook 2001: 179). “[M]eaning is emergent” in the interpreter: it is not only embedded within and restricted to the content of the text(s) under consideration. The context of the message (performance) being received (listened to) impacts on the understanding of that message. This understanding has been long held in translation studies but when transferred to multimodal communication, the contexts of each mode make the process of translation much more complex. All texts (a broad term I use here to refer to all forms of meaning delivery via an expressive medium) are issued within a context (cultural, historical, social and so forth) and received within (often a different) context. As such, what does a consideration of translation studies enable musicologists, dance historians, collaborative artists and so forth to understand, analyse, reassess or appreciate which we would not otherwise consider? Might we consider as a discipline these issues of meaning creation and communication (topics that have been prevalent in new musicology since 1980s) in relation to translation studies?

Where translation studies has been slow to engage with concerns and theories from multimodal communication (Klaindl 2019 and 2013; Kress 2019), music studies (including musicology, ethnomusicology, analysis, and artistic research) has considered meaning and communication but not often in terms drawn from translation studies. The field of music and translation is relatively in its infancy still, despite questions of translation in the context of music (such as concerning the translation of libretti or song lyrics) existing for some time. For example, the act of “translating to music is a very different matter from translating in general” (Spaeth 1915: 297). Those working with song lyrics, libretti and such like have long been dealing with translating text *to* music. What is relatively new is the consideration that different modes can translate across and between modes, with or without verbal language, and that the transfer or exchange between modes is “possible and hugely difficult” (Kress 2010: 10). Many have noted that the “immediate problem that we face is of language” (Jordan 2000: 9) (in the sense of the artistic languages and terminologies of dance, music et al) when we explore the interrelationships of the different arts. Lévi-Straus too noted that “there is a problem of a language which is not working as a language should [even though] music is a means of communication” (Steiner 1966: 37). How we talk about music or dance, for example, can determine how we experience it, and certainly, it can be confusing. There are shared words, such as dynamics, which exist in both art forms, but for which this word means something different (music: dynamics, volume; dance: muscle intensity). As such, we

are aware of implied equivalence where none might exist. Equivalence in art is something that is used in creative acts and discussed in reviews and analyses, but it is only one part of the possible interrelationships of these art forms. When parallelism is discussed in film, it denotes a similar working of the modes in the expression of the moment, but it does not denote that the modes produce meaning in the same way, or that they are by default the same. In fact, any observation of similarity always shows the difference between the media and the mode. A similar remark has been made by Wolf (2017: 35) in recognition of society as translation, as well as recognised by Cook (1998: 125) in exploring a similarity test between media, and by Albright in denoting the consonances and dissonances that occur between media. Any exploration or attempt at mimesis “tends to confound the distinctness of media” (Albright 2000: 19). Herein lies one of the problems that warrants further attention.

This article considers the issue of multimodality in the context of music and translation in order to illustrate how meaning is transferred, shared, constructed, changed and interpreted within its necessarily intercultural, multi-style, multimodal, collaborative contexts. It provides an outline first of why these fields are mutually of significance. What can be classified as translation? I refer to multimodal theorists and translation scholars to show that the remit of translation is both broad and shares some definitional boundaries. I iterate the main concerns in the current field of music and translation, outlining not only who engages with this field, but why this engagement is growing in the context of multimodal communication, to answer the question: what role does translation have to play in the context of music? In tackling the problem that a logocentric approach to translation is limiting and ignores contemporary modes of communication, I raise the following questions: How do collaborative creative works rely on a process of translation? In particular, how is meaning generated within and between the different modes (music, dance, gesture, image, film, and text for example) during creation? The same question can be asked of a work’s reception. The art of music expresses in more than one sense by default: we hear music, it is produced through sound waves, but that means we also feel music physically in our bodies. That somatic understanding supplements our aural understanding. Moreover, most music is disseminated alongside images, whether a marketing photograph, a stage setting, arena lighting, an album cover, a music video, or a film. Indeed, most music is now listened to for the first time either on YouTube (which usually includes the music video) or on Spotify (which comes titled with an album image) (McIntyre 2017). Music is innately a multimodal art form, though for some translation studies authors, it is categorised as a mode (Kress 2010:

79). A mode is “a socially shaped and culturally given semiotic resource for making meaning” (Ibid.). But the resource of music contains not only the collective sound that is music, but it is formulated from its elements: rhythm, dynamics, melody, phrasing, tempo, metre, pulse, pitch, harmony and so on. I urge the recognition of the complexity of this mode. Without verbal language, without a word it can produce tears, laughter, a sense of belonging, a sense of a community and it supplements our memory, our sense of nostalgia and our sense of self. As such, it is hugely powerful. But it is all done in a way which is far less specific in its referential potential.

This article first lays out the current field, outlining the impact of the translational turn in relation to music. To do this, I first survey the intersections and developments within translation studies, musicology and multimodal studies. I then outline the core myths in the field (notably that music is often referred to broadly, and sometimes inaccurately, as a language) and the research problems this raises. A framework is proposed for how we might utilise tools from translation studies to reassess musical translation, in action (through creative and collaborative works) and in reception. There is much diversity in this field. It must be noted that the prepositions or syntactic phrases used to refer to music and translation change the issues at hand. When we talk of translation *to* music (Spaeth 1915), translation *for* music, translation *of* music, translation *in* music, translation *with* music, translation *through* music, *translating* music, or musical translation, we are referring to different situations each time.

## **MUSIC AND TRANSLATION IN TRANSLATION STUDIES AND MUSIC STUDIES**

The twenty-first century has seen a diverse need for translation, not least in music, as the globalized release of popular music across the globe is dominated by vocal music. There are rising successes of non-English language popular music groups on an international scale. One prime example is the K-Pop group, BTS, A Korean boy band whose albums have hit the charts in China, the UK, and the USA. Their world tours are expansive, attract vast numbers of international fans, and perhaps for the first time, their success has not been predicated on singing in English for the English-speaking market. A recent international conference “BTS: A Global Interdisciplinary Conference Project” was hosted in January 2020 by Kingston University London, co-chaired by Colette Balmain and Helen Julia Minors (2020: online), and focussed on the interdisciplinary reach of their work, with papers spanning politics, gender, wellbeing, international relations, music and art. But the unifying feature was a

thread related to the transfer of sense, meaning and appreciation across languages, cultures and regional borders, across political opinions and between fans. Though not intended as a translation conference, the processes of interpretation and analyses relied extensively on understanding how meaning is transferred between modes, cultures and people. With an increase in music tourism (Desblache and Minors 2020a and 2020b: online) and a global music revenue which was estimated in 2018 at US \$ 53.77 billion (Watson 2019: online) and is expected to “surpass 65 billion U.S. dollars in 2023” (Ibid.) it is important that we consider how translation and meaning construction impact music and vice versa. Increasingly live music and music tours are the main means of income for bands and artists, as online streaming earns very little in comparison. For example, one online calculator suggests that for 10,000 streams on Spotify, the artist would only earn in the region of \$43.70 (Ditto 2020: online). By this quota, an artist would need 229 streams before they even earned a dollar.

The bringing together of people, cultures, languages and intersemiotic forms of meaning delivery are increasing whether through online sharing and streaming of music and its associated fan-based cultures, or (whether) in person in gigs and events. I write this, however, as we all experience the Covid19 pandemic, which has cancelled all live events, music holidays and cruises and such like. It is yet to be seen how the international music industry will recover from this global event, but what has been clear is that music has been active throughout, in broadcasts, TV and film, radio, podcasts, as well as some new releases recorded and produced during lockdown (Akingbade 2020: online). Despite the limitations to accessing live music during this time, musicians have remained active, collaborating through digital means usually remotely. The current pandemic has shown that the globalized world is advancing and that the need for global communication is more necessary than ever. To recognise and reflect on this situation music has been used often: in Wuhan, China, the location of the start of Covid19, we saw locals sing from their flat windows to lift morale (South China Morning Post 2020: online), and in the UK to celebrate and recognise key works, many sang and played the song “Somewhere Over the Rainbow” in what became a regular Thursday evening clap for the NHS for the first 12 weeks of lockdown (YouTube has many videos of such activity). During this time, a virtual choir of NHS workers released this song as a track, in celebration of the 72<sup>nd</sup> birthday of the NHS (Lapwood 2020: online). What is significant here is that as a species we are sharing our experiences not only through language, but through music. Music tourism can be an act of travelling to experience live music, but increasingly it is a mediatized exploration conducted online. Such an

“intersemiotic traveller” (Cronin 2020: 79) performs music tourism (Desblache and Minors, 2020a: online) from their armchair.

Recent conferences within translation studies have moved toward overt intersemiotic aims and specifically to exploring multimodal ways of understanding. The first, “Beyond Words: Multimodal Encounters in Translation” was hosted by The University of Cambridge, 5-6 July 2018, and explored specifically how multimodal approaches were necessary for all forms of translation. This conference resulted in the book, *Translation and Multimodality: Beyond Words* (Boria et al 2019). That same year the “4th International Conference on Itineraries in Translation History” was held at The University of Tartu, Estonia, December 2018, which explored the intersections between the arts, with many papers looking to music, art, design and dance. Some of those papers are feeding into the book *Music, Dance and Translation* (Minors forthcoming a) which specially asks how music-dance works utilise a process of translation during the collaborative creative process. Most recently though is the “2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference on Intersemiotic Translation” on the theme of “Transmedial Turn?” in December 2020, The University of Tartu Estonia, which includes papers exclusively dedicated to exploring meaning construction across modes.

It is clear therefore that there is a trend forming whereby translation studies has broken out of its own field to look outwards, rather than remaining an inwardly focused field. Certain pioneers enabled this movement to arrive at a position where we can claim that the field of Music and Translation exists and is becoming increasingly active. The recent translational turn that was identified by Bachmann-Medick (2009), when she observed that cultural and social encounters were increasingly global and shared via mediatized platforms, was a key contributor to the developing field. She emphasises later in her work on the cultural turn that there is a need to recognise the “expressive dimension of both actions and social-based events” which lead to the “generation of cultural meanings and experiences” (Bachmann-Medick 2016: 73). As communication reaches further outward from a single language the central concern becomes how we understand and exchange meaning in such globalized ways beyond language.

Others within translation studies have become aware of this shift toward multimodality and to recognising that “translation is a multimodal practice and that translatorial action is a multimodal semiotic act” (Kaindl 2019: 65). Consequently, the often-cited categories

established by Jakobson (1959) are now outdated: although interlingual and intralingual translation refer to language, these dimensions are necessarily intersemiotic as they include the context, the movement of the person speaking, the visual textual form of the writing; therefore, intersemiotic translation as a separate term is almost invalid as it includes the prior two categories. But the need to further explore the multimodal field of translation is necessary and has been debated much by the leading scholars referenced here. The field would benefit from some frameworks to explain how translation studies can benefit music and vice versa. Indeed, Bassnett recognised that “the broader, translinguistic aspects of translation, including translation as negotiation, as intercultural mediation, as a transcultural process” (Bassnett 2012: 67) was now a necessary act, and so broadens the potential for translation to assist us in interpreting beyond words. As Kress asserts, the field is “moving from the dominance of one means (‘language’) to a recognition of the potential equality of many means of making meaning evident” (Kress 2019: 24). In recognising the move to multimodality and the need for a performative turn, in addition to the translational turn, Wolf notes the importance of the “materiality of the media participating in the performance process” (2017: 29). It is this active coming together of materials in collaboration that has inspired me in my own work to question how music operates in a translational manner. It is no surprise, then, that translation scholars are increasingly using examples drawn from music to explain meaning delivery in a range of contexts. Cronin led the way to understanding the transmedial turn. He notes that media was part of the very operation of meaning delivery in the current century. He now uses musical examples to explain tourists’ interactions in localised situations:

“The apparent ability of music to transcend language difference is encapsulated in the holiday iconography of campfire sing-songs and groups of tourists crowded into Irish pubs listening to folk music sessions. Listening to music is not an experience that is predicated on knowledge of a language, though it may of course, as in the case of song, be enhanced by it” (Cronin 2020: 79).

There is an exchange, there is an interaction, but language is not necessarily the point or focus of any such transfer of meaning. Cronin makes clear that context, the locality, is significant when interpreting it as a receiver.

Since the cultural turn and the rise of current musicology from the 1980s, which explored the cultural context and meaning of music, music studies of all forms have been increasingly concerned with music’s active role within socio-cultural contexts (see for example Kramer 2002). Questions of musical and cultural meaning have thrived. Translation and music first



came together in work that explored how texts were translated *to* music, or how texts were shared to supplement a musical performance, such as translations *of* musical texts in the forms of sung lyrics, surtitles, programme notes, and pre-concert talks. Since the 1990s and the translational turn, the 2000s with the performative turn, and the 2010s with the transmedial turn, scholars working within music, whether musicians, musicologists, linguists, among other field in the humanities, have begun to ask about the identity, agency, voice and role music has in projecting meaning beyond words. In the context of interdisciplinary collaborative art of the last century, there is a vast range of artistic works which operate crossing medial boundaries, fusing and creating a sharing of the arts, which has been discussed in terms of the interart aesthetic. Dayan explores the “laws” of the interart aesthetic (Dayan 2011), which interrogates how the arts function in a collaborative work specifically with examples drawn from the start of the twentieth century. He has asserted that each media can operate in the terms of the other (Ibid: 46), that analogies between media are possible (Ibid: 6), and that collectively, they form “a *new* reality” (Ibid: 2). Similarly to Dayan, Albright’s work explores the collaborative interactions of music, painting and words. In so doing, he questions repeatedly: “Can we aspire to more precise kinds of translation?” (Albright 2009: 3 and Albright 2014: 163). In articulating concerns regarding whether music is a universal language, he plays on the analogy to verbal language in the title of the book, and in asking, how *Music Speaks* to its listeners (Albright 2009). Both Dayan and Albright refer to translation in describing the interaction of the arts and the exchange of sense across media (i.e. a modal exchange), but Dayan rightly observes that: “There can be no direct translation, and no unproblematic collaboration” (Dayan 2011: 3). Moreover: “We often think of music as a translation of emotional states” (Albright 2014: 163). There is much research on music and emotion in the field of music psychology, but the felt experience of music has been discussed across most literature that refers to collaborative arts practice. For example, “music has direct contact with our raw felt experience of the world, especially in its transcendence over words or concepts” (Shaw-Miller 2002: 141). Bringing these fields together, Desblache asserts that “musics are capable of arousing emotions” (2019: 303), recognising that much narrative nineteenth-century romantic music relied on such a “translation of emotion” which was “at the heart of much music” (Ibid: 304). The point to the above is that music is referential, that it can elicit emotions and understanding without need of verbal language.

Ekphrasis refers to how an artist responds to another artist's work, by creating a new work of art that is a representation of the previous work, usually sharing the same title. The transfer of sense from one work to another, in an aim to retain a similar representation, is analogous to the process of translation proper. But, if we consider all forms of language to be multimodal, then ekphrasis too is multimodal and so any form of "ekphrasis is also an intermedial translation" (Albright 2014: 120). Bruhn's extended study of musical ekphrasis proposes the term "transmedialization" to denote this move of content between, across and through media (2000: xvi). If a composer, for example, creates a work in response to, or inspired by, painting, poetry, or another art form, the resulting work claims somehow to have features of the source text. Or, as Bruhn iterates, it must have "transformed the essence of this art work's features and message" (2000: xix). The reference to message here is important: Jakobson's overview of translation was a process from a sender – delivering a message – to a receiver (Steiner 1966). In a musical context, there are fewer senders than there are receivers. The relational, in these contexts, must go beyond verbal language: as Jakobson highlighted, "the question of relations between the word and the world concerns not only verbal art but actually all kinds of discourse" (1960, 351). Such an "intermedial translation" (Albright 2014, 219) might then be seen to "project... the choices made by the artist working in response to the source work" (Minors 2017: 191). Bruhn refers to this transference between media as an "intersemiotic transposition" (Bruhn 2000: xxi). The language used to refer to the transfer of sense, always prefixed by trans-, denotes there is indeed the problem that language cannot yet refer precisely to the different forms of translation processes when we extend translation beyond verbal language to other multimodal forms of communication. Similarly, Kress proposes two terms that refine how translation processes function. Namely "transduction" as a subgroup of translation, which articulates the movement of content "from one mode to another" (Kress 2010: 125), and "transformation" which is another subgroup of translation, which "describes the processes of meaning change through re-ordering of the elements in a text or other semiotic object... in the same mode" (Ibid: 129). However, as Kaindl has remarked (2019: 59), the terms can reduce and limit the current reach of translation studies that has expanded more to encompass multimodal translation now. As Bruhn's term, they do not consider the source text to be innately multimodal, which I and Kaindl clearly do. Nevertheless, where did these discussions outlined above move directly to music and translation to form a field?

The seminal work bringing music and translation into significant dialogue tackling specific issues of meaning transfer in the context of music was an edited special issue of *The Translator* (2008), led by Şebnem Susam-Sarajeva. This journal issue tackled concerns of how verbal text is translated within the context of a musical work, with the volume exploring folk song, popular song, musicals and songs in film music. In each case, the discussion tackles textual language illustrating how text is translated *to* music, or how text is translated *for* a new context. Significantly Susam-Sarajeva raises the fact that until very recently music has been considered outside the remit of translation studies: “The mere mention of translation within the context of music opens up a huge can of worms” (2008: 189). When researchers consider translation in the context of song, opera and musicals, it is possible to consider the translation of song texts which attempt to retain the musical rhythm within their translation, but which might change the wording, which requires something other than a word for word translation. Leading scholars in this field, including Peter Low’s work, explore “purposeful translation” for song texts (Low 2013: 69), while Ronnie Apter and Mark Herman work collaboratively to explore the notion of a singing translation, which considers not only rhythm but also word painting, text setting, and the very musical elements which contribute to overall meaning supplementing the verbal meaning (Apter and Herman 2016).

There has also been much research and practice into translation in opera, whether that be the translation of the libretto for publication in programme notes, CD leaflets and books, or whether the translation serves the particular purpose of the surtitles (projected usually above the stage during performance) or of subtitles (shown on the bottom of the film screen). Sarah Eardley-Weaver has looked in detail at how surtitles can promote accessibility, exploring specifically how surtitles can support the experience of the blind and partially sighted (2013) and the deaf and hard-of-hearing (2015). The technical aspects of surtitles have been discussed in detail by the Royal Opera House’s surtitlers Judi Palmer (2013) and Kenneth Chalmers (2013) as well as by one of their freelance translators Jacqueline Page (2013). They outline the technological capacity of the Royal Opera House while referring to audience engagement describing experiments with surtitles shown on devices in front of seating as well as above the stage. The main aim of surtitles is intended to “make opera accessible to everyone” (Palmer 2013: 33).

From personal experience as a musician (trumpeter, singer, improviser and ensemble leader), I have often translated (in a metaphorical sense) the content of the musical programme of a

concert for an audience whether in a pre-concert talk, outlining the key issues, concerns and points of interest, or introducing themes and music in radio programmes. I regularly now lead pre-concert conversations for the Aldworth Philharmonic Orchestra (rather than formal talks) whereby I facilitate a discussion between conductor (Andrew Taylor), soloists and select orchestral members to enable the audience to understand how a programme, a piece or a commission has come to fruition prior to them experiencing it. This ensemble has developed a range of interactive approaches to education, outreach and access, notably including accessible performances of Holst's *The Planets*, including signed performances for the deaf and hard-of-hearing, and performances whereby we allowed flexibility, movement, conversation and support to enable concerts to be welcoming to those with ADHD, Autism and Asperger, Dementia and similar conditions, with support from the Arts Council. This also included a programme introduction online, with downloadable materials (Taylor 2020: online).

I have led other such pre-concert discussions within a music venue, rather than a concert hall, frequently. Notably as part of the Arts Council funded project, Women's Voices at Club Inégales (2019) (further explored in Minors forthcoming b). I curated a series of pre-concert informal conversations between composers and performers, giving an opportunity for audience questions and engagement. These sessions were interesting in the context of discussing music and translation as my focus was to illustrate to the spectator how the musical programme had been put together, how the composers had approached the creation of the work, and how the performers had interpreted it. As such, the discussion is process driven, outlining the choices, changes and developments to works. This process in many ways is analogous to that of a translator.

What do conductors and pre-concert presenters do, though, in such an introduction to the music which is about to be performed live? Why does the music need an introduction? These questions are not new. In fact, in the nineteenth century some composers writing tone poems presented their own written programme detailing the narrative to ensure the audience had time to understand what was forthcoming: the most famous example of this is Hector Berlioz's programme for *Symphonie fantastique* (1830). If a story exists, it can aid the appreciation of the audience to know first something of the story. But pre-concert talks can also bring children closer to the drama, to engage their imagination in what is to follow. It can also engage a wider range of audience members in the issues pertaining to each concert

programme, encouraging access and smoothing the way for the “concert virgin” (a term used by Aldworth Philharmonic [APO 2020: online] in a scheme which offers free tickets to those who have not previously heard a live orchestra).

Accessibility is important, and applies as much to audiences with disabilities, as to audiences from lower economic backgrounds or simply to someone who experiences a particular kind of music for the first time. Access to opera for example has been of prime concern to the Royal Opera House and to the English National Opera, both in London, for some time. Indeed, funding conditions now commonly require some form of outreach and access work to be embedded in funding applications for arts projects that can demonstrate engagement outside the regular audience. These institutions were part of the Arts and Humanities Research Council funded network, Translating Music, which was co-led by Lucile Desblache and Helen Julia Minors during 2013-2014. The project had a wide remit, building on the book, *Music, Text and Translation* (Minors 2013). The project explored three key areas: “music and meaning across language, across cultures and across senses” (Desblache and Minors 2020a: online). The book, and the network, explored translation in terms of a range of genres: opera and popular song; musical translation, whereby a musical work engages with other modes to transfer sense into the audio domain; and the notion of adaptation and transference in the music industry, whereby MTV, for example, has a strategy and approach to ensuring audio-description in text through subtitles. The network engaged with various industry partners, but we instigated discussions, seminars and filmed interviews with colleagues in opera. The Royal Opera House surtitles each opera in English but sings the opera in the original language; whereas the English National Opera always sings in English translation but in addition offers surtitles in English translation. This is central to their accessible remit. The network leaders went to the Macerata Sferisterio Opera Festival to offer some audio-described performances, touch tours for the blind and for children, and to conduct a series of interviews. This ethnographic visit resulted in several interviews that are available via the project website (Desblache and Minors 2014: online) with the artistic directors, producers, singers and musicians. The Sferisterio festival brought together the full range of musical translation for a performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. I have analysed how this production worked as an intercultural translation (Minors 2016) and showed how opera is a particular mode of translation (Minors 2020b). The interesting feature of this performance was that Shakespeare's play, in Italian translation, was performed alongside Britten's opera in English, and Mendelsohn's incidental music. The combination

and adaptation fused languages, the different modes of music, sung performance, instrumental performance, acting, dancing, stage sets, as well as programme notes, pre-concert touch tours, and the context of the outdoor large venue of the Sferisterio theatre in Macerata, Italy. What this research activity and the network showed was the significance of multimodal translation, but the lack of a framework to support such translation. It asserted that moving from one place (or culture) to another, as well as from one mode to another, to experience different cultures, also is translation, whether it is inter-, intra- or intersemiotic.

## **MYTHS OF MUSIC AND TRANSLATION**

There are some myths that surround music and translation. These arise from discussions of music before the rise of cultural musicology, where the notion of music as language, as an analogy, was rarely questioned. To set out a framework for music and translation, it is necessary to clear the air about some of the main perceived myths below.

### **1. Music as Universal Language**

There is a belief among many that music is a universal language, and indeed a language (Cooke 1959), which has been commented on by Albright, referring to it as “understood intuitively by everyone” (2009: 3). There are a few issues with the idea that music is universal which are troubling from the point of view of translation studies or hermeneutics. It is possible to listen to music from anywhere in the world and to appreciate it, but it is not possible to comprehend the meanings associated with the original work, or to truly engage with the messages that might be within the work. It is more likely, as Cook (2001) identified, that we would construct our own meaning, as emergent, in the context within which we are listening to it. Therefore, as much as we have a universal access to most music, especially through online streaming, it does not automatically give us the access to its meaning. This is no different to textual language, where language requires translation; only for music, this process goes beyond verbal translation; the need to know something of the context of the work’s development, its genre, and its intended usage is always required in translation, but the creative dimension of the target works presentation setting must also be considered.

Nevertheless, if we equate musical language to textual language the following claim is possible: “a word awakens both an emotional response and a comprehension of its meaning, whereas a note, having no meaning, awakens only an emotional response” (Cooke 1959: 26). This is a limited view however. It pitches word and note as elements within the mode as

potentially meaning bearing, but we know from the broader research field that meaning is only confirmed and developed, then delivered, within the context of the mode and the socio-cultural context of its delivery and reception. As such, the comparison to a single so-called meaningless note is inappropriate and inaccurate. It does not consider the potential for our comprehension to change over time (music is a temporal art, and works are recreated over time) as well as to connect notes with notes in listening to phrases, melodies and sections. Even considering individual words for translation can produce miscommunication unless the context of the sentence and paragraph is understood. In fact, in many languages single words often have multiple meanings, and sometimes those meanings are contradictory. Though this is common in languages and translation studies, it is less common in the discussion of the performing arts, so I iterate some examples. For example, contronyms bear two meanings, including: in English, to *dust*, which refers both to removing dust from objects but also to sprinkling sugar on cakes; to *overlook*, which can refer to one failing to notice something, but also to one who is paying particular attention to something. In French some words have two meanings which are related but different, such as *entendre* which refers to both the understanding of something and the hearing of something. In Swedish, some words have the same spelling and different meanings, such as *gift*, which means married and poison, but in Swedish some words are spelt the same but pronounced differently, resulting in very different meanings, such as *Banan*, which refers to either a banana or a train track, or *bål*, which can mean a large cocktail bowl, a torso or a bonfire. A holistic approach to comprehension is required which is situated within a detailed understanding of the context of the source text. The meaning of such words is only determinable by the context within which it is used. The meaning of music is, likewise, informed by its context. Like translation studies, music studies too always utilises and analyses its contexts, and has done with major advances in research in both fields since 1980s.

## 2. Music is Lost in Translation

Music expresses through associations. As we construct our own emergent meanings, we are using our prior associations, memories and understanding of the music style. As such, music means through metaphor. Although the exact details of an original source text may not be carried forward word for word, for example in an orchestral tone poem that sets a story, it will offer supplementary meaning in clothing the structure of the story with associative musical language which can elicit emotional reactions, which supplementing the original meaning. If music speaks, as asked above, it must speak of itself and express its meaning in

its own terms. Music can operate in the manner of other art forms (and vice versa) but it expresses through and of itself. As such, although the granular textual (word) or image (painting) detail may be lost in a musical adaptation of a work, something is supplemented. Indeed, translation studies has often set out a hierarchy, as textual language is translation proper (to borrow from Jakobson 1959). As Wittgenstein has observed, however, “speech is a special case of music” (Albright 2009: 14).

### 3. Translation is Language Proper

This claim is that to perform an act of translation, that act needs to be the translation of a textual or verbal language. This is now not maintained by everybody in translation studies. Since Jakobson (1959) proposed the notion of an intersemiotic translation the potential for translation to extend beyond words has been possible.

Visual art can express without words – a standard saying is that a picture tells 1000 words. We can assert that other forms of non-verbal art can express something. Art expresses in more than one sense: music relies on our hearing, our somatic feeling, as well as the visual presentation. Opera is a prime example where language alone is not enough. The stage is set, there is a backcloth, a series of characters and costumes, make up, lighting, a programme, surtitles and the musical performance. Together these create a multisensory event. It is even possible that scents delight our sense of smell in installation arts. The notion that translation is limited to language is problematic, and most translation scholars now consider how they involve verbal language and verbal text, and now the field is expanding to consider multimodal experiences. There is a famous comment at the start of Edith Wharton’s *The Age of Innocence* that outlines the complexity of changing languages in a musical setting, which demonstrates the need for more than a single interlingual translation. In this case of opera, Wharton is describing opera performed in America, set in the 1870s: “the German text of French operas sung by Swedish artists should be translated into Italian for the clearer understanding of English-speaking audiences” (Wharton 2006: 4). This interlinguistic translation is set within a stage set which usually changes each time it is produced, and each time it is staged new singers will take on the roles, changing the singing style, articulation, gestures and musical shapes.

### 4. Music needs no translation



The danger of the above myths is that if translation is only considered in relation to verbal and/or textual terms then none of the other musical texts would be carefully considered in terms of how the musical content, the mode of music, and do in fact impact the ways in which text translation occurs for songs, musicals, operas, as well as for the specific requirements of surtitles, subtitles, programme notes, libretti, and such like. As Minors (2013) and the Translating Music network made clear, companies such as MTV and Deluxe Media work hard to ensure the translation of musical texts facilitate access to musical content more broadly (Desblache and Minors 2014: online), but in so doing they necessarily create translation in a multimodal context for multimodal purposes. Music scholars, especially those working in artistic research, recognise that our reading of a score is “translated into auditory perception” (Coessens 2019: 143). The score as source text is only one representation of the music. Here, translation is being used as a metaphor. The notion of translation as a process is not the same as, for example, an interlinguistic translation.

#### 5. The Translator is Invisible and Silent

The notion that the translator could be invisible, as once referred to by Venuti (2008), is problematic. If the resulting translation is made for a specific context and a specific purpose, the translator must make the meaning accessible for that context. They have a role in adapting meaning delivery to function well in the target text. Although the meaning of the source text is the prime focus, the translators’ choices make them to some extent visible (it is a matter of degrees). The translator is identified through comparison of source and target text – not a process performed by all readers. Similarly, in a musical context, if a composer responds to a source text in another mode (in an ekphratic manner), their response may carry forward the sense of the source text, but its presence in a new mode essentially projects the voice of the composer. The translator working in and across any mode is therefore very present. Their voice (their agency, approach, choices) is embedded within the target text. As such the notion that the “translator is an empty vessel, a channel that simply allows passage between two languages” (Wu 2019: online) is as Wu identifies limited. Any attempt to claim invisibility is no doubt why assertions have been made to the effect that: “The translator is a shady character, sinewy with betrayal” (Wu 2019: online). In recognising and articulating the role of the multimodal translator, it is hoped more of the process would be seen and understood.

#### 6. Music only requires Hearing

Music is an aural art form in that we perceive sound waves via our ears, but it activates more than one sense. Music is both accessible to the deaf and hard-of-hearing via the vibrations and feeling of music within and on our bodies. Music is experienced alongside the other senses. We usually see something of the performance whether in a live event, a broadcast/streamed performance or via the imagery that accompanies music releases.

## 7. Knowledge comprehension

There are many ways of knowing, beyond written and verbal forms of comprehension. Knowledge is contained within words: other ways of knowing however are integral to music and the broader performing arts. Our somatic, felt, experience enables artists to develop both an embodied knowledge and therefore an intuitive understanding. “What is interior embodied language could be translated into a non-textual medium” (Penrod 2019: 114). The application, use and sharing of all forms of knowledge are integral to understanding collaboration in performance arts (Blain and Minors 2020).

Despite these myths, there is movement of sense from music to the listener, as such we can say that sense has transferred from the artist, through the artwork to the receiver. But, as it is “emergent” in the listener’s somatic experience, it is clear that “music conveys not unnuanced emotion but emotionless nuance” (Cook 2001: 180). The emotional content is pieced together by the spectator, and so the emergent meaning includes, as one part of the meaning construction, an emotional reaction. This is “the key to a model of musical meaning that understands it as neither immanent nor arbitrary, but rather negotiated and emergent” (Cook 2001: 180). The negotiation that the spectator performs is analogous to the act of translation. In attempting to assess how creative collaborations work from creation to performance, it would be worth exploring a framework of musical translation to consider how music not only creates meaning but works to project and co-create sense through a collaborative dialogic process.

## **A FRAMEWORK FOR MUSIC AND TRANSLATION**

If translation is the transfer from one mode, place and culture to another, then it necessarily moves beyond language and requires that we recognise that translation in a multimodal setting functions as metaphor. Considering that it is also generally assumed that music functions as metaphor, the case for translation to extend to music seems logical, on this basis alone. Nevertheless, as noted, there remains no core methodology or model for applying

translation to music, therefore, “transfer-oriented investigation methods are necessary” (Kaindl 2013: 265).

I subscribe to Bassnett’s view that: “A translator cannot be actor, director, designer and audience all at the same time” (Bassnett 2010: 99), but that each is acting as a translator. Their position within the collaborative work changes what actions they can make, and when they make them. The movement from sender to message to receiver changes the positionality of their role. Moreover, in a collaborative context, their positions likely do not remain in only one location. The (co)creators are also the first receivers and may well be those creating the work live. The intersections between sender and receiver are important. I see the translation process as a dialogic process, in which each creator and each performer modifies the resulting work, in bringing it to fruition. Their collective voices bring the final piece together to be shared, thereby sending the *message* contained in the work via a performance, broadcast and such like. I agree with Wolf that the process of translation is “conceived of as a performative process [which]... transcends borders and creates representation by deliberately exploring differences encountered during the process” (Wolf 2017: 32). Encountering difference is not only likely, but the encounter with difference encourages us to think and work as translators in recognising where our understanding meets, where the modes are able to transfer and share content, where there are limitations to such sharing.

I propose (Minors 2013, 2016, 2019, 2020a and 2020b) that music can translate the content of other art forms. The significance of translation is that it enables collaborators, creators and analysts to explore how sense is transferred, or simply, to making us more aware in the moment of how we speak and communicate during the creation of a work (Minors 2012a and 2020: 121-127). As noted: “Music, dance, painting, sculpture, and handcrafts—all offer a way to translate embodied language” (Penrod 2019: 115). Bringing this tacit knowledge to a verbal domain at both the start and end of the translation process enables artists in a collaborative context to share their understandings (see Blain and Minors 2020: 3).

The translation process in a collaborative creative work relies on recognising the position of each collaborator, their context and their roles, but it is necessary to recognise that the meaning and coming together of the work only “achieves its full potential through the performer’s interpretation” (Malena 2017: 1). Indeed, the position of the translator or artist within the collaborative team and within their socio-cultural context is significant to

understanding how transfer of sense occurs across modes, between people, and within the work in question. As Kress asserts, “‘position’ is *the* issue” in multimodal translation (2019: 28, original emphasis). A framework would help in establishing our individual positions within such a collaborative, dialogic process.

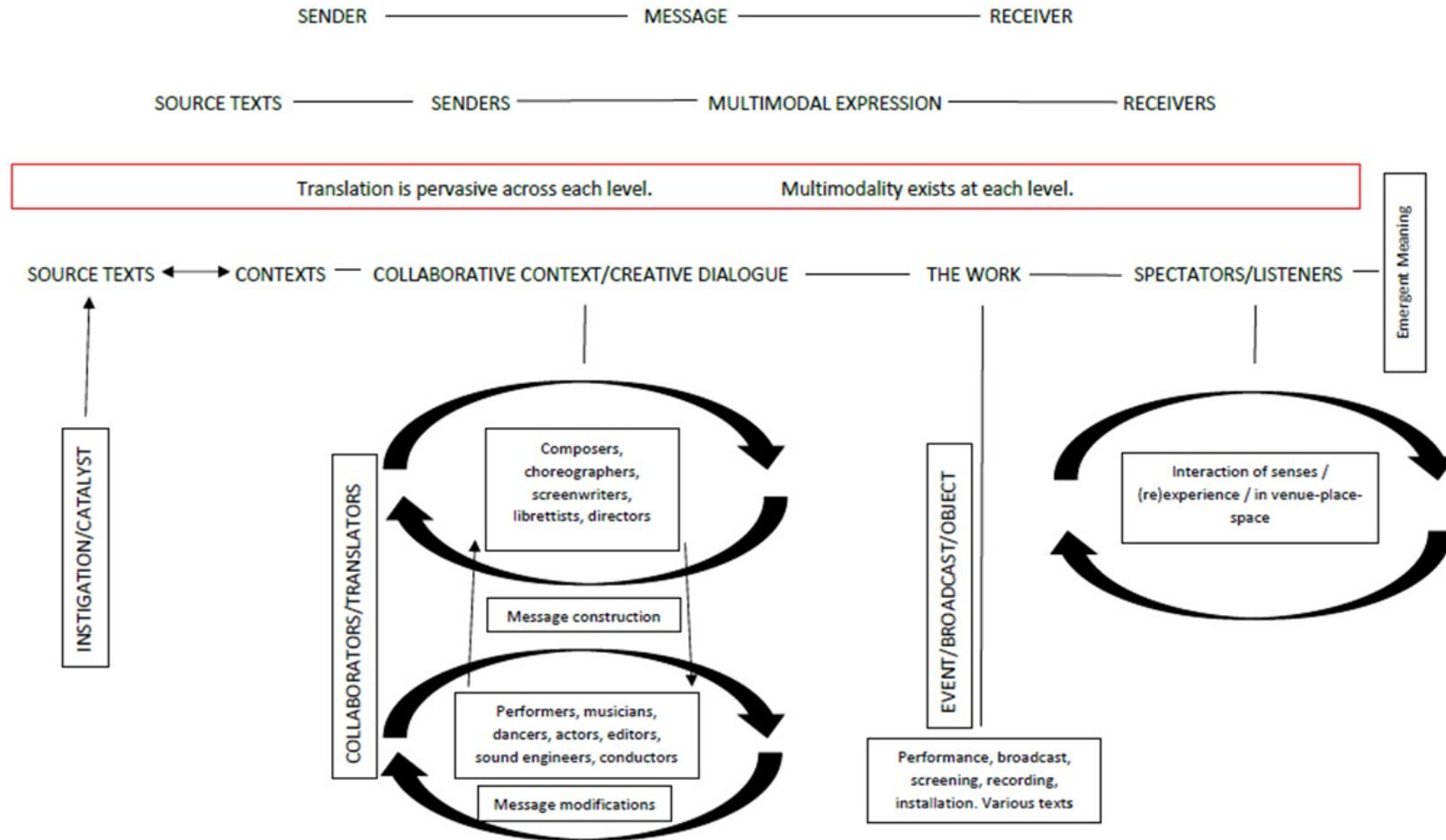
In order to clarify the positionality of the artist as translator, and the process of translation, I set out a framework, illustrated below in Figure 1. A framework is neither a method nor a model, in that it gives an overview of the structure and underlying system of multimodal communication, but it does not give the precise ways in which it can be applied. This is deliberate, in hope that it can be realised in a wide range of specific multimodal cases. It is necessary, though, that a framework is proposed in order to illustrate how tools from translation studies are indeed relevant to multimodal fields. It illustrates how music (and the other arts) work in action, in collaboration, requiring the transfer of sense at various points in the process, not only during the final stage of reception. Both Bassnett (2012: 67) and Kaindl (2019: 49) call for a framework, from a translation perspective. What I offer, is something similar but pitched (inevitably) from my perspective as a cultural musicologist and performer. The framework, diagrammatised below, is necessarily complex, as the process of artistic collaboration is. Indeed, I have modelled elsewhere the mapping of the different art forms in developing a work and meaning in a model akin to a venn diagram (Minors 2012b). I see this current framework as a macro level process, whereby a previous mapping a model exists both within the collaborative and interpretative stages. Creative collaboration is a dialogic process. It requires an exchange of sense in order to modify and create the work. There are, therefore, multiple senders as well as multiple receivers.

Building on Jakobson’s model, where there are senders, a message and a receiver (1959), it is necessary to recognise that the sender may also have a source text as inspiration or instigation for a new work, which is multimodal, expressed in multimodal terms, and that this is then received. The source text(s) therefore interacts within its context(s). The production, the creative dimension, is more complex than simply showing a single sender; rather, this framework aims to illustrate the fact that there is a dialogic process, whereby a composer, as one example, might be interacting with a director (as in film), or a choreographer (as in ballet), or a librettist (as in opera). These collaborative artists often wear many hats, in that they may be functioning across roles. However, the point is that together they adapt the content of the work in creating something that is multimodal and intended to function as a

cohesive work of art. As such the framework below recognises two stages within the collaborative context: the first are those agents creating the artistic content, the text(s), of the work, for example, the score; and the second is the stage whereby the performers, dancers, actors, learn the piece and rehearse it, which may also introduce new modifications, to feed back into the work. Translation exists at each stage and multimodality likewise exists at each stage. The stages will be concurrent for the creator, who then receives the work in rehearsal and makes changes. The position of the translator/artist is important as each moves between their role as creative artist, performer to interpreter and back. In other words, the sender will become the receiver and may then change their message and re-send it within the collaborative team during the creative process.

By starting the framework with the three dimensions proposed by Jakobson (at the top of Figure 1), I intend to show that his principle of message delivery is at the heart of the field of music and translation, but that it needs further expansion if the complexities of collaborative creative works are to be explored in relation to translation. The most intriguing dimension to me, as a scholar, is that of the collaborative context, in which the creative act takes place. I recognise that all the collaborators must participate and that not only the ascribed author (such as the composer, choreographer et al.) but also those performing and creating the event, have a role in developing how the message is delivered (Minors 2020a). I subscribe to the view that the performer has a role in interpreting the piece in performance (Minors 2013) and that we experience their position and their interpretation, in addition to the content of the musical (or other art) work. Therefore, the performer(s) is/are a vehicle through which we access live, recorded, broadcast and streamed music. This article has proposed such a framework to consolidate the range of issues outlined in the new field of music and translation.

Figure 1: A Framework for Music and Translation



## TRANSLATION AND MUSIC

There is a wide range of possible examples and ways to test how music and translation function. The above overview of the field, from both the perspective of translation studies and music studies, shows that there are shared issues concerning how meaning transfer happens in contexts which are multimodal, which reach across cultures, eras, styles, genres and modes. The experience of translating across the different modes also means we translate across the senses. Translating across the senses is “a product of reflection through culture” (Shaw-Miller 2002: 131). Not only is translation situated within a context, but so too is the translator. Their position within culture and within the work (especially if it is collaborative in nature) determines how they will formulate their own translation. In interpreting a performance, one performs an act of translation (Minors, 2013: 1-3). The performance act requires translation, whereby the imagination of the auditory work translates the score even before sound is produced (in the case of a classical musician) (Coessens 2019), or where the spectator “translate[s] external life from the mind of the artist as manifested in his or her work” (Shaw-Miller 2002: 55).

The framework could be useful in many situations, where the process and form of translation varies. I consider a situation where there is a catalyst for creation. For example, Paul Dukas’s *L’apprenti sorcier* (1897) is a musical representation of Goethe’s ballad, *Der Zauberlehrling* (1797) from exactly a century earlier. Goethe himself can be said to have performed an act of translation (in a metaphorical sense), as the content of the story is based on Greek myth. Dukas’s access to the story is the famous French translation by Henri Blaze. As such, there is a multi-layered translation process, from Greek myth, through German culture and a poetic version, through French translation, even prior to his own musical representation. Interestingly, Dukas not only wrote a descriptive piece of music, but he also analysed his own musical themes, noting the musical themes that were associated with the main characters of the apprentice and the broom (see Minors 2007: 141). This detail shown in his manuscript score (Dukas 1897: Ms. 1037-39) is testament to the notion that a composer actively interprets the content of a source text when responding to it in making a musical representation, or in translating the story into the mode of music. The translation does not stop with Dukas’s score or the performance of it in the concert hall. In the case of this piece, Disney used a shortened version of Dukas’s music for *Fantasia* (1940). As such, it moves from myth (verbal), to poetry (text), to music, and then to animation. The themes Dukas ascribed were carried from the source text (which for the Disney production was Dukas’s

score) to the target text, in that the apprentice and broom theme are associated with those symbols in the animated story. Interestingly, the thematic associations, established by Dukas, from Goethe's text translated by Henri Blaze, have been used again in TV adverts in Britain, including a recent advert for gardening tools where the sorcier was represented by a young male, effectively, conducting the gardening tools, which are complementary to the broom of Goethe's text (STIHL 2017: online). What this shows is that multimodal translation does not have a single end: a work can be re-translated and moved to a new mode and to a different culture, at any time. The source text can therefore be different for each sender (artist) in that they may access the work in different forms, not necessarily in chronological order.

The example above is particularly of relevance to proposing a framework for multimodal translation. Multimodal translation in this article is used in a different sense from the way in which it is used in Translation Studies, where it is a process involving a verbal text (together with many other signs and codes) and a change of languages and cultures (among other things). The above diagram shows that multimodal translation here is metaphorical in sense. Although Goethe is not a translator in this example, I share his specific ideas about translation as a process as the categories he explores are highly significant to musicology and music studies (and have been since the 1980s, outlined above). Part of his contribution was to formulate a model that represents three kinds of translation, which I see as phases in that they can be concurrent, recurrent, and can overlap. It is interesting to consider his suggestions, as he was also a practicing artist, aware that his own writings may one day be translated. The three phases consist of: 1. Epoch, which "acquaints us with foreign countries on our own terms" (Bassnett 2014: 71). This phase clearly denotes a position of the translator in terms of their national, regional and cultural context, not only the context of the target language to which they are translating. 2. Appropriation, which denotes that the translator in some way digests the source text author's perspective and understanding, before positioning their own translation to create a modified work that is relevant for their own context. This phase denotes more change to the source text as it requires the translator to contribute something further of themselves. This seems a close parallel to the ideas within Bruhn's view of *ekphrasis*. 3. This final phase is considered in high regard by Goethe in that it brings the source text and the target text closer by ensuring some level of originality in the translation to make the work accessible to the target audience, but requires that the target text retains a deep understanding and close structural relationship to the source text. Waltje called this phase an "interlinear-translation" (2002: online). Bassnett raises the issue here that this may suggest



something bordering on “a theory of untranslatability” (2014: 71), but it also seems possible that Goethe’s notion (intended for interlinguistic translation) of presenting the source text in a new manner could refer also to the shift of mode from text to performance art, from poem to story, from written text to spoken text as well as to a shift in language.

The transfer from myth to text, to music, to animation, to TV is a long process which requires that “a translation recontextualizes the source text in the translating language [or mode] and culture by applying a set of formal and thematic interpretants to inscribe an interpretation” (Venuti 2013: 4). *L’Apprenti* could be said to represent Goethe’s third phase. Such a process is endemic to a wide range of music. Dukas’s friend and contemporary, Claude Debussy, famously took Stefan Mallarmé’s eclogue and composed *Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune* (1894) in response to it, to which then Nijinsky (as choreographer) working with Serge Diaghilev (as impresario) created a balletic version (1912). The layered meaning is interesting, but how these artists responded to their source texts is significant when we try to establish a framework for multimodal translation (see Minors 2019: 166-170).

The sci-fi film *A Space Odyssey* (1968), is based on a novel by Arthur C. Clarke. This source text provides the basis for the narrative, and the characters, but the tone of the film comes from the combination of the visual scene, the actors and the soundtrack, so led by the director’s choices. In this particular case, famously, the originally commissioned music was not used throughout the film; rather, the director chose to retain music from the temp-track (the temporary track added to the film as a guide to the composer for what the director was hoping to achieve) (Minors forthcoming c). As such, the new target text (the film) integrates not only a representation of the novel, but also pre-composed music, into the film, appropriating those source texts into an entirely new context. As the framework shows, the source text(s) are situated in a context, but during a collaborative creative act those texts may change, adapt and develop. The resulting work is not only multimodal, but has multiple layers of interactive relational components, each contributing to what we interpret when the final film is received by the spectators. Though the music is not the original source text, or created specifically for the target text, its inclusion is part of the translation process which the director led.

Both examples I mention above do not include text set to music of course – the examples represent the broader categories of film music and narrative music. If we consider opera or

the vast array of popular music, there is a text to consider in addition. I referred to BTS at the start. They are an interesting case, as their songs are often sung with verses in Korean and choruses sometimes in English. The fan culture has been the location for textual translation, online. But textual translation happens in a sense via the multimodal presentation if one views the music video. One hears, reads, sees, observes and senses the work as a whole. “Idol” was a song on the album *Love Yourself: Answer* (2018: online) and notably has a title in English, lyrics referring to “artists”, and a scene set within a large, opulent art gallery, integrating visual imagery from the European baroque era. Symbolic references from art and cultures are used throughout their albums, which are all themed and sometimes come in parts (the above is the second *Love Yourself* album from 2018; the first was subtitled “Tear”). Their second studio album, *Wings*, includes “Blood, Sweat and Tears” (2018): this is a fascinating song not only because of the text, which merges Korean and English in the verse and includes a monologue in English, but because it opens with a classical chorus (J.S. Bach, “Kyrie Eleison” from *Mass in B minor*) and embeds in the middle an extract of organ music also by J.S. Bach. The whole song, in its music video form, is a *mélange* of languages, musics, and paintings. Its quasi-religious symbology, especially to the last supper of Christ, projects not a specific Christian ideal, but rather a global ideal of friendship, support, unity and togetherness. The group have become known for their philanthropy, and the musical and visual symbols in their latest music videos often support that. Not least now, a spectator may read more into these videos, since the band spoke at the UN for Generation Unlimited (Washington Post 2018: online). What BTS illustrates is how much the spectator is now actively involved in the translation process to interpret meaning. But it does also show that the collaborative artists bring together modes and different cultural contexts to express a coherent meaning, through different languages and modes within a single work. The bringing together of art works in this context is not too dissimilar to the film example, the opera example, or the narrative music example either. They each share a source text(s), a catalyst, a collaborative process, and then the delivery and reception of the work. A process shown in the framework.

## CODA

Translation has much to offer in the context of music. Music is active within and across culture, history and languages. It is something through which we share experiences, memories, rituals and significant moments. Due to its liveness, we usually experience it across our senses, as indeed Cronin’s translation work on travel has articulated: “All the five

senses can be pressed into the service of understanding” (Cronin 2020: 76-77). Music is not as specific as language: and although we have equivalences between the content of these modes, such as sentences and melodies, they express in different ways – although can also express together, in unison. This is not to say they express the same thing; looking for similarity only enables us to see their differences. Any mode communicates “via its own means” (Kaindl 2013: 265), which is why it is so vital to open up translation studies further to reach all forms of multimodal communication. It is because there are “significant shifts in meaning” (Kress 2010: 124) in all forms of translation processes, extending to adaptation studies, multimodal studies, hermeneutics and beyond, that we need also to look to translation studies from within music and the other arts. An understanding of the field of translation and music enables us to recognise what is not communicable via verbal language, and also to explore all processes of communication in new ways. As globalization continues to expand, the reach of communication seems unlimited. Music, art, film and so on are accessible globally, online, and so opportunities for receiving messages (experiencing art) are expanded. The wider reach of translation gives the receiver (spectator), as much as the sender (artist), a proposition to read, think and interpret across the senses, to feel, to hear, to see, even to smell and taste, and therefore, to form new ways and new understanding about how we communicate. After Albright’s plea, we could learn more about how to “speak music” (Albright 2009: 195) and therefore more about how to interpret it.

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