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Whispers: Cognitive Process in Inter-semiotic Translation

Yangzhou Bian

ybian2@binghamton.edu

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Whispers: Cognitive Process in Inter-semiotic Translation

Yangzhou (Yao) Bian
Project Instructor: Tarek Shamma

Dedicated to My Mother Yingmang Meng,
A Fabulous Dancer and An Irreplaceable companion

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Sylvia Skok, the creator of the paintings,
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Abstract:

The research uses *Whispers*, a graduate student theater project as the case study to analyze the cognitive process of inter-semiotic translation from different media/semiotic pairs. The study adopts the Interpretive Theory of Translation proposed by Danica Seleskovitch and Marianne Lederer as a point of reference to examine artists' thought processes when translating across sign systems. Spontaneous reflection of the artists, retrospective interviews, and written statements of the artists used during the performance have been collected along with copies of the source and target media. The paper begins with an introduction to the *Whispers* and the Interpretive Model proposed by Seleskovitch and Lederer, then proceeds with six section analysis, discussing Sylvia Skok's paintings as the source media, Neva Derewelzky's translation from painting to music composition, Marielle Zuccolo's translation from poetry to American Sign Language, the cast's collective translation from paintings to poetry, René Neville's translation from painting and poetry to choreography, and the dancers' translation of their names into choreography. The study concludes with a discussion session, summarizing the inquiry, reviewing the strength and limitations of the project, and proposing directions for further investigation.

Keywords: Intersemiotic Translation, Interpretation, Interpretive Model, Cross-Disciplinary Collaboration, Cognitive Process, Collective Translation, Performance, Cybernetic Art, Inspiration

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1. *Whispers*: Inter-semiotic Translation in Cross-Disciplinary Artists' Collaboration

Whispers was an original dance program exploring cybernetic art (Neville, 2022, p.2). It was conducted by theater graduate student René L. Neville in the fall semester of 2022 at Binghamton University as an In The Works performance project. The cast included Yingmang Meng, Madisyn Mercado, Jeanne Norton, Laura Ulrich, and Marielle Zuccolo, who were members of the student body and the community at large. Rehearsal began on September 13 to October 25, meeting for three days every week. The performance was held in the Anderson Center Grand Corridor from October 27 to 30 with free admission and was open to the public. Other key collaborating artists include Sylvia Skok, faculty of the Art History Department, and Neva Derewetzky, a graduate student from the Music Department at Binghamton.

The project was inspired by the role of cybernetics in art, which makes *Whispers* an exemplary case study for inter-semiotic translation (Neville, 2022, p.2). According to American Art Historian Edward A. Shanken that cybernetics brings several interconnected propositions about information transfer within and across systems. He argues that first of all, “phenomena are fundamentally contingent”, which corresponds with American linguist Noam Chomsky’s conceptualization of the “surface meaning” and “deep meaning” in the Generative-Transformational Model (2002, p.258). Secondly, Shanken suggests that “the behavior of a system can be determined probabilistically”, which correlates with the subjective nature of interpretive emphasis given during the translating process (ibid, p.258). Thirdly, the theory proposes that a unified theory could be articulated with regard to the transfer of information, as “animals and machines function in quite similar ways” (ibid, p.258). The Interpretive Model, a theoretical framework on the cognitive process of interpretation studies proposed by Danica Seleskovitch and Marianne Lederer could be a helpful tool to cross-check to what extent the process of information transfer across media types resembles one another and whether the universal characteristics exist. Lastly, Shanken indicates given the aforementioned hypotheses substantiate, “by regulating the transfer of information, the behavior of humans and machines can be automated and controlled” (ibid, p.258). In other words, if uniformity could be verified, then it would be possible to expand the language-based models in translation to study the transfer of information across sign systems and to establish theoretical pathways for inter-semiotic translation. Most importantly, manifested through the collaborative process, by giving focus to “how message flow through feedback loops”, cybernetics and the concurrently emerging field of information theory represent “a fundamental shift away from the attempt to analyze the behavior ... as independent and absolute phenomena” and settle on how the “transfer of information... alters behavior at the systems level”, redirecting the inquiry to the process and its associative outcome (ibid, p.257-258). Furthermore, *Whispers* was dwelling on two levels of creative involvement called first-order and second-order cybernetics. First-order cybernetics is similar to translation proper. During the process, the observer is outside of the system. Second-order cybernetics is similar to interpretation during which the observer is participating from the inside of the system whose behaviors simultaneously shape the systems (Neville, 2022, p.5). The relevance of the concepts and practices adopted in *Whispers* manifests clear connections to the study of translation.

Moreover, the collaborative process of *Whispers* makes it a compelling case to study inter-semiotic translation. The visual artist Sylvia Skok provided five paintings labeled *Alpha (+1)*, +2, +3, -4, and *Omega (|5|)* which served as the source of inspiration for Neva Derewetzky's three original music compositions used for the choreography studies. While Derewetzky was translating the set of paintings into music, the cast translated *Alpha (+1)*, +2, +3, and -4, into words and phrases based on their impressions. Neville curated the collective interpretation of the cast into poems. During the re-verbalization process, Marielle Zuccolo discovered one of her father Angelo Zuccolo's published poems coincidentally encapsulated the same essence as with *Alpha (+1)* and offered to translate it to American Sign Language during the performance. Neville and the cast cooperated in translating what the poems impart to choreography, coordinating the stage picture and the styles of body language while establishing referential points throughout the pieces to acknowledge the relationship between the pieces and the original paintings. The last number on the program was constructed through a concurrent creative process interpreting the concept of "Omega" as an extension of the existing body of work, with Skok finishing the last painting of the series and Neville directing the cast to choreograph their names into movement sequences as the final bow to the audience. According to Russo-American structuralist Roman Jakobson's categorization that the dance project *Whispers* simultaneously embarked on transmutation, "an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of non-verbal sign systems" when translating from painting to poetry, from poetry/ names to choreography, and from poetry to American sign language; and inter-semiotic translation to a broader sense as translation across sign systems when translating from painting to music and when references were directly made from choreography to paintings (Jakobson, 1959/2012,p.127). During the collaborative process, in order to transfer the meaning from a graphic form into a kinetic form, Neville and the cast re-introduced verbalization to assist the transfer of meaning from two non-linguistic sign systems. The intermediate step of the translating process resulted in poetries and their incorporation in the final performance to an extent transforming the designation of the "source text", the translating experience, and the end product. The collaborative process manifested the dynamics of cybernetics in work and the chance variation of inter-semiotic translation in performance, making *Whispers* a fascinating instance for further exploration.

2. Theoretical Reference: Interpretation and Inter-semiotic Translation

The research studies the thought process of the collaborating artists when transferring meaning from different pairs of sign systems. The researcher uses the textual, video, audio, and graphic records of the rehearsal and performance, the recall from in-person observation, and interviews with the various artists to reconstruct their thought processes and then compare to the Interpretive Theory of Translation of Seleskovitch and Lederer to discuss the commonality and distinctiveness of interlingual translation, transmutation, and inter-semiotic translation. While the emphasis is given to the translating process of individual medium pairs, the research addresses the products and their functions as components of one united performance.

The Interpretive Theory of Translation (ITT) emerged in the 1960s and gradually developed into a cogent construct to assist the study of the translation process of language-based materials in both oral and written forms (Lederer, 2010, p. 173). According to Seleskovitch that

how meaning is transferred is an “interaction of language and mind” that “the brain did not build sense by first grasping the meaning of separate words, then putting them together, but rather worked top-down” (ibid). Seleskovitch’s experience was supported by studies in neuropsychology, testifying that “language and thought were located in different areas in the brain” (Barbizet, 1968, p.56–7, as cited in Lederer, 2010, p. 173). Further clinical evidence in favor of “the duality of language and high-level thought” was provided in the field of neurology and psychology, attesting viewing language and thought as identical is a “conventional absurdity” (ibid, p.176). The tenet of the Interpretive Theory of Translation is that “translating is an act of communication” during which “sense is to be transmitted but the original language should be left behind” (Lederer, 2010, p. 174, 176). The Interpretive Theory of Translation summarizes the translating process into three overlapping stages: comprehension, de-verbalization, and reformulation. “Comprehension” refers to “using linguistic competence and ‘world knowledge to grasp the sense of the ST” (Munday, 2016, p.101). To expand its application in inter-semiotic translation, “Comprehension” would most likely be defined as building a cognitive connection with the source media based on one’s past experience of the semiotic system and “world knowledge”. “De-verbalization” refers to the “mental representation” or “conceptualization” (Lederer, 2010, p.175). It is the corruption of the surface wording as soon as understanding takes place. According to British translation scholar Andrew Chesterman, the purpose of this stage is to “avoid unwanted formal interference” of the surface structure of the source text and “to arrive at the intended meaning” (Chesterman and Wagner, 2002, p.9–10, as cited in Lederer, 2010, p.176). In inter-semiotic translation, this stage would be re-approached as “De-semiotization”, or the distillation of sense to its abstract form through the abandonment of the source media. “Reformulation” is owning sense retained from the source text and re-expressing it through the target language (Munday, 2016, p.101; Lederer, 2010, p.174). In inter-semiotic translation, the stage would be adapted to owning sense retained from the source media and re-expressing it through the target sign system. A fourth stage “Verification” was added by Canadian translation scholar Jean Delisle, summarizing a further step adopted by the translator revisiting and evaluating the target text, and identifying potential areas for revision (Munday, 2016, p.101). Presumably, a similar mental stage corresponding with the “proofreading” and confirmation could be spotted when conducting inter-semiotic translations. Arguably, for interlingual as well as inter-semiotic translation, “Verification” is not an obligatory stage compared to “Comprehension”, “De-verbalization/De-semiotization” and “Reformulation”.

In addition, Seleskovitch explains that “sense is a conscious mental representation not to be mistakenly identified with the specific linguistic meanings of any given language” (Seleskovitch, 1992, p.3, as cited in Lederer, 2010, p. 175). The confirmation of the separation between language and sense is crucial to hypothesize the validity of non-verbal semiotics being viable containers of meaning that performs in a similar way as language does on an individual level. Therefore, it is reasonable to infer that the thought processes of artists translating from one sign system to another sign system may observe the same or similar stages as interlingual translation. The cross-comparison of Seleskovitch and Lederer’s theories could serve as a starting point to contest if the linguistic models may be adapted for use in understanding inter-semiotic translations. Furthermore, the Interpretive Theory of Translation challenges the

“distorted or superficial” understanding of the sense being given by the target text (Lederer, 2016, p.175). In her article *Interpretive Approach*, Lederer points out that “sense is made of linguistic meanings plus the relevant extra-linguistic knowledge supplied by hearers/readers”, identifying the agency and the contribution of the interpreter (ibid). The autonomy of the interpreter and the subjectivity of the interpretation are characteristic of inter-semiotic translations. For many nonverbal sign systems, there is no or little previously agreed-upon association with the sign systems involved, or the divergence in such association within a given community is too great to make one standardized deliverance possible. Seleskovitch and Lederer not only identify the interpreter’s contribution but incorporates it into the Interpretive Model as an important part of how meaning is produced, making it a more compatible reference than the theories that take a hostile stance towards the relative autonomy of the translators and argue for curtailing their interpretive agency. Finally, the Interpretive Theory of Translation urges that sense could not be grasped with a high degree of certainty (ibid). Instead, Seleskovitch and Lederer propose to examine the adequacy and acceptability of the translated work from the perspective of whether or not “the sense understood by each of the interlocutors overlaps to a great extent” and “communication is generally pretty well established” (ibid). This proposition is helpful in directing the analysis of inter-semiotic translations as it circumvents the discussion on faithfulness to the source media which is hard to evaluate when the translation takes place across non-verbal sign systems.

3. Case Study: Intersemiotic Translation Pairings and The Cognitive Processes

3.1). Sylvia Skok: the Source Media

During the performance of the dance project, a collection of nine paintings created by Sylvia Skok was hung on the back wall of the Grand Corridor with curlicue printouts of their labeling and associative phrases interspersed among the exhibitions. Starting from left to right are *+d*, (*System*)¹, *Alpha (+1)*, *-c*, (*Cybernetic*), *+2*, *+3*, *-d*, (*Esotericism*), *-4*, *-a*, (*Perspective*), and *Omega (|5)*. Paintings labeled with Greek and Arabic numerals *Alpha (+1)*, *+2*, *+3*, *-4*, and *Omega (|5)* were the source media for inter-semiotic translation. Paintings labeled in English alphabets *+d*, *-c*, *-d*, and *-a* were unchoreographed paintings from the same collection. The curlicue phrases were compositional guidelines of Skok during the creative process which also served as the indicative points of the immersive experience for the spectators and collaborating artists. In place of the description of artworks were bullet points curated under each of the five curlicue phrases. These linguistic elements were included in the following long quotation:

“*Whisper* (quiet communication; heard by some; a secret to others)
System (entity arising; when parts cooperate & interact as a whole)
Cybernetic (circular feedback; observed from the outside—1st order; observed from the inside—2nd order)
Esotericism (ideology; deep, secret, difficult to acquire; knowledge; truth)
Perspective (is everything)”

¹ Italicized words in parentheses were used to designate phrases. English Alphabet and Roman numerals were the titles of paintings.

Alpha (+1)² is the juxtaposition of spaces. On the left, a block of orange and a block of creme form the first half of the diagonal line that is proceeded by the intersection of black and strokes of pastel purple. The top is a narrow band made out of blue and shades of red and orange. From the top right corner to the bottom left corner, three circular shapes of unidentical sizes, colors, and textures form a second strip crossing the diagonal line in the middle. The lower quarter is divided into triangular clusters in creme, chartreuse green, baby blue, and sapphire blue. Small dots of red, arctic blue, pink, white, orange, and black spatters across the shapes. Gold, red, black, and arctic blue are laced around the circular shapes in straight and squiggly lines.

+2³ is a circular organization of strokes of colors. The loop is divided into four quarters, with each quarter extending the family of colors it hosts to the top right, top left, bottom left, and bottom right corners that end in red, black, creme, and arctic blue. The loop is made of a layered melange of brown, yellow, and white, followed by black smudged with white and green, then a patch of red and orange, and concludes with thinning sapphire blue and white. The counter-clockwise momentum is broken in the middle by a fragmented vertical line. Left to the bottom are drops of blue and white. Two parallel lines dribble from the top finishing a little below the middle point of the painting's height on the right.

+3⁴ is a construction of angles and partial geometric shapes. The painting is divided into five compartments interwoven by the use of colors. The top half of the painting is a black semicircle with smudges of baby blue curved out of a rectangle of creme and red. The diameter of the semicircle makes the hypotenuse of a mountain green right triangle that is pointing down. The height and base of the mountain green triangle become the hypotenuses of two partly overlaying right triangles. The one on the left has wide smudges of white, yellow, and cornflower blue. The one on the right contains red dots and stains of brown and purple.

+4⁵ is a contestation of symmetry. The painting is vertically divided from the middle by the contrast of colors and the directionality of the strokes. The top one-third is composed of two right-angled "trapezoids" mirroring at the base. The one on the left is black with expanses of red, cyan, orange, baby blue, scarlet, chartreuse green, and scarlet. The one on the right begins with maroon and brown that extends into an orange sector marked by a black hole in the middle. The center-left is made of a scarlet rectangle, a midnight blue rectangle, and a black rectangle. The middle right is a blurb of whites mixed with baby blue breaking through a black square. The bottom quarter of the painting is composed of smudges of reds surfacing upon three irregular spreads of light blue.

*Omega (|5|)*⁶ is a gyration of circles. The motion begins with a cluster of white drops each with a black core in the center and extends to enlarging circles of flint, ash, Tiffany blue,

² See Appendix 6.1.1.

³ See Appendix 6.1.2.

⁴ See Appendix 6.1.3.

⁵ See Appendix 6.1.4.

⁶ See Appendix 6.1.5.

and brown upward and bounces off to smaller circles of mixed red and orange, red, Tiffany blue, baby blue and cornflower. The circles form the shape of a large letter B on a background of white receding into grey and black interrupted by dots, flings, and dribbles.

Alpha (+1) and *Omega (|5|)* were drawn with brushes and acrylic paint. When painting +2, +3, and -4, the artist switched to Griffin Alkyd oil and palette knives as the conduit. All paintings were composed on canvas over stretchers with purchased or found ready-made objects attached to sides forming non-frames. Non-frame was a term coined by Skok referring to a “frame” that belongs to the class of frames that do not block the painting within its confines but instead, the portals of the non-frames mark the points that spaces are coming together and the direction the spaces are extending beyond.

An interview was conducted with artist Sylvia Skok on Friday, Oct 21 2022 from 9:30-10:00 am in her office FA 219 to understand her creative process and the message the source media was conveying.

According to Skok, the name of her practice is called “cybernetic scrying”, an approach to creating abstract paintings. While Skok was creating her paintings, her mind was transferred into a light meditative state. The focus was given to the response generated from the deep consciousness to the spherical occurrence in which the artist was situated. While breathing with the space, what happened spontaneously was deep listening and deep looking, a type of uncontrived and heightened sensitivity and awareness of the tangible and intangible occurrence coded in the physical expression of the word such as light, shape, sound, and rhythm. The paintbrush and palette knife scooped the piece of life and what echoed to the artist at the moment into a piece of art. The paintings were Skok’s personal diary of her conversation with the moment. For instance, -4 depicted an elm tree, with the sun sieving through the tree crown and shapes symbolizing the north star which existed in the sky of the low mountain area where dwelled the artist. In +2 lived a big rock. It was a huge boulder sitting in the field at the back window of Skok’s home. The special texture encapsulated in the painting revealed the grit and groove on its rough surface where rain had come and made its enduring prints. The red and pale blue dribbles were made by “British Soldiers”, a species of lichen with pale blue hollow branches that ended in distinctive red fruiting bodies. When sharing her works with collaborative artists and audiences, Skok did not want to them to decode the referential images taking shape in her perception but to embrace the revelation of each individual contact. To Skok, the “sense” encapsulated within the set of paintings was a cosmic flow. By labeling instead of naming the paintings, Skokie refrained from arbitrating her interpretation as the authority designation of the paintings but invited the encounters to listen to the whispers of the paintings and to establish their connection to the moment through the paintings. To Skok, the “meaning” did not exist on its own. The paintings were one form of conveyor that she generated. It was the interactive involvement of all memories, experiences, and senses that made the metamorphosis towards a “message”. Therefore, the “message” was the attempt to communicate and it was the act of interpretation—the translational process inaugurated by the source media. Skok had shared her intention with the director of the project Neville, the composer Derewetzky and the cast. The aim of the project was to produce similar effects as with the source media rather than the “textual faithfulness”. In other words, the source media was the communicative pathway initiated by the paintings.

What was striking was Skok's creative process which resembled the Interpretive Model proposed by Seleskovich and Lederer. Skok's paintings were an inter-semiotic translation of the three-dimensional occurrence of the moment captured by her senses as she was standing in front of the easel. During the stage of "Comprehension", the light meditative state enabled her to absorb the source text. During the stage of "De-verbalization/De-semiotization", the sound, smell, and images produced by the sensorial inputs that register with her conscious mind were reduced to impressions. During the stage of "Reformulation", Skok transformed the idea of the moment into abstract shapes and colors, reconstructing of her experience on canvas. "Verification" was the whispering from the paintings that kept taking her back to reappraise canvases. The paintings were only complete when they stopped to speak to her.

Skok approached her paintings from the angle of system science and regarded her creative process as a type of modeling. Modeling is not thriving to mimic the original in all its dimensionality. Rather, the model is less detailed. It is a summary with interpretive cues to help people to understand the real thing. Skok assumed the utmost power in conceptualizing which facets of the source media to include. The selective approach echoed back to the decision-making of translators on whether and to what degree to omit, elaborate, or remain loyal to the source text. Moreover, Skok's choices were shaped by her cultural, social, and educational background as much as the communicative intention of what she reckoned as the "source media"—an immersive experience of and a metaphysical rumination on living. Skok's philosophy made her art a conglomerate of descriptive partial translation with the layout determined by chance happenstance and the fidelity to the source text was considered of less importance than the translating experience and the interactions the end products continued to spark. Skok believed that each composition was a system and she pursued complex systems that continue to evolve. The time of her "inter-semiotic translation" was a starting point, the refractions through the spectators endowed the completed paintings with the capability to further develop. To Skok, the interpretation continued to breathe life into the artworks. The paintings were never "finished" and the message they convey was forever becoming. While the shapes and colors remain unchanging, the ongoing process of interpretation made the painting evolve in its meaning, interrupting the constancy of the symbols, and making the experience intimate and individualized.

3.2). Neva Derewetzky: From Painting to Music

The cognitive process of the composer Neva Derewetzky was also highly corresponding to the Interpretive Model identified by Seleskovitch and Lederer when composing for the dance project with +2, +3, and -4 as the source media.

An interview was conducted with the composer Neva Derewetzky on Friday, Oct 28 2022 from 11:00-11:30 am in Fine Arts Building John Arthur Café to understand her cognitive process when composing for the dance project and whether it may fall into the category of inter-semiotic translation.

According to Derewetzky, there was not enough time to compose all nine paintings from Skok's collection. Derewetzky and Neville selected the pieces that they both made an immediate connection to and Derewetzky kept photographs of +2, +3, and -4 on her cellphone. When Derewetzky started the process, she would spend a sufficient period of time carefully studying

the pictures. She absorbed the information contained in each painting as a whole, soaking up the colors, shapes, arrangement, and other details in the brain. This expository and absorptive process correlated with “Comprehension”, the initial stage of the Interpretive Model. Then came “De-semiotization”, or the establishment of instinctual feelings. Derewetzky read the paintings as the diary of life, telling of circumstances of different days. According to Derewetzky, +2 was still. It felt as if one was crouching inside on a rainy day, looking out of the glass windows into the world distorted by the falling rain. +3 was the meditation evoked by natural landscapes. -4 was charged with energy, momentum, and movements. Obviously, Derewetzky’s interpretation of +2, +3, and -4 differed from Skok’s indication. Yet her perception of the paintings as individual momentary experiences was not far from Skok’s communicative intention. As Derewetzky was getting more familiar with the graphic layout and the content, “Reformulation” took place. Electronic and natural sounds assuming the rich and earthy quality of the paintings began to flow in her ears, creating what Derewetzky spoke of to as a “sound world”. The “sound world” Derewetzky perceived for +3 was earthy and grounded. In Derewetzky’s mind, the triangular shape extending downward was reflected through the movement of sound. It began in a meditative state. The intensity started to build, and then eventually came down. The sound world Derewetzky perceived for +2 was composed of strings, bells, wind chimes, and the whispers of the wind that conveyed bits of the unenclosed outside world. The strings acquired a purply blue quality that resonated with the texture of the palette knife strokes. The bells carried the same spellbinding/charismatic feeling manifested through the gyration of the colors. The wind chimes and recorded wind sounds were transformations of the inconsistency and consistency of the dynamic environment. The sound world of -4 was inspired by the large area made of multiple yellow hues, which were made of multiple divergent sound sources. However, in Derewetzky’s case, the “Reformulation” stage was further divided into “Initiation”, “Experimentation”, and “Reorganization”. Derewetzky would write down what she hears in chords and phrases, playing them out on instruments, and develop the “score” through the use of a digital audio workstation named DAW, a great application for composing electronic music. “Initiation” was the initial state of “hearing” the feelings manifest in a “sound world” constructed by instrumental and natural sounds. Examples included notes played through the piano and the accordion, the falling raindrops, the blowing wind, and the tapping horse hooves. These sound phrases were sonic manifestations of Derewetzky’s visceral response to the paintings which then supplied the backbone of the composition. “Experimentation” described Derewetzky’s attempt to produce the tunes her brain captured on a combination of instruments. “Reorganization” took place when Derewetzky assembled the composition on the digital audio workstation. A similar subdivision was observed in the choreographic process of Neville and the dancers and Neville’s development of the accompanying poems. “Initiation” could be considered the transitional phase into the target sign system. “Experimentation” was the trial and error phase, to trial different expressions of the identified units of meanings in the target sign system. “Reorganization” was the drafting phase, to settle down the layout with details fleshed out. The fourth stage “Verification” was manifested through Derewetzky’s long editing process, her later adjustments, and retrospective reflection of the interrelatedness between the compositions. She wrote comparably fast. When each piece was first completed, Derewetzky would allow herself time to sleep on it before revisiting the drafts and making changes. Derewetzky believed being cooled

from the initial impulses, the analytical phase would help her to reassess the connection of her composition to the paintings and enable her to further sculpt the music to communicate the feeling of the source media. An example was when conceptualizing +2, +3, and -4 as a sequence, Derewetzky was constantly checking back to make sure the compositions shared internal connections as the paintings were reflective of one another. +2 was composed in the style of electronic music with recorded natural sounds as background. -4 was utterly a work of electronic music and +3 was mostly natural sound with a small portion of electronic components. +2 used synthesized string, solo violin, piano, drums, bells, and prerecorded natural sounds. +3 used natural sound, piano, synthesized string, and edited live recording of an accordion. -4 used acoustic/electric guitar, piano, synthesized string, electronic base, synthesized Cajon (a type of box-shaped drum), and shakers. Derewetzky switched to the same sound quality to mimic the recurring use of colors in the paintings. She employed unidentical tunes and occurrences of the same instrumentations at different parts of the composition to differentiate the variation of shape and layouts. This was demonstrated through the repeated use of natural sounds in +2 and +3, and the continued presence of a synthesized string and piano for all three compositions.

Derewetzky's approach was function-oriented. Though the compositions were created from the paintings, Derewetzky also factored the practical needs of the project into the process. Derewetzky incorporated drums in the background to keep the beat which has been proven helpful for the dancers keeping track of counts. Derewetzky refrained from using live music, recognizing from professional experience that conducting an orchestra in front of a live audience or broadcast through loudspeakers would be a far more technically demanding and intense process. On the contrary, the programmer would have more control over the effect when using electronic music, and the process was less stressful and more effective. In Derewetzky's case, the compositions or the target media were determined by the source media and the performative purpose the commission was to serve.

It was not unusual for composers to use visual art for inspiration. Many influential music numbers were created based on paintings, including Ottorino Respighi's "Botticelli Triptych", Sergei Rachmaninov's "Isle of the Dead", Modest Mussorgsky's "Pictures at an Exhibition", Bohuslav Martinů's "The Frescoes of Piero della Francesca", P. Hindemith's "Mathis der Maler", and F. Liszt's "Hunnenschlacht", to name a few (Medhurst, n.d.). The analysis of Derewetzky's cognitive process reveals the relationship between the music compositions and Skok's paintings +2, +3, and -4 was beyond mere "inspiration" and more similar to that shared between a "target text" and its "source text", even though the degree of resemblance was uncertain and hard to access. This observation raised the question as to whether should the objective examination of the fidelity to the source medium, or the subjective intention of the agency that conducted the transfer of meaning from one sign system to another, determine if the activity would qualify as translation. Should it be defined as a creative exploration with a limited connection to what's claimed to be the inspiration? Reversely, "Inspiration" could be seen as a type of innovative translation, initiated by identifiable stimuli, and the ongoing process of translating determines the proceeding source text which may, or may not be related to the initial point of departure. "Inspiration" seems to allow the creator/translator the ultimate power to make adjustments to the "source text". Following this thread of thought, one may potentially identify "Inspiration" as one of the most liberal types of translation.

3.3). Marielle Zuccolo: From Poetry to Sign Language

Before the performance of the choreography for *Alpha (+1)* began, one of the cast members Laura Ulrich read the accompanying poem “The Ocean Rose” authored by Angelo Zuccolo while another cast member Marielle Zuccolo simultaneously interpreted the lines into American Sign Language. The four stages of the Interpretive Model were also identified in Zuccolo’s cognitive process when preparing for the interpretation.

An interview was conducted with the interpreter Marielle Zuccolo in the Anderson Center Grand Corridor to understand her cognitive process when interpreting the poem from English into American Sign Language. The interview was divided into three sessions. The first session took place on Friday, Oct 28 2022 from 7:10-7:40 pm. The second session took place on Saturday, Oct 29 2022 from 7:00-7:30 pm, and the third session took place on Sunday, Oct 30 2022 from 1:10-1:20 pm. A transcript of Zuccolo’s interpretation has been provided in the appendices under the section on interviews.

Zuccolo is a student of American Sign Language mentored by her teacher from the deaf community. American Sign Language (ASL) “is a complete, natural language that has the same linguistic properties as spoken languages” that is “expressed by movements of the hands and face” to assist communication among people with challenges hearing residing in North America (NIDCD, 2021). ASL is a language completely separate and distinct from English (ibid.). The exact beginning of ASL is unclear yet some suggest ASL “arose more than 200 years ago from the intermixing of local sign languages and French Sign Language (LSF)” (ibid.). According to Zuccolo, there are two ways of interpreting a written text in American Sign Language. One is called fingerspelling, the representation of the letters of a written system using only hands. The other is called signing which employs both manual and nonmanual expressions such as facial expression and the positioning of the body.

When translating “The Ocean Rose” into ASL, Zuccolo fingerspelled the letters of the author’s name “Angelo Zuccolo” with corresponding hand signs. Then Zuccolo interpreted “The Ocean Rose” line by line as Ulrich read the poem to the audience. Zuccolo differentiated her interpretation from the “word-for-word” translation of the source text which she referred to as “signed English”. When translating into ASL, conjunctions such as “and”, “or”, and “but” were taken out or worked into the holistic meaning the sentence imparted. When preparing the translation, Zuccolo analyzed the poem line by line. Most of her attention was paid to the nouns and verbs indicative of the main topic. “Comprehension” took place as Zuccolo was exposed to the poetry and manifested through the identification of the kernel components of the sentences and the omission of connective elements. “De-verbalization” followed as Zuccolo summarized the idea and feeling of the lines in her mind. Next, she would select vocabulary from ASL and organize the hand gestures and expressions into a sequence of movements within the time constraint as her interpretation was spontaneous. These procedures corresponded with the “Reformulation” stage, the endeavor made to transfer the deep structure of the meaning through the surface structure of American Sign Language, a medium crossing the border of linguistic and non-linguistic sign systems. The fourth stage “Verification” was combined with outsourcing and reflective adjustment. Having choreographed the draft, Zuccolo visited her instructor in ASL and revised her interpretation based on the comments received.

In addition to the semblance of Zuccolo's cognitive process to translation proper, there were several other aspects of Zuccolo's interpretation that corresponded with some of the theoretical models proposed by theoreticians of translation studies. These included Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet's classic taxonomy of linguistic changes in translation and Hans Vermeer and Katharina Reiss's Skopos theory. To an extent, Zuccolo had taken the relative autonomy of the translator when working with specific words and expressions. These measures equated to what Vinay and Darbelnet refer to as "oblique translation", with "transposition" and "modulation" being the two most frequently used strategies observed in Zuccolo's interpretation. Sometimes, Zuccolo chose to replace the general concept with its part or particulars if cross-references to the painting as well as the accompanying poem confirmed that the adjustment was better suited for both. For example, she used the hand sign of "waves" to represent the word "ocean" to indicate the motion and expanse exhibited through *Alpha (+1)*. Sometimes, Zuccolo would omit elements that contribute less substantially to the sentences. In the third line, she signed only "soft rain" for "and the soft summer rain". At the same time, Zuccolo was aware of the function and intention of her signing being serving the performative expectation of the spectators, thus priority was given to fluency and fluidity over fidelity. Sometimes, there were several ways to sign the same vocabulary with subtle differences. In cases alike, Zuccolo would turn to the one that would connect most effectively with the phrase before and the phrase afterward. Sometimes, she would need to slightly adapt and even reinvent a gesture when the existing options could not be adopted because of the limited time allowed. In the eighteenth line, Zuccolo rephrased "with the happiest of teardrops" as "the heart swells" and indicated it with the dominant hand over the left side of the chest and the fingers gradually opening up from the O hand shape. Nonetheless, she would double-check to make sure that the basic meaning was coming through for people trained in ASL, reassuring the original purpose of signing was fulfilled.

Sign language interpretation assumes a unique position in translation studies as it crosses the border of linguistics and non-linguistic sign systems. Zuccolo's cognitive process and the approaches she adopted in interpreting from English to ASL suggest the commonality of translating within the same sign system (from language to language) and translating across sign systems (from language to movements). Compared to the more obscure and subjective interpretation of other non-linguistic sign systems, American Sign Language and French Sign Language have established conventions that enable a more unified understanding, recommending them to be a strong starting point to further pursue the study of non-linguistic-based translating across different sign systems.

3.4). The Cast: From Painting to Poetry

During the rehearsal process, Neville asked the dancers to put what they see from the paintings into words. She scribbled them down verbatim and curated the words into poems to be read at the beginning of each dance performance. The group approached the paintings as the source media and the resultant poems were the target text. When transcreating the text for +2, +3, and -4, while the thought process of the individual input of the dancers was reflective of the Interpretive Model, the collaborative process was also serving and reenacting the different stages proposed by Selekovitch, Lederer, and Delisle.

Interviews were conducted with the dancers Jeanne Norton, Marielle Zuccolo, Laura Ulrich, Madisyn Mercado, Yingmang Meng, and the choreographer René Neville retrospectively to analyze their cognitive process in relationship to the Interpretive Model.

In +2, Ulrich likened the dark background and the spatter of dots to the "stormy nights". The yellow and white reminded her of "blurry lights". The big "swirl" in the center and the commingling of contrasting colors gave her the feeling of disorder, "chaos" and "motion". Norton interpreted the paintings more conceptually. The white and blue colors of the painting made her think of water. The swirl of dark colors in the background and the bright colors of the foreground reminded her of *The Water Dancer*, a novel by Ta-Nehisi Coates about heritage in the form of a myth and slavery that she had just finished reading. The protagonist was a young boy who learned that he has a power called conduction. On contact with water, the boy could use it to transport himself and other people across great distances. This transfer of energy took the people from the danger of the South to the shelter of the North. Subsequently, Norton chose the phrases "conduction and transference of energy" to represent her understanding of +2. Neville revised the words and adjoined the phrases with conjunctions and verbs to let the sentences flow. She also added lines based on her reflection of the picture to assist the story-telling and to make the scene complete. Recorded below is the complete version of poem number two.

"Storm creates blurry lights
Chaos swirls and chaos brings comfort
Sweeping generalizations are not it
Conduction of energy
Transfer of energy
Confusion between colors fighting for prominence
Walking through colors with supportive love
Determination and vision forms movement
Movement heralds the storm
as the storm creates blurry lights"

When +3 was presented to the dancers, the patches of green came to Norton as "mountains", the pale yellow and peach as "light" and the smashes of blue as "water". Zuccolo saw the spatters of red and orange above the green as "orange poppies in the garden", and the swirl of whites and blues as the wings of "a snow angel". Meng read the red color above the green as "the sun rose above the mountains". The splashes of whites were like the "surfs" and "sea spread". Mercado discovered that the triangle painted in green that was upside down was like a "mountain" and the swing of pale blue was like the "mountain lake". Later observing from a different angle, one of the dancers described the green triangle as the "Pyramid" and another dancer likened the splashes of white at the bottom of the painting to a "Waterfall". Neville rearranged the words into poem number three which is recorded below.

"The mountains herald the sunrise
A sign that something is about to happen
The sea smiles as her sea spray invigorates the soul
The morning softly creeps in on silent feet
The circular movement of poppies in the green garden
Reflects the sound of a waterfall, a pyramid

The leftover motions of a snow angel
mirror the refracted reflections of light on a mountain lake
as the mountains herald the sunrise”

When -4 was presented to the dancers, Norton described the expanse of yellow with browns revealing from the corners as “flowers in a cardboard box” and the shapes Skok created in the painting reminded her of inanimate objects and “still life”. Zuccolo read the yellow colors carved out of the darker colors as a “yellow duck”. Meng read the light blue spreading over from the lower center to the bottom quarter of the painting as a “flood” breaking out from the blockage of rocks. The strip of navy blue clipped in between the large rectangle of scarlet and the strip of black stood out to her like a “tombstone”, the entrance from the world of the mortals into the world of the deceased. Meng described the semi-circle of oranges, reds, and yellows as a giant, surrealistic “sun”. Mercado reflected that the vibrant colors gave her the feeling of the “exotic birds” and the “tropical rainforest”. Neville rearranged the words into poem number four which is recorded below.

“A flood of water gathers momentum
as a tombstone, a blue memorial
connects two worlds
An imagined sun shifts shades of light and meaning
into a rainforest, densely tropical, with exotic birds
A bouquet of flowers in a cardboard box
impersonates a still life
A yellow duck holds an umbrella
as a flood of water gathers momentum”

When interpreting the paintings, the dancers demonstrated different strategies. Some approached the individual painting as a whole and resorted to words and phrases that described the overall feeling that they were generating as a direct response to the said painting. These included Norton’s interpretation of +2 and Mercado’s interpretation of -4. “Comprehension” began when the cast started to absorb the full landscape. “De-semiotization” was abstracting the lines and colors into the mind’s eye, and making associative attachments to pre-existing concepts. “Reformulation” was the verbalization or description of concepts or feelings through the use of language. When being asked to interpret graphic information, most commonly, the dancers would first categorize the shapes and colors into units of meaning. Then they would compare the units of meaning to extant objects or scenarios that were the closest in configuration. Finally, they chose befitting words to describe the objects or scenarios identified. The act of categorization was a means of “Comprehension”. “De-semiotization” was manifested through the process of likening the units of meaning to more legible things and ideas that obscured the exactitude of the features of the original and transferred two-dimensional inputs into dimensionless concepts. Similar to the previous examples, “Reformulation” was when the renaming of units of meaning after the mental modification. Examples included Ulrich’s interpretation of +2, Norton, Zuccolo, Meng, and Mercado’s interpretations of +3, and Norton, Zuccolo, and Meng’s interpretation of -4. What was interesting was also how two different dancers might have arrived at the same or similar interpretation having been given access to each other’s thought processes. For instance, both Meng and Mercado read the green triangle as a

“mountain”. When Neville was assimilating the phrases into poems, she found her interpretation of each piece was not very different from the dancers. Mercado’s repetition and Neville’s affirmation upon perusal and the small adjustments Neville had made were functioning as an external “Verification”, validating the interpretation of the dancers. Moreover, when approaching the paintings from the parts instead of the whole, neither of the dancers made the attempt to translate the full picture. Instead, they worked with the units of meanings that stood out to them as “interpretable”. Nor did Neville scrutinize and took out overlapping units of meaning. In +3, one might argue the small rectangle made out of different shades of pink was “untranslated”. The large area of yellow on top of -4 had been “translated” three times as “an imagined sun”, “a bouquet of flowers in a cardboard box” and “a yellow duck”. These decisions resulted in the omission of some of the content in the source medium and repetition in the target text.

The selection of the poems for *Alpha (+1)* and *Omega (|5|)* were two instances that were deviating even further from the conventional notion of translation. The poem accompanying *Alpha (+1)* was not assembled from the dancers’ words. It was from a collection of poems written by Zuccolo’s father. Zuccolo joined the project after it had started and she was unaware of how the group has approached the painting in the earlier phases of the rehearsal. When Zuccolo was introduced to *Alpha (+1)*, the swirls of color immediately revived the memory of a poem she had read years ago written by her father Angelo Zuccolo in his published collection “The Ocean Rose: Poems of Love Found and Love Lost” (Zuccolo, 2005, p.7). Zuccolo instantly realized the poem and the painting were meant to be a match. In the painting, the splashes of white and different shades of blue transferred Zuccolo’s mind to the sea. In the bottom left corner, the spinning blob of baby blue formed the swirl that incarnated the momentum of the water that broke up the tranquil surface. In the middle of the painting grew the lonely red rose rising above the waves in the center of the ocean. The prepossessing colors reaffirmed that the wondrous sight existed only in the dream world or a mystical land. Black vines stretching out from the center were smeared off by translucent brush strokes. They were the representation of the strenuous draft of the chilly season. Tiny colored dots spattering around the drop of red were like nurturing raindrops. The stripe of red on the top right corner and the vivid yellow and mellowing orange floating on the expanse of white indicated the sunlight of summertime undulating along the surface of the sea. The concomitant feeling of lightness and darkness created a strong sense of hope breaking through a hanging gloominess. Suddenly the red drop became a heart, throbbing and pumping vigorously. The ocean became the sky and the slender white slips at the bottom of the circle were the streaming tears that sparkle through the firmament. At that moment, they were transformed into stars. The poem reads: “

Rarely had the sun and the moon
and the sea and the surf
and the soft summer rain
and the strong winter wind
all gathered together at one moment
to marvel at a most wonderful sighting
a rose
growing in the center of oceans
alone in its beauty

delicate in its strength
alive in its passion
confident of its renaissance in such an unlikely garden
and all of those dwelling in the sky
and in and below the waves
and nearby and faraway, too
smiled
and the ocean rose
with the happiest of teardrops
looked
and touched the stars”

The connection made by Zuccolo could be seen as an association. When she looked at the painting *Alpha (+1)*, the impression Zuccolo gained immediately initiated the recall of her father’s poem. If comparing the process to interlingual translation, what happened was the translator/interpreter speedily identified a pre-existing text in the target language that almost seamlessly corresponded with the source text and could function sufficiently as a substitute without needing to dissect the whole body of text into chunks and search for a target language identical for each unit of meaning. It is similar to the occasions when an identical target language idiomatic expression has been located for the source language idiom that little or no additional effort is needed for taking the sentence apart and reassembling the translated words and phrases. The difference is idiomatic replacement takes place on a sentence level, and Zuccolo’s association took place on the “text” level. Zuccolo hadn’t rendered the poem line by line, and her instinctive reaction accelerated the “translating” process. Yet she went through the same cognitive stages as the dancers in the previously discussed examples. “Comprehension” began as Zuccolo was given access to the painting and accepted Neville’s request to interpret it. “Desemiotization” was achieved by extracting the ambiance by corrupting the physical delineation of the lines and hues and reaching her understanding free from the constraint of the graphic language of the painting. “Reformation” took place when making the association with and making the reference to an existing entity in another medium form. Her retrospective analysis when reading through the poem line by line with the painting in mind to reassure the perceived equivalence and conversations with other members of the group corresponded with the fourth stage “Verification”. What transcended Zuccolo’s “association” from a personal level was that the choreographer Neville and the cast shared Zuccolo’s insight that *Alpha (+1)* and “The Ocean Rose” were conveying the same essence when the poem was introduced to them. Though on a small scale, the external confirmation of the high compatibility confirmed that the same “sense” could be delivered and received through different media, verifying the point made by Seleskovitch that meaning exists independent of verbal or written language.

Omega (|5|) was another instance of the poem not made out of the dancers’ words. The poem came from another performance project with the reversed process of using choreography as the source of inspiration for creating artwork. As a component of the project, Neville asked the dance company what were they inspired by and curated the responses into poems. When Neville and the dancers began the choreography, Skok was still creating *Omega* (|5|). As the source media was in development, Neville was unwilling to predetermine what and how it would be.

Her thoughts skipped out of the box and decided to go to the source of the source media, the idea of “inspiration”. Neville recalled that poem and found it to be appropriate. If Skok was ultimately articulating her interpretation of the exact moment when her paintbrush was put into contact with the canvas and meant to encourage a similar interactive pathway amongst others with her concept as the media, then equivalence of the process and observation to the function could be achieved through a record of spontaneous utterances of many others who were trying to capture their source of inspiration in the form of words that had the power to elicit further reflective participation. Accordingly, Neville believed that as the finale of the dance project, it would benefit to leave the audience with space to think for themselves just as Skok’s process and philosophy were leaving the dancers at this moment—an unrevealed canvas with all its potential. The poem used as the accompanying text of *Omega* (15) is recorded below.

“Inspiration is everywhere
in music
in dance
in creativity
in cleverness

Inspiration is everywhere
in thinking outside the box
in staying involved
in connecting with other musicians
in working hard to master something you are passionate about

Inspiration is everywhere
in your mother
in your husband
in your grandchildren

Inspiration is everywhere
in positive and influential people
in mentors who encourage faith in yourself
in great artists who always inspire

Inspiration is everywhere

in giving
in doing things that create joy or beauty
in doing things that ease suffering
in the willingness to give truthful feedback

Inspiration is everywhere

in single mothers getting their kids on the bus

in interns working for free with thousands of dollars of student debt
in students making it to an 8:00 am class with a hangover

The human spirit is always working, creating, achieving...
yes, inspiration is everywhere”

Whether it is appropriate to address Neville’s selection of the poem as a translational activity, the interpretive elements in her process and the presence of a relationship between the identified source and target outcome indicate the possibility of applying theories of translation studies to analyze the situation. If to make the attempt to map the Interpretive Model over Neville’s thought process, “Comprehension” could be seen as Neville’s assessment of the situation that led to the inquiry into Skok’s creative concept as the purpose and the examination of Skok’s working mode as the process. “De-semiotization” was the complete disregard of the emerging physical form of the source media and dethroning of the actual painting as the derivative of a larger purpose and one of the many possible samples produced by a defining process. “Reformulation” was summarizing the key components of Skok’s practice as the “search and reenactment of inspiration” and the direct borrowing from a previous project which appealed to the same ideas. “Verification” was Neville’s ongoing rumination carried over the remaining rehearsals and finalizing the decision when being exposed to the actual painting.

The development of accompanying poems to the paintings provided a variety of samples for the analysis of the thought process of multiple interpreters under different scenarios. Though the lack of effective means to judge the quality of the “translations” has placed a major obstacle in accepting the illustrated activities as variations of translating, the discussions reveal the relevance of the Interpretive Model to a broader spectrum of cognitive processes associated with information processing beyond the conventionally defined translational activities.

3.5). René Neville: From Paintings and Poetry to Choreography

After having obtained the poems, Neville began to choreograph the dances. Neville adopted a collaborative approach. She would come up with a basic phrase of four units of movements or sixteen counts time of choreography reflective of her understanding of the paintings and teach it to all dancers. Then the ensemble would start to explore the basic phase and proceed to variations. For instance, different dancers might begin the same set of movements at different points in time, then be brought back in unison. In given moments, someone would alternate the side, mirroring the rest of the ensemble. Sometimes consecutive movements from the basic phrase were assigned to each dancer and carried out in a succession. The dancers were encouraged to discuss their thoughts, whether they find the experiments conform to or challenge the feelings evoked by the paintings. Neville also tasked the dancers with homework, asking them to come back with small samples of their own movement phrases springing from their reaction of to the paintings, the selected segments from the accompanying poetry, or a given concept. Neville would lead the dancers to go over what they brought in, adapt, and weave their offerings into the work. Though Neville’s creative responsibilities and the tasks she performed differed from the cast, the three stages of the Interpretive Model were spotted in the cognitive process of all participants, and Neville’s re-organization and coordination functioned as “Verification”.

The discussion was based on interviews conducted with the dancers Jeanne Norton, Marielle Zuccolo, Laura Ulrich, Madisyn Mercado, Yingmang Meng, and choreographer René Neville along with observations made during the rehearsal sessions, the four performances, and analysis of videotape recordings of the choreographies at different stages of development.

3.5.1) The Choreography of *Alpha (+1)*

In *Alpha (+1)*, influenced by both the painting and the poetry, Neville's thoughts went to chairs and had them arranged in a line facing the front, which made up the shoreline. She envisioned the dancers sitting on chairs, hanging on the chairs, standing up then returning back to the chairs, likening their departure from and returning to the chairs to the rising tides and ebbing tides. The basic phrase was anchored with circular motions, turns in different directions, at different elevations, with different amplitudes, and rounded body trajectories that imitated the motion of waves and the spinning red rose.

While assembling the phrases, Neville also incorporated an improvisatory section of Meng. Neville was drawn to the merry spirit bouncing off a series of shoulder and chest movements of Meng as an endeavor to relax and asked Meng to extract from what she did and make it into something that would go along with the painting and the existing choreography. Neville made the remark that Meng seemed to be imbued in her own world and that moment was simply moving and delightful to watch. Meng reflected that it was likely she unconsciously embodied the mesmerizing ocean rose depicted in Angelo Zuccolo's poetry and for a moment lived her beauty, her passion, and her strength, totally unaware of the change of the celestial sphere. Meng duplicated and adapted the movements of the first eight counts from her memory. Yet both Neville and Meng felt what was touching was the internal joy and buoyancy. From then on, Meng decided not to bind herself by any script but the mellowness of the ocean rose—crouching, extending, reposing, shuddering, growing; and let Derewetzky's beautiful composition carry her torso and limbs as the soft summer rain and the strong winter wind patting on the leaves and the stem of the ethereal flower. However, according to Meng that the self-analysis was retrospective and the decisions she made were mostly a primeval instinct.

The choreography of *Alpha (+1)* was simultaneously informed by the two source medium—the painting and the accompanying poem. When choreographing for *Alpha (+1)*, “Comprehension” was both Neville's initial exposure to the painting and the later process of her reviewing, accepting, and reflecting on Angelo Zuccolo's poem “The Ocean Rose”. “De-semiotization” was Neville's arrival at the impression of the seascape, her exploration of the texture and elements of the ocean, and her grasp of essence shared by the two source mediums. The third stage “Reformation” was shown through Neville's decision on the layout of the chairs, the dancers' movement trajectory, the use of turns and circular motions, and the commission of Meng's improvisation. Identified by Neville, part of Meng's “Comprehension”, “De-semiotization” and “Reformulation” were involuntary responses that predated Meng's cognitive registration as an instinctive reflex incurred by the continuous absorption of messages from the painting and the poetry. Yet one may argue that Meng's “Comprehension” officially started when Neville formally entrusted her with the translational task and took place in form of their

conversation. “De-semiotization” was Meng’s assessment of the situations⁷ and the connections she drew between the source medium and her improvisatory moment as the draft.

“Reformulation” was the development of movement sequences combining the adaptation of the gestures from her memory and the distillation of a performance plot serving as the improvisational guideline featuring the spirit of the ocean rose. Neville and Meng’s introduction of living the moment trespassed from the territory of dancing to that of acting. Though the exact physical expression differed slightly from performance to performance, according to the reception from the audience the aim of preserving the same essence was at large fulfilled.

3.5.2) The Choreography of +2

The choreography of +2 was predominately influenced by the poem. The abstracted hand gestures stretching to alternative sides, the pushing of the palms, the extending arms, and the throw with the back leg lifted echoed with blurry lights created by the storm, the conduction, and the transfer of energy projected from dancers’ interoperation of the +2. The choreography was unified and synchronized, yet as the performers were traveling, the motions were radiating in different directions at varying amplitudes. Neville used union and the momentary departure from unison to create a world of chaos. The choreography began with Mercado stepping away from her chair, inquiring about +2 which was hanging on the back wall as if looking through a window into the rainy night. It was followed by the basic phrases developed from Ulrich and Nortan’s choreography that came from their individual perception of the paintings, covering up the first five lines of the poem. Then Neville reversed the sequence of line six and line seven. She instructed the dancers wearing magenta, indigo, purple and pink to walk through the space, indicating “walking through colors” and used it as the transition back to the previous line of “confusion between colors fighting for prominence”. After a series of scoops, throws, and turns that mimicked the curve, the spatters and dripping in +2, Neville divided the dancers into two groups with their positions facing one another. The gesture she developed was confrontational, articulating the two sides of the battle. Then the dancers reunited to stage left as an ensemble and came towards the center hand in hand re-enacting the large circle at the center of the painting, showing “supportive love” through a caressing movement adapted from Eugene Louis Faccuito⁸’s jazz exercise. Lastly, the dancers returned to the first four counts of the basic phrase, as the last two lines repeated “movements heralds the storm, as the storm creates blurry lights”.

Ulrich made the first sixteen counts of +2 and René used it as the beginning of the ensemble. It began with the right leg crossed over the left leg following the leg hand stretching to the side at the level of the waist. The next two counts repeated the first two on the other side.

⁷ In the previous section of Neville’s selection of the accompanying poem for *Omega* (15), the “situation” was what she identified as the source medium, therefore it would be more appropriate to append her “assessment of the situation” as “Comprehension”. In Meng’s case, her source media were *Alpha (+1)* and “The Ocean Rose”. It was the exposure to the source text that propelled her to the next stage “De-semiotization”. Therefore, in this case, Meng’s “assessment of the situation” was categorized under “De-semiotization”.

⁸ Eugene Louis Faccuito (1925–2015), was an American jazz dancer, choreographer, and instructor professionally known as Luigi. The jazz warm-up exercises he developed were the world's first standard technique for teaching jazz.

Then the right palm dived down and reached up until the arm straightened with the body turning to the left. Again, the movements repeated on the left side. The second eight counts began with a series of gliding, consecutive steps to the front side left with the arms scooping up the air. Next was an inside turn with arms held up in a V shape. The phrase concluded with the arms swinging horizontally to the side and the head tilting in the same direction with the feet step-touch to the left and another step-touch to the right. The turns were inspired by the swirls and the feeling of chaos and motion of a stormy night.

Following Ulrich, Norton's contribution was inspired by the conduction and transference of energy. Influenced by the circular motion of the painting, it began with a head roll to the right. Next, as she was thinking about the underground railroad, the right arm reached up and pulled from the earth. The left arm reached up and pulled from the earth. The knees bent when both arms came down in front of the chest. Then Norton further abstracted her concept as deliverance—to reach, connect, give it away and get over there. In the last part, the arms extended forward with a throwing motion. The right leg was lifted at the back with the body slightly bending forward, balancing on the left leg.

In this example, Neville again was overseeing the large picture as she embraced and spotlighted the creative input of Ulrich and Norton. Similar to *Alpha (+1)*, +3, and -4, the first stage of "Comprehension" was demonstrated through the careful study of the painting and preparation of the poem before beginning to choreograph. "De-semiotization" was shown in Neville settling on using "unison", the antithetical expression of "chaos" as the thematic orientation. "Reformulation" was expressed through Neville's transposition of the order of lines and her execution of "unison" and the "departure from unison" in form of kinetic movements that mimicked the physical and conceptual features of the painting and key phrases of the poem. Norton and Ulrich's cognitive process was not unlike. "Comprehension" took place as they re-approached the phrases they each contributed to the poem and "De-semiotization" was the effort they made to re-register the feelings. "Reformation" was the presentation of the underlying meaning of the lines in form of the hand, head, feet, and body movements.

3.5.3) The Choreography of +3

In +3, Neville positioned the chairs according to the layout of the portals that made up the frame of the painting that Skok referred to as a "Non-frame". The choreography began with unscripted traveling of the dancers across the center of the space to downstage left, upstage right, and upstage left before coming back to their chairs. When arriving at the first station, the dancers would engage in movements led by the shoulders. When making the second and third stops, they would engage in movements led by their head, and then their feet. The prelude was to provide the feeling of the world getting ready and preparing for its awakening. Three chairs were grouped together. The dancers started sitting on the chair and perform the words excerpted from the accompanying poem one by one. A fourth chair was set on the other side. At the end of the full sequence made by the Meng, Zuccolo, and Ulrich's movements, the solo dancer Mercado in the fourth chair repeated the whole thing—beginning with the introductory hand gesture, then from "Mountain" to "Sunrise" choreographed by the other three dancers. Then each dancer proceeded with her own choreography of "Ocean (Sea)", "Sea spread" and "Morning". These words were taken out of the first four lines of the accompanying poem. After that, Neville used

Mercado's choreography of "Morning" and reimagined it to express "the circular movements of poppies in a green garden". The dancers were instructed to roll over their hips. They formed a circle on the floor, turning clockwise. Then they sat on their knees to perform the phrase Mercado developed for "Morning" intermittently. Next, the performers were divided into two pairs. Mercado and Norton were sitting, holding their elbows in front of the upper body and rotating around the waist, embodying the rhythmic "sound of a waterfall". Meng was laying on the floor with Zuccolo stepping over her knees forming the triangular shape of "a pyramid". Next Meng rolled over to the upstage center and was led up by Zuccolo. The two took a jump at the same time with their arms held up as the wings. The section were demonstrating "the leftover motion of a snow angle" and "mirror the refracted reflections of light." The dance concluded with Zuccolo sitting on the chair reaching up, symbolizing the summit of the "mountain", and Meng stretching on the floor as the lower slope of hills which "herald the sunrise". Norton and Mercado repeated the leitmotif of the rhythmic sound of water, indicating the presence of "a mountain lake".

In +3, Neville asked the dancers to choreograph their own "Mountain", "Sunrise", "Ocean (Sea)", "Sea Spread" and "Morning".

Meng choreographed her "Mountain" by reaching her right arm down and lifting her left leg up from the kneeling position she was holding on the seat of the chair. She felt that the line the body formed looked like the slope and the pointed feet indicated the rocky surface of the mountain. For "Sunrise", Meng put down her left leg and withdraw her right arm, but managed to do it gracefully as if her palm was heralding the sun from his underground bed-chamber and windmilled him to his office in the sky. For "Ocean", Meng slowly slipped down from the chair and spread over the floor with her left knee bending up and arms opening to the side, thinking about floating on top of the blanket made by the billows. For "Sea Spread", Meng curved her palms from the wrist at different sides of and different distances from the body for she believed that surfs rarely restrain themselves to certain landing places. Then she sat up and took a series of rolls on her knees away from the chair to the center as if being pushed by the surge of giant waves. Meng identified that her magenta performance costume coincidentally matched the red and orange dots in the painting. After a couple more curved motions of the palm, she came down on her back and rolled over on her stomach, resting the head over her arms. The "sleeping" was in preparation for waking up as the prelude of her choreography of "Morning". Then Meng gradually stretched her arms and legs, revealing herself from the imaginary quilt as her head rose from her forearm which she used as the pillow.

Zuccolo's choreography of "Mountain" was inspired by yoga movements. She began by sitting in a chair crossed-legged. Then the legs dropped to the ground. The two feet opened to the sides and came back to the closed position. The arms fell to the side, with the head forming the summit of the mountain. The gesture felt grounded and rooted in the earth. For "Sunrise", Zuccolo extended her arms toward the floor. While the body came up, the arms opened up crossing one another at the chest. The head was bending backward, with eyes closed, facing up. She arranged the movements to show the coming up from the earth and basking in the sun. For "Ocean", Zuccolo began with the left foot pointing out and coming back. Then led by the right foot and then the right arm, the body rotated to the right side of the chair and made a full circle coming down from the chair to the floor. Zuccolo was lying on her back with her left hand

drawing a circle over her head. The rotation was similar to the roaring surfs. For “Sea spread”, Zuccolo drew up her knees and moved them from left to right and then right to left as if the waves and ripples were undulating back and forth. For “Morning”, Zuccolo sat up, stretching both arms led by the palms pushing to the toes, then coming up and pushing down again as if rising from the bed alongside the morning sun.

Norton choreographed her “Mountain” standing up facing stage left and placing her left foot on the seat. Her left arm was on the back of the chair and her right arm was leveled at the shoulder, pointing to the left. Standing indicated the height of the mountain. With her head kept straight, symbolizing the summit. For “Sunrise”, Norton touched the floor and raised up with her palms heralding the sun from below the horizon and gradually looking up. For “Ocean”, Norton stepped forward away from the chairs, with her left hand covering her nose. Like the seaweed, her right arm was undulating as she slowly came down, kneeling and then crouching on the floor. For “Sea Spread”, Norton was hearing the sound of the ocean and visualizing the splashing of water. She stood on her knees, releasing the tension from her arms, and gently swung her body from side to side. At first, the arms were arriving low around the pelvic area, then as the momentum was building, the swinging grew faster and the arms were flinging at the level of the shoulders. For “Morning”, Norton rolled on her back, crouching in a fetal position. Suddenly, she opened up her arms and legs forming two paralleling Vs, mimicking a child waking up and waving hello to the world.

Mercado repeated the sequence of movements the other three performers came up with for “Mountain” and “Sunrise”. Then she performed her own choreography of “Ocean”, “Sea Spread” and “Morning”. Mercado choreographed her “Oceans” as standing up from the chair with her feet closed together, arms stretching toward the sky, and opening up in preparation for the dive. Then Mercado plunged forward to the floor, supporting herself with both palms and lifting the left leg at the back, mimicking the tail of a mermaid. Neville asked Mercado to add a whistling sound as a cue to the other dancers who were laying on the floor waiting to proceed with “Morning”. For “Morning”, Mercado was sitting on her knees. She threaded her right arm to the right side of her body, then repeated with the left arm. After that, her hands touched the floor, and the arms came up crossing at the center and then opening to the sides, mimicking waking up from a dream and yawning.

Neville’s “Comprehension” predated her choreographic endeavors. “De-semiotization” was demonstrated through Neville singling out the images represented by keywords from the lines and the rough draft she made in her mind about what to omit and what to emphasize. “Reformulation” took place as she actualized her plan through movements, sound, and different floor patterns. The dancers’ “Comprehension” took place when they were given specific words “Mountain”, “Sunrise”, “Ocean (Sea)”, “Sea Spread” and “Morning” to choreograph in the context of the poem/painting. “De-verbalization” proceeded as they began to associate the words with a particular scenario, feeling, image, or action such as waking up, being grounded, the mermaid, and floating. “Reformulation” manifested through the dancers using gestures and movements to describe the compound of reactions initiated by the words. “Verification” was shown through demonstrations to Neville and the confirmation or recommendations for adjustment the dancers received from the choreographer to make sure the individual inputs would match the music as well as Neville’s directorial vision. What was interesting about

Neville's approach was that instead of striving for word-for-word correspondence, Neville was more interested in dynamic equivalence. She did not restrict the interpretation to be carried out by one type of media, namely the body language, and incorporated the use of sound (the whistling of Mercado), floor patterns (the circular formation), and visuals (the colors of the dancers' costumes). At times, the association between the paintings and lines to the choreography was direct mimicry. At times, the bond between the source medium and the target media was conceptual. According to the reaction from the audiences, the diversification and inconsistency were effective in rendering not an apparent interpretation but the general feeling of the painting and the poem.

3.5.4) The Choreography of -4

In -4, Neville shared everyone's vision and saw the white splashes as flood and as momentum, the royal blue strip as the tombstone, and as a memorial, the yellow spread as sunlight, as flowers, and as the yellow duck. The choreography began with the dancers leaving their chairs to the opening area in the middle of the stage standing facing backward. Upon turning front, they repeated the first basic phrase three times with each dancer two counts behind the previous dancer. The basic phrase was composed of a side-way step to the left, a turn with knees bent, a leap with the right knee up, a jump with the left leg up and a side-way step to the right. The jumps and turns mimicked the frolicking spatters. The juxtaposition of unsyncopated movements and then everyone eventually coming together and the ensemble of the second basic phrase was inspired by the first line "a flood of water gathers momentum". The second basic phrase was composed of a windmill of the arms, a turn on the right leg with the left knee up, a change of the ball of the foot, two gliding steps with side swings, a jazz turn, three shoulder rolls, and a plank. The coming down from the standing position to the floor was influenced by the idea of "a tombstone...connects two worlds". As Mercado, Zuccolo, and Norton performed the third basic phrase of floor stretches, Meng in her magenta costume rolled over to the center stage and then changed the speed as the red splatters across the arctic blue at the bottom of the painting. The three dancers at the back gradually raised up on their knees, reflecting the three parallel strips of colors at the lower left portion of the painting. Meng rolled on her stomach, lifting her limbs up in the air, forming different positions to embody the "exotic birds" that dwelled in the "densely tropical" "rainforest" with other dancers standing on their knees as the tree trunks. Meng joined the ensemble on her knees. At the same moment, everyone was rotating their right arm with their chest bent back, showing the rays of the "imagined sun shifts shades of light and meaning". Next, Neville divided the group into Norton's solo and an ensemble piece of Mercado, Zuccolo, and Meng.

Norton's solo was inspired by line six "a bouquet of flowers in a cardboard box" and line seven "impersonates a still life". Norton slowly rolled up from the floor, with her right arm reaching up high. The same arm led her body to swing to a standing position, with her left side facing the audience. Then she flung the right arm to the right side of the pelvic bone twice. It was like a flower growing up from the earth and spreading its leaves. Norton stood facing front with her legs open. Her left palm came through the right fist in front of her chest, with the fingers of the left-hand fanning to right at the same pace and the same direction as the head roll three times. This was adapted from the word "Grow" from American Sign Language. Then she walked four

steps backward beginning with her right foot. Norton hold the standing position for a period of time and repeated the second basic phase, and walked forward to center stage revisiting the ending part of the “conduction and transference of energy” from the choreography of +2.

The ensemble piece reiterated the end of the poem from line six to line nine as a collaborative effort from Mercado, Meng, and Zuccolo. The dancers dropped to the floor, lying on the side of their bodies. Then they gathered around back to back, making a unit of three. The unit rotated three times clockwise. Each time, the two dancers at the front would bend forward, and the third dancer would raise up and improvise her moment. The unit was to mimic the opening of a cardboard box and a bouquet of flowers was revealed. Next, the dancers stood on their feet and roll up slowly, “impersonating a still life”. After repeating the first portion of the second basic phrase which was the transition from “a flood of water gathers momentum” before entering line two, the dancers formed the stage picture of “a yellow duck holds an umbrella”. At the front, Meng was sitting on the floor with her arms handling an invisible oar. Mercado was standing with her knees half bent holding an imaginary umbrella. At the back, Zuccolo was standing, moving her arms as if they were the wings of a bird.

Again, for -4, Neville’s thought process was not much unlike choreographing +2, and +3. “Comprehension” of the source medium was not a one-time effort. It took place through the multiple attempts Neville made to evaluate the paintings and the curating of the poem. “De-semiotization” was the surging of feelings and random movement patterns in response to the analysis of the painting. “De-semiotization” could first take place at the unit/sentence level and then be reassembled into a holistic field of information or it could take place at the painting/text level with certain details gaining more prominence than others. In this instance, recalling the structure of the choreography that it was likely Neville’s understanding was obtained at a “paragraph” level which she later had mapped movements upon during the “Reformulation” stage. The dance was divided into four sections, including the first basic phrase, the second basic phrase, the floor work of the ensemble, and the division of one solo and one trio. The four sections did not directly correspond to the structure of the poem as the first portion of the second basic phrase repeated line one through varied kinesthetic expressions before continuing with line two. This phenomenon resonated with the Deconstructionist proposal of the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, suggesting that meaning was more fluid than the physical delineation, such as the textual appearance and the grouping of sentences, or the kinesthetic movements and the clustering of dance phrases. “Reformulation” happened as Neville was formatting the field of information obtained from the source medium through movements as well as positioning of the bodies of the dancers in relation to one another and the space. Norton’s “Comprehension” took place as she repeated the phrases to be “translated” such as “a bouquet of flowers”, “flowers”, and “still-life”. “De-semiotization” was Norton arriving from the words at what a “big bouquet of flowers” entailed. “Reformulation” was Norton and Neville fleshing out the gestures and movements to indicate the idea. “Verification” was the further adjustments made by Neville and Norton to accommodate the dancer’s physical capability and to be in harmony with Mercado, Meng, and Zuccolo’s performance. For the trio of Mercado, Meng, and Zuccolo, “Comprehension” was the ongoing discussion they were having on what the remaining lines of the poem were about. “De-semiotization” was the embodiment and experimentation with movements, level, and formation to trial individual reactions and consolidated the “flowers”,

“still-life” and “a yellow duck holds an umbrella” as major ideas through the process. “Reformulation” was the development and selection of individual and ensemble movements. “Verification” was the finalization of the movements, counts, positioning, and stage pictures in consultation with Neville.

3.5.5) The Choreography of *Omega* (15|)

According to Neville, the choreography of *Omega* (15|) was informed by two goals. Firstly, it was the last painting and Neville would love to let the dancers have their personal bows. Secondly, Neville wanted to incorporate an exercise called “Name study” which was designed to help the dancer communicate what his or her name means through the use of movements. Besides, when the creative process started, the group hadn’t had a chance to see the painting as Skok was still composing. Neville was drawn to the practice of painters signing their names on canvas when finishing the painting, and the choreography of the dancers’ names for the last piece shared the same concept. Similar to the genesis of the accompanying poem, the inspiration for this choreography was less of the content of *Omega* (15|), but the idea of what “authorship” entailed. It also resonated with the theme of the poem “Inspiration”. By doing so, the choreography would not really conflict with whatever Skok eventually presented to the group and the audience. The five dancers Mercado, Meng, Zuccolo, Norton, and Ulrich each choreographed their own name. Upon discussion with the dancers, Neville organized the presentation in the order of age from the youngest to the eldest, followed by all the dancers performing their names a second time in an ensemble. The choreography of the dancers’ names and the interpreters’ thought processes are recorded and discussed in the next section of the paper.

With a very loose connection between the painting and the poem as identified source medium, it was even harder to qualify the choreography of *Omega* (15|) as a translatorial activity. The thematic coherence of the painting, the poetry, and the dance was insufficient to be used as a substitute to check the criterion of equivalence. Neville’s thought process reflected a three-stage progression of assessing the situation incurred by the creation of the source media as juxtaposed to “Comprehension”, establishing connections and determining the core creative concept as juxtaposed to “De-semiotization”, and the development of the strategy and executing the plan as juxtaposed to “Reformulation”. Later her re-evaluation of the process had the same effect as “Verification”. Instead of “translation”, Neville’s approach to the choreography was closer to generic problem-solving. To probe deeper, “translation” is, in fact, a type of problem-solving and the three stages of the Interpretive Model could be generalized as “Contemplation of the problem”, “Dissociation of unrelated/unhelpful information”, “Development of a response”, and an optional fourth stage of “Reflection prior to execution”. Further research and empirical examinations are needed to contest the validity of the supposition before broadening Seleskovich and Lederer’s model to wider use. Nonetheless, the discussion points to an interesting direction for the application of translation theories. Similarly, if the assumption is proven true, data on the cognitive process of problem-solving could be referred, to assist the understanding of the transfer of “meaning” and potentially give a more clear description of the various types of containers of “meaning” such as language, sound, shapes, colors, temperature, et cetera.

According to Neville, the choreographies were also heavily influenced by practical considerations independent of the source medium such as the capability of the dancers, the availability of the space and equipment, and safety concerns. For instance, Neville changed a number of demanding postures to alleviate the physical stress the movements might have on the dancers' bodies. Neville choreographed the beginning of the dances to be vastly dissimilar from one another to avoid confusing the dancers, as the order of the performance of +2, +3, and -4 was to be determined by the audience during the performance. The positioning of the chairs was remodeled according to the length and the width of the Grand Corridor which was different from the rehearsal room when the choreographies were devised. This points to one of the limitations of the original Interpretive Model and the necessity of incorporating "Verification" as a fourth overlapping stage along the process, as the initially identified three stages of the cognitive process were mostly sourcing medium oriented and failed to take into consideration of external factors.

Another unique aspect of these examples was that the choreographer and the dancers were simultaneously working with two source media, the paintings as well as the accompanying poetry of each painting. In different instances, priority was given to either the painting or the poetry during the translating process. Also, according to observations that when spotting each given moment, the interpreters were only registering one source medium. Interestingly, most of the time that the choreographer and the majority of the dancers were referring back to words instead of visuals. One possible explanation was that compared to the use of words, the use of pictures was a less established method for communication. It was easier and more effective for the exchange of ideas to take place through language instead of pictures during collaboration. Another reason might be that when translating across two non-language-based sign systems, the "Comprehension" was more fluid and it was harder to anchor the meaning. As Mercado explained during the interview that her interpretation of the source media on one occasion might not be the same as the interpretation of the same source media on a different occasion. On the contrary, words were more specific and tractable for guiding "Comprehension". In fact, the use of poetry could be seen as an intermediate step in the process of translating from painting to choreography. The re-introduction of words could be exploited as a useful strategy when conducting translation across different sign systems. Another proposal coming out of the discussion is the incorporation of two or more source media that were near-identical in meaning or multiple derivatives of the same source medium such as different translations of the same work in language or languages accessible to the translator during the translating process. Cross-referencing and consultation with external resources would be helpful in rectifying inaccuracies in "Comprehension", gaps that emerged during the process of "De-verbalization/De-semiotization" and undesired deviation during "Reformulation".

3.6). The Cast: From Names to Choreography

The choreography of *Omega* (15) was the last piece of the performance. After the accompanying poem was presented, the dance began with Meng, Ulrich, Zuccolo, Norton, and Mercado sitting in the chairs which formed a horizontal line parallel to the audience. The dancers would step forward one by one in the order of Mercado, Meng, Zuccolo, Norton, and Ulrich, occupying different areas of the space, each performing the choreography of their name twice.

For the first time, only one dancer was presenting the choreography of her name at a time. The second time, everyone was presenting at the same time. The dance finished with the ensemble holding hands and taking a bow to the audience.

The discussion was based on interviews conducted with the dancers Jeanne Norton, Marielle Zuccolo, Laura Ulrich, Madisyn Mercado, and Yingmang Meng along with an analysis of videotape recording of the choreographies.

3.6.1) Madisyn Mercado: “Maddie”, “Pink” and “Lasagna”

Mercado used her nickname “Maddie” for the choreography assignment. She was mimicking the shape of the letters and transformed them into a sequence of dance moves. In the end, she incorporated the choreography of her favorite color “Pink” and her favorite food “Lasagna” to highlight the disposition of “Maddie”. To form the shape of “M”, Mercado stepped out her left leg and left arm and grabbed her left hand into a fist while drawing the elbow to the chest. She repeated the movements on the right side, reflecting the symmetrical quality of the letter “M”. Then from the standing position, she swept her arms to the side and let her body come down with her legs open and knees bent to mimic the shape of “A”. For the two “D”s, she began to hop with one leg landing behind another four times. The swing of the left leg backward represented the first stroke of “d”. The second stroke was represented by the linear alignment of her body. Then for “I”, Mercado chose a high kick with her right leg, followed by an inward turn. For “E”, she took a turn on her right foot and landed with her left foot stepping out. For “Pink” she took a jump starting and ending with the feet crossed but their positions interchanged which ended in the fifth position of ballet. According to Mercado that “Pink” made her happy and when she was happy she would jump. For “Lasagna”, Mercado came up with a quick turn to the left led by her head and her arms crossed. The movements were telling the spectators that when Mercado had a yummy meal she would grab her tummy and feel content. The choreography ended with standing on the right leg with the left leg pointing to the side.

Mercado’s “Comprehension” of her name began at the surface level of the composition of the word. Then it moved to the deep level of the representative power of the name—its association with the specific person led her to the incorporation of movements that was telling of her personality. “De-semiotization” was her distillation and abstraction of the shapes of letters in her mind and the selection of creative ideas such as “Maddie”’s reaction to “Pink” and “Lasagna” to supplement the dimension of her characteristics that a literal “translation” was insufficient to convey. “Reformulation” was the formulation and presentation of the dance moves. “Verification” was initiated by Neville’s prompt to introduce who is “Maddie” through Mercado’s likes and dislikes that directed her thought process again to “Comprehension” and “De-semiotization”, manifesting overlapping of the stages identified by Lederer and Seleskovitch.

3.6.2) Yingmang Meng: Dai Ethnic Dance and a Mini-scene of “Dream”, “Mango”, and “To Welcome”

Yingmang Meng is Yangzhou Bian’s mother and the dance personae whom Yangzhou Bian embodied in the dance project. In the paper, Meng refers to Bian, and Mother refers to the legitimate owner of the name. Meng choreographed the three Chinese characters “Meng”,

“Ying”, and “Mang”. She chose the style of Dai ethnic dance of Yunnan province. Yunnan was next to her hometown Sichuan. Most importantly, Dai ethnic dance was the first dance she learned and performed with her mother. Dai ethnic dance was characterized by agile hand movements and the arches formed by the body and the limbs, which was telling of the disposition of Mother. Mother’s family name “Meng 孟” was the homophone of “Meng 梦” which meant “Dream”. The choreography began in a standing position with the left cheek resting over the back of the left hand. Then followed by the arms stretching and a jumping step forward to indicate waking up. The two characters of Mother’s given name were closely tied to the social disturbance in China at that time. “Ying 迎” means to welcome. “Mang 芒” means the mangos. Mother was born amidst the Cultural Revolution⁹ and her name was indicating a political event when Chairman Mao was sending a basket of mangos he received from the diplomats of Pakistan to workers all over the country as a gift. When the mangos arrived in the towns, they were treated as the Chairman himself and handled with extreme care and reverence. To reciprocate the chairman’s generosity, these mangos were made into specimen and wax models. The fervor over the exotic fruit exhibited throughout the country was far beyond madness could describe. When choreographing, Meng chose to erase the collective trauma the country had suffered and restricted the presentation of the name solely to the representation of the fruit mango and the hospitality the word “Ying” imparted. She extended her left palm to the front and her right hand led the swirl around the wrist to indicate the ripe mango on the branch before picking it up. It was followed by a turn to the right, a swing of the hip to the left, and then to the right. Each time her arms would cross in front of the corresponding side of the pelvic bone. Having harvested the mangos, she made another turn to the left with her arms coming down to the side of the waist from above the head, mimicking the mango tree. To choreograph “To welcome”, she took a tiny step back, impersonating the jolly surprise of noticing a friend appearing in the distance. Next, she walked forward with her head slightly bending and palms touching in front of the chest in the prayer position to show the blessing and warm regards towards the guest. Then, she placed her arms to the side of the body and made a series of turns to the left, indicating leading the visitor home. Lastly, she rested her right cheek over the back of her right hand, signaling going back to sleep. Mother was hesitant when Meng asked if she could use the name and more so Mother’s identity. Nonetheless, Mother agreed as she did not own the letters if Meng insisted to adopt them as a pseudonym. Meng wanted to acknowledge Mother yet she wanted to respect her wishes of being invisible. So Meng added a preface before the choreography, gesturing “this is my mother” in American Sign Language that began with her crouching on the ground and then raising up and sitting on her knees to communicate the message. According to Meng, the meaning of the characters was the structural components of the choreography, the style of the dance and the vibe of the movements were more revealing of the character of Mother—innocent, vivid, and generous in nature.

⁹ The Cultural Revolution or the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution was a sociopolitical movement in the People's Republic of China from 1966 to 1976. The goal was to consolidate the autocratic power of Chairman Mao Zedong and the central position of Communism by eliminating any remnants of capitalist and traditional elements from Chinese society.

Meng took a similar approach to Mercado by interpreting each character of Mother's name. Yet instead of working with the morphology of the characters, Meng was choreographing the meaning of each character. The divergence was likely caused by the different lexical compositions of English and Chinese names. In English names, a letter could be taken as an individual constituent. Yet usually it was not representative of a unit of meaning. In Chinese names, a character was simultaneously the individual constituent and the smallest unit of meaning. Also, instead of incorporating Mother's preferences as Mercado had done, Meng personalized the name through the choice of a dance style that was closely associated with Mother's temperament and Meng's memory of Mother. While Mercado employed the add-on approach, Meng's object was to choreograph the person behind the name through the layering of the dance style. "Comprehension" began as Meng assessed the name "Meng Yingmang" character by character. "De-semiotization" took place when she started to make associations between what the characters meant in the given context, making the decision to exclude culturally sensitive information and to include an additional explanation of the situation. "Reformulation" was Meng's development of a storyline made out of three mini-scenes of "Dreaming", "Harvesting the mangos" and "Receiving guests" centering the three Chinese characters "孟/梦 (Meng)", "芒 (Mang)", and "迎 (Ying)" through the use of steps and movements. "Verification" was Meng's incorporation of the preface after revisiting her conversation with Mother, and insertion of a transitional turn upon reflection of the positioning of other dancers.

3.6.3) Marielle Zuccolo: "The Crown", the letters, "The Wolf", Pet, Faith, and Personal Interests

Zuccolo used a combined approach when transforming her name into choreography. The choreography began with the meaning of her family name, followed by the presentation of the individual letters of her given name "Marielle", then a reference to her mother's maiden name, her pet, her faith, and her state of mind. Zuccolo began with the right palm wrapping around the head to indicate "Zuccolo", which means "the crown" in Italian. Then she stretched the arms towards the lower right, and came up, indicating the bend of the letter "M". "A" was looking over the left shoulder and flinging the arms upward. Next, the right leg made a turn from the side of the knee and pointed out, mimicking the shape of the letter "R". For "I", she stood up tall, crouching with the arms drawn to stomach areas making the dot. "E", double "L" and "E" were shown through stretching further forward down holding the back leg up. The sustaining was used to indicate there was more than one of each letter. She patted the left thigh to sign the word "dog" to refer to her pet dog and her mother's maiden name which meant "wolf". Then Zuccolo tapped the palm of one hand with the middle finger of the other, and vice-versa to sign "Jesus", representing her faith. Next, she used the left and right index fingers to point across at the elbow to form another "M". The turn and the excerpt of tap steps were to show the dance styles she was passionate about. The choreography concluded with both arms reaching up and coming back to the chest with palms closed as she returned to a peaceful state.

"Comprehension" was Zuccolo's assessment of the name "Marielle Zuccolo". "De-verbalization" was her study of the Italian root of her family name, the morphology of the letters

that composed her given name, and who was the person that the name as a whole represented. “Reformulation” was the development of the dance phrases, the planning of the duration of the movements, and the order of the presentation as well as the incorporation of ballet, tap, and American Sign Language. “Verification” was Zuccolo’s discernment of minor changes carried along the rehearsals and her acceptance of Neville’s affirmation of the finalized version.

3.6.4) Jeanne Norton: The Journey of Growing Up

Norton’s concept was different from Mercado, Meng, and Zuccolo’s. Her choreography departed from the composition and meaning of her name and settled on her memory of growing up. Norton was raised on a farm. When she was a kid, she liked playing in the dirt. So the choreography began with Norton crouching, her palms sweeping the floor, meddling with the soil and sand. Then Norton stepped back on her left foot, pushed back with her arms, did a stretch, and rose up, indicating growing up. She swung her arms and legs to mimic kicking cans, remembering the fun activities of her childhood. The next movement was holding the rein. Norton’s father trained her to ride and they would go to see horse racing every week. Next, she held both elbows up at shoulder level with the palms facing down meeting at the top of the chest. Then she turned to the left, extending her left arm and drawing her right elbow back to mimic pulling the bow, indicating archery, another favorite engagement back in time. Next, Norton took a step to the left with her left arm drawing the invisible pompom and swung it to the left and repeated the movements to the right side, showing her participation in cheerleading. Then led by the right arm, her body flung around and now Norton was facing right. There was a big turn in her life. Norton held out her arms and pointed them while walking forward, indicating moving on. She held her palm to her heart, showing herself falling in love. Next, she was facing the front and folding her arms as if carrying a baby. Her left foot took a small step to the left and followed by the right foot crossing front and she repeated it three times to show the three children she gave birth to. Then Norton stood with her feet together and bent her knees as the arms were reaching out, indicating her job. She had worked with hundreds of people. The experience was about giving as well as sharing. When the arms came back to the sides, her right foot took a step back and she crossed the fingers together and stretched the arms above her head. The ending was Norton saying she is still here, still learning, and still growing.

“Comprehension” was Norton’s reflection of her name and her rumination on the assignment of “Name Study”. “De-verbalization” was Norton’s redefinition of the assignment, shifting from kinesthetically spelling out the name “Jeanne Norton” to demonstrating what had made up “Jeanne Norton” as a person. The answers came to her as memories of the past, her philosophy of life, and her aspiration for the future. It continued with the identification of the key moments of her life and the central concepts of her being. “Reformulation” was Norton’s re-enactment of the selected scenarios through the use of her body. “Verification” was the ongoing re-approaching to the drafted phrases as the choreography was developing.

3.6.5) Laura Ulrich: The Storybook and the Chapters

Ulrich’s emphasis on the choreography was things that were important to her during the span of her life: reading, ballet, jazz, musical theater, the wedding, the honeymoon, the job as a special aid teacher, and visits to the beach. The choreography began with the feet together, knees

bending and palms closed in the front of the body at the level of the chest to indicate her fondness for reading. The gesture also functioned to represent the book of her life. Then her arms traced the shape of her initials “L” and “U”. She further stretched the arms to the fourth position to the left and gracefully the left arm reached up and the right arm reached down to show her training in ballet. She then stepped forward with the Jazz hand followed by the jazz square stepping left, right, left, and right to represent her training in jazz. Next, Ulrich walked back using the Bob Fosse steps from “All That Jazz” to show her experience in Musical theater. She choreographed and participated in many Musical theater performances. Then Ulrich turned around and walked forward with a bouquet of flowers in hand, mimicking walking down the aisle to indicate her blissful marriage to her husband Tom. The next phrase represented Ulrich’s “honeymoon”. The couple was part of a Polish Folk Dance group. Right after getting married, they went dancing with the team at a folk festival. The step-touch with both wrists resting on the side of the waist and gliding steps with one arm reaching up were signature moves from Polish folk dance. After that, Ulrich turned her back to the audience and began to draw “A”, “B”, and “C” on the imagined wall with her left hand. She then erased the letters one by one with her right hand. Ulrich was a special education teacher for twelve years. Then followed by a series of steps moving forward and then coming backward. Ulrich was bending from the waist with the elbows rolling over one another. The choreography was to show the waves coming upon the shore and receding. After retiring, Ulrich and her husband always took summer vacations on the beach. The small jump and kick to the left, then to the right was kicking the surf. Lastly, Ulrich turned around and closed the book, ending in the position she began with. It signified the end of the chapter.

During the choreography, “Comprehension” began as Ulrich started to think about what did the name “Laura Ulrich” mean to her and what distinguished this “Laura Ulrich” from others that might have shared the same name. “De-verbalization” took place when things and events that were significant to Ulrich began to enter her cognition such as reading, the different styles of dances, vocations at the seaside, her wedding, her honeymoon, and her profession in the form of thoughts, memories, ideas, and emotions. “Reformulation” was the use of these recalls as the source of inspiration to come up with her own movement phrases and the reference to signature movements in Ulrich's preferred dance styles. “Verification” took place concomitantly as she put the phrases together and familiarized herself with the steps. Due to a recent injury, Ulrich was confined to a small set of movements. The practical needs also greatly influenced the choreography and how it came to its final shape.

The analysis of the cognitive process of the dancers when translating their names into choreography brought out some interesting discoveries. When viewed in light of inter-semiotic translation, the “Name Study” revealed a high degree of flexibility in the interpretation of the dancers’ names as the source text. Mercado, Meng, and Zuccolo adopted more of a “letter-for-letter/character-for-character” approach, with a large proportion of their choreography highlighting the linguistic constituents of their names, with their focuses spanning from the morphology of the letters to the meaning of the words. Compared to American Sign Language, the presentation of the letters leaned towards the practice of “fingerspelling” while the choreography of the sense shared a greater resemblance to signing. As discussed in section three, these correspondences could be adopted as an entry point to extend the connections between

uncodified movements¹⁰ to codified movements and then to verbal/written language, and potentially develop criteria for assessing the translation between words and gestures. Instead of the physical name, what Norton and Ulrich identified as their source text was the person the name represented. Therefore, their choreography was far less of a direct representation of shapes. Instead, Norton and Ulrich's presentations were more in line with a chronological narrative, recounting aspects of their lives that led them to become who they were and who they are today. While it was possible for a different individual other than the owner of the name to translate the letters/characters into kinesthetic movements as with Meng's "Name Study", Norton and Ulrich's approach was putting additional demand on the credential of the translator. The concept these two dancers were oriented towards posed the question of "translatability". When an "intimate" source text such as the name of a specific person was handed to different translators, another individual would not have the access to the knowledge of many private events that could have informed the translation. Mercado, Meng, and Zuccolo's "Name Studies" demonstrated a high degree of objectivity, suggesting that they were mostly treating "their names" and studying them as an external text. Though each to an extent personalized the name they were interpreting, most of the information they used was researchable and available for public access. In the contrast, Norton and Ulrich's "Name Study" relied heavily on additional knowledge of the subject matter that was not presented in the source text, making their endeavors closer to that of self-translation. Hypothetically, as with Norton and Ulrich's translation, interlingual self-translation may also demonstrate a higher degree of divergence from the source text due to the availability of additional information and the acquisition of the power of the author to re-access and redefine the source text along the translating process.

4. Further Discussions

Seleskovitch and Lederer's Interpretive Model has been a pivotal tool in the study of the dance project *Whispers*. The similarity and differences between exclusive linguistic translation and translation that involve one or two sign systems other than what has been conventionally defined as language enables the adaption of the four stages of "Comprehension", "De-verbalization/ De-semiotization", "Reformulation" and "Verification" proposed by Seleskovitch, Lederer, and Delisle for the broader analysis. Out of the examined examples, the first three stages have been identified in the cognitive process of all artists working across sign systems. "Verification" was at times absent or carried out by an external reviewer independent of or collaborating with the translator. Similar to intralingual and interlingual translation, to transfer information between different sign systems, the translators all went through the initial stage of "Comprehension", registering their voluntary and involuntary response to the exposition to the source medium during which "De-verbalization/De-semiotization" may have been happening spontaneously or consecutively. "De-verbalization/De-semiotization" was the processing of the field of information. The distinction of "De-verbalization/De-semiotization" from

¹⁰ "Uncodified movement" was a term coined by the researcher to refer to movements with no previously existing and agreed-upon interpretation shared within a defined community. By contrast, "Codified movement" refers to movements or gestures which are conveyors of meaning within the same defined community, such as Sign Languages.

“Comprehension” was the differentiation the main ideas and supportive particularities from the source medium. It usually involved re-organization and modification to the source text at the cognitive level. According to the interviews, at the beginning of this stage, meaning could have manifested itself in the form of emotions, feelings, memories, images, sounds, or concept fragments which were then re-grouped into chunks of information according to the relevance and applicability to the translation project. The emergence of a basic plot and preliminary stylistic choices were made at the end of “De-verbalization/De-semiotization”. This internalization of the source medium was completed at the first two cognitive stages. After “De-verbalization/ De-semiotization”, there might be an additional phase of “Re-verbalization”, or the summary of the key components of the plan and putting them into words.” Re-verbalization” could be contemplated as the preparatory stage of “Reformulation”. As demonstrated in the translation of painting/poetry to choreography in +2, +3, and -4, the re-introduction of words was proven helpful for collaborative inter-semiotic translations as it was hard to clearly communicate the shared vision using gestures only. “Reformulation” was the externalization of the curated information distilled from the source medium in the form of the same or different medium defined by the translation project. According to the analysis, “Reformulation” was often further divided into “Initiation”, “Experimentation” and “Reorganization”. “Initiation” was the preliminary visualization of the general impression or the sample motifs in the target medium. “Experimentation” was the sculpting of the details through the trial of various possibilities. “Reorganization” was the arrangement of the phrases and segments into a whole which may or may not observe the layout pattern of the source medium. “Reformulation” was often the stage that factored in the practical consideration apart from the source medium. Yet reflection of environmental and circumstantial limitations might have started at the previous two stages or be brought up later during the stage of “Verification”.

A second discovery from this inter-semiotic translation project is that as Seleskovitch pointed out that language was not the only viable container of meaning. The analysis of the “Comprehension” stage suggested that meaning is a subjective response to the source media. The analysis of the “De-verbalization/De-semiotization” stage revealed that meaning may exist in a single form or the mixed form of feelings, emotions, visuals, sounds, and memories. Yet the records of the translators’ cognitive process propel the researcher to question if meaning could truly exist independent of its containing media. Relevant research of neurological studies might provide further insight into the processing and transfer of information.

A third discovery is about the mode of overlapping described by Seleskovitch and Lederer. In the studied examples, among the four stages, “Comprehension” took slight if not complete precedence over “De-verbalization/De-semiotization” and then followed by “Reformulation” and lastly “Verification”. What Seleskvitch and Lederer identified as overlapping was mostly likely caused by the continuous inflow of new chunks of information over which the translator has little or no control. When the translator proceeds to the second stage with the first chunk of information, he or she would also be starting the first stage of the second chunk of information. This was characteristic of conference interpreting upon which the model was initially developed. This type of overlapping is less relevant to the case studies of the *Whispers* dance project. Moreover, some of the translators adopted a holistic approach that took in the source media as a whole and others adopted a segmentary approach and accessed the

source media component by component. Whether the unit the translators were handling was large or small, simultaneously handling multiple units of information was not a common working mode. Instead, it was more prevalent to finish the translation of one chunk of information before embarking on the next. However, the third and fourth stages of “Reformulation” and “Verification” may initiate a revisit to the previous stages to negotiate and modify the understanding and conceptualization.

This study demonstrates that Seleskovich and Lederer’s Interpretive Model is extremely helpful in establishing connections between language-based and non-language-based translations and the cognitive process of the translators could be exploited as an effective method for the comprehension and analysis of inter-semiotic translation as it circumvents the near impossibility of assessing the adequacy and acceptability of the target medium. This inability to objectively review the output in relation to the source media also points to the limitation of the study, challenging the qualification of the illustrated examples as inter-semiotic translations, further questioning the definition of translation and the appropriateness to consider “inspiration”, “association” and “substitution” as variations of the translation proper. Another criticism of the project is addressing to the methodology. During the interviews, the researcher only isolated and recorded the main concepts from the interviewees’ responses. The script was re-developed through the editing process during which the researcher had inserted subjective interpretations which might deviate from the original intention. Secondly, the interviews were self-evaluating and retrospective. The attempt being made to understand one’s own approach and gaps in memory may likely distort what was perceived during the translating process. Thirdly, the researcher was part of the dance project. On the one hand, the involvement gave her more access to information. On other hand, the close connection established between the researcher and the subjects reduced the impartiality of the observer. Furthermore, the familiarity with the project through participation could have likely numbed the sensitivity of the observer. Nonetheless, this research and further contemplation of the generalization of the Interpretive Model to access the cognitive process of general problem-solving, and the correspondence to discoveries made in neurology have shown the usefulness and high applicability of translation theory beyond its own field.

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6. Appendices

6.1) Paintings by Sylvia Skok

6.1.1) *Alpha (+1)*



6.1.2) +2



6.1.3) +3



6.1.4)-4



6.1.5) *Omega* (15)



6.2) Interviews with the Artists

6.2.1) Interview with Artist Sylvia Skok

Friday, Oct 21 2022 9:30-10:00 am.

FA 219

(Conducted and edited by Yangzhou Bian in consultation with private discussions and exchange of emails.)

Sylvia Skok is a cybernetic artist and the Assistant to the chair of the Art History department at Binghamton University. She has earned her Ph.D. in system science.

1. What inspired you to compose the five paintings?

Cybernetic scrying is my method of painting. Cybernetic scrying is an approach to creating abstract paintings. While I am creating the paintings, my mind is transferred to a light meditative state, during which I am aware of what's going on around me. The focus is given to the response generated from the deep consciousness to the spherical occurrence in which I am embedded. The noises and the urge to extract artificial meaning out of noises are tuned down, leaving everything in its natural state. While breathing with the space and breathing with the presence and non-presence, what happens spontaneously is deep listening and deep looking, a type of uncontrived and heightened sensitivity and awareness of the tangible and intangible occurrence coded in the physical expression of the world such as light, shape, sound, and rhythm. The paintbrush or the palette knife in my hand scoops the piece of life and what echoes to me at that moment into a piece of art. The paintings are the personal diary of my conversation with the moment. Yet what is most important when sharing these works with collaborative artists and the audiences is not having them decode the referential images taken shape in my perception, but embracing the personal revelation through each individual contact. To my understanding, the "sense" encapsulated within the set of paintings is a cosmic flow. My intention is not to share my interpretation as the authority designation of the paintings but to invite the encounters to listen to the whispers of the paintings and to establish their connection to the moment through the paintings. The "message" has a transformative nature. It is the quiet communication heard by some and remains a secret to others. I have communicated my wish with René, Neva, and the cast. Based upon the understanding, the aim of the project when viewed in light of translation is to produce similar effects as with the source media rather than the "textual faithfulness". In other words, the source media is the communicative pathway initiated by the paintings. That is the main reason why the collection is left untitled. The numbering system is used to label the paintings to ease communication when referring to a specific piece. The numbering system I use is related to the cosmogenic system of color. Shades and hues are constantly pulling in and pulling out, colors expanding and constricting constructs the Yin and Yang. It is the equilibrium of changes and equilibrium in motion. As to the inspiration for the paintings, I can give you some examples.

Alpha (+1) is inspired by a mix of things, including circles to represent cybernetics, triangles to represent a trinity, which has special harmony, and the moon and sun.

In +2 lives a big rock. It is a huge boulder sitting in the field which I could see from the back window of my house. The special texture encapsulated in the painting reveals the gritty cracks on its rough surface where the rain comes and makes its enduring prints. The red and pale blue dribbles are made by the “British Soldiers”, a species of lichen with blue hollow branches that end in distinctive red fruiting bodies from which the popular name is derived.

-4 depicts an elm tree, with the sun sieving through the tree crown and shapes symbolizing the north star which exists in the sky of the low mountain area where I am from.

This painting on the floor that is leaning against the table is another example. It is called -a, a piece from the same collection as the other two. When creating the painting, I was transferred to the inside of the farmhouse. The sunlight was peaking through cracks in a barn, straws scattering in the foreground and background, beats of light breaking up, and contributing to the patterns of the shades.

I feel once the paintings leave my hand, they would cease to live. The interaction of the audience with the exhibition prolongs its life through continued conversations. While the shapes and colors remain unchanging, the interpretation makes the painting evolve in its meaning, interrupting the constancy of the symbols, and making the experience intimate and individualized.

2. How did you compose the five paintings—the choice of media, color, shape, frame, layout, etc?

I think of my training in arts and my approach to art as an evolution. The concept of viewing my painting as a living system is influenced by my study of computers, especially in system science.

Alpha (+1) and *Omega (|5|)* were created using acrylic paint. Alpha was first among a batch of finished works. It was one of the final ones of my acrylic and paintbrush period. When Neva and René were conceptualizing the dance project, they were invited to the storage room, and to my surprise, they picked *Alpha (+1)* along with +2, +3, and -4. Acrylics is a fast-drying paint with a wide color palate of exciting colors which makes it a great material when experimenting. Maturing as an artist, I choose to abandon acrylics and now I mainly use Griffin Alkyd oil paint, a fast-drying resin-based paint that appeared in the market not too long ago. It has a less expansive color palate and doesn't have fluorescence. When painting +2, +3, and -4, I have also switched from brushes to palette knives as the conduit.

Omega (|5|) is an experiment on an abandoned project of the paintbrush and acrylic period. I re-approached it, believing there is a need to bring the set of paintings to a stylistic balance soon as Neva and René intended *Alpha (+1)* to be the opening piece of the dance project. I feel that what lives at the beginning shall manifest in the end.

All the paintings are drawn on canvas over stretchers of various sizes and attached to non-frames. Non-frame is a term I coined referring to a “frame” that belongs to the class of frames that do not block the painting within its confines. Instead, the portals of the non-frames mark the points where the spaces underneath are coming together and the direction the spaces are extending beyond. Each non-frame has an idiosyncratic design. The Portals of the non-frame are found or purchased objects such as parts and pieces from old furniture and factory rejects. I find that it is the imperfection, cracks, and twists that make an object unique and gives it life and

magic. It is a tradition of art-making to leave the imperfection untacked among the native Americans. It represents good fortune.

3. What message do you want to deliver through the paintings?

The message is truly subjective. Instead of having the paintings viewed as some dead “essence” to be unpacked rationally and objectively, my art holsters the primacy of interpretation and perspectives, the fifth reminder illustrated on the back wall along with the exhibition. To me, these paintings are the manifestation of Igor Fyodorovich Stravinsky’s concept. Stravinsky was an influential composer of the 20th century and a pivotal figure in modernist music. Stravinsky stresses that the soul of the music comes from the listeners. In other words, to my understanding, the message does not exist independently on its own. It is the process of interpretation, the contact of the source media, and the agents that create meaning. The paintings are one form of conveyor that I have generated, it is the interactive involvement of all memories, experiences, and senses that makes the metamorphosis towards a “message”. Inspired by the Russian painter Wassily Wassilyevich Kandinsky, one of the pioneers of abstraction in modern art, I reckon that art is part of its time and part of now. This makes me very enthusiastic about the contributions of collaborative artists and audiences that transform the limitation of time. Due to my previous training, I approach my paintings from the angle of system science and regard my creative process as a type of modeling. Modeling is not thriving to mimic the original in all its dimensionality. Rather, the model is less detailed with interpretive cues incorporated as a summary to help the people to understand the real thing. The philosophy makes my art descriptive instead of prescriptive. Furthermore, each composition is like a system and I pursue complex systems with the ability to evolve. The time of creation is a starting point, the refractions through the spectators endow the completed paintings with the capability to further develop. The paintings are never “finished” and the message they convey is forever becoming.

6.2.2) Interview with Composer Neva Derewetzky

Friday, Oct 28 2022 11:00-11:30 am.

Fine Arts Building John Arthur Café

(Conducted and edited by Yangzhou Bian in consultation with private discussions and exchange of emails.)

Neva Derewetzky is a master's student in Music at Binghamton University.

1. What is the process of creating the music from the paintings?

Due to the limitation of time and availability, not all of the nine paintings could be transferred into musical and kinetic language. I accompanied René when selecting the pieces that we both made an immediate connection to be choreographed. I keep photographs of +2, +3, and -4 on my phone. When I start to compose, I would spend a sufficient period of time with each painting, carefully studying them and absorbing the information it contains as a whole. Gradually as I am getting more and more familiar with the graphic layout and connected with the

content, rich, earthy, electronic sounds assuming the sonic quality of the painting begin to flow in my ears. I would write down what I hear in chords and phrases, play out the fragments on instruments, and develop the “score” through the use of a digital audio workstation named DAW, a great application for composing with electronic music. Though the music pieces have been created from the paintings, they are influenced by the practical needs of the project. I am well aware that the pieces are meant to support the dancers. So I incorporated drums in the background to keep the beat which has been proven beneficial. Another thing is I refrain from using live music. I recognize from my professional experience that conducting an orchestra in front of a live audience or broadcast through loudspeakers would be a far more technically demanding and intense process. On the contrary, the programmer would have more control over the effect when using electronic music, and the process is less stressful and more effective. I write pretty fast. However, when each piece is first completed, I would allow myself time to sleep on it before coming back and starting the long editing process. Being cooled from the initial impulses, this analytical phase helps me to reassess the connection of the composition to the paintings and enables me to further sculpt the music to communicate the feeling of the source media. Out of the pieces I create for the project, I am most proud of +3 and -4 is the least favorite. For +2, I would love to revisit it at some point.

2. How do you interpret the selected pieces from the artist’s collection of paintings?

To me, the colors and shapes in Syliva’s paintings manifest in a “sound world” constructed by instrumental and natural sounds such as the notes bouncing off the keyboard of the piano and effusing from the billow of the accordion, the falling raindrops, the blowing wind, the tapping horse hooves... The “sound world” supplies the backbone of the composition for it is my visceral view of the painting. The sound world I perceive for +3 is earthy and grounded. In my mind, the triangular shape extending downward is reflected through the movement of sound. It begins in a meditative state. With the dancers spreading over the floor, the intensity starts to build, and then eventually comes down. The sound world for +2 is composed of strings, bells, wind chimes, and the whispers of the wind that conveys bits of the unenclosed outside world. The strings acquire a purply blue quality that resonates with the texture of the strokes. The bells carry the same spellbinding/charismatic feeling manifested through the gyration of the colors. The wind chimes and recorded wind sounds are transformations of the inconsistency and consistency of the dynamic. The sound world for -4 is inspired by the large area made of multiple yellow hues, which are made of multiple divergent sound sources.

3. How do you re-evoked the inspiration among the audiences/dancers? What style, instrumentation, motif, patterns, etc did you choose?

As the paintings are reflective of one another, when conceptualizing +2, +3, and -4 as a sequence, I was dwelling on the theme of correspondent evolution. +2 is composed in the style of electronic music with recorded natural sounds as background. -4 is utterly a work of electronic music and +3 is mostly natural sound with a small portion of electronic components. +2 uses bells, the string synthesizer, solo violin, drums, piano, and prerecorded natural sounds. +3 uses natural sound, piano, string synthesizer, and edited live recording of an accordion. -4 uses acoustic/electric guitar, piano, string synthesizer, electronic base, synthesized Cajon (a type of

box-shaped drum), and shakers. I switch to the same sound quality to mimic the recurring use of colors in the paintings with unidentical tunes and occurrences of the same instrumentations at different parts of the composition to differentiate the variation of shape and layouts. This is demonstrated through the repeated use of natural sounds in +2 and +3, and the continued presence of a string synthesizer and piano.

4. Additional thoughts and comments on the process?

I read the paintings as part of the diary of life, telling of circumstances of different days. +2 is still. It feels as if one is crouching inside on a rainy day, looking out of the glasses into the world distorted by the falling rain. +3 is a meditation evoked by the natural landscape. -4 is charged with energy, momentum, and movements. Approaching the paintings is like absorbing the colors, the shapes, the arrangement, and everything into the brain. Sometimes you may or may not comprehend what or why, but something jumps right at you, be it a thought, a holistic impression, or an idea.

6.2.3) Interview with Director/Choreographer René Neville

Friday, Nov 4 2022 2:00-3:00 pm.
FA 163A

(Conducted and edited by Yangzhou Bian in consultation with discussions of and video recordings made during the rehearsal process.)

René Neville is the Assistant to the Chair of the Music Department and a second-year master's student in Theater at Binghamton University. Neville is a fluent dancer and an experienced choreographer and instructor. Her creative approaches are lenient and non-discriminatory, embracing movers with all capabilities. Neville believes dancing is an effective way of breaking the boundary between different types of arts and strengthening the connection between all the very unique people.

1. How does the dance project take place?

Sylvia has been a long-time collaborator and friend. The previous semester, she approached me with a group of finished paintings and wanted to show them in some way meaningful and innovative. We have worked in the past in a similar process in which dance was inspired by art. Sylvia thought this could be another lovely project. I agreed and instantly reckoned that the studio shows offered by the theater department would be a wonderful venue to host the project. So I wrote the proposal and applied.

2. How do you come up with the selection of paintings to be choreographed?

I first asked Neva and encouraged her to choose the paintings that appealed to her. I am more advanced in age and I guess, also more familiar with the development process. I assume it is easier for me to establish a connection to paintings that speak most to her. When looking at the paintings, I suppose I could work with all of them. I feel to have Neva decide and giving her the platform she would feel comfortable working on would be helpful to guide her compositions

which would become an essential part of the project. Somehow in the room, I did share with Neva which ones I was more drawn to. It was mostly Neva's options and I like them very well.

3. What is the order of the choreography?

It is a random process. Originally, I start with *Painting Number One*, then *Painting Number Two*, then *Three* and *Four*. Initially, there were only four paintings. Later from Sylvia, I learned that she labeled *Painting Number One*, *Painting Number Two*, and *Three* and *Four* as *Alpha (+1)*, *+2*, *+3*, and *-4*. So the names of the dances changed accordingly. Sylvia told me that *Alpha (+1)* is distinguished from *+2*, *+3*, and *-4* as it was painted with another type of paint and she intended to add another painting *Omega (|5|)*, which became the fifth piece of the show and also the last painting we began to work on.

4. How do you and the cast interpret the paintings?

Abstract paintings allow people the ability to see things. It is similar to looking at clouds in the sky—people see different shapes in different clouds. With prompting and guidance, the dancers would start to open up and tell me what they saw. I decided if there was not enough information, we would start by having the dancers show me what colors attract them most and why. These connections stemming from the inside kindled emotional responses. The base of the choreography was really these perceived emotions. Sometimes, the dancers would come up with a visual image. When looking at the spreading yellow in *-4*, Jeanne came up with “a bouquet of flowers in a cardboard box”. These descriptions were helpful in determining the movements, providing cues without necessarily arbitrating or being restricted to morphological imitation or mimicry.

6. How does the incorporation of poetry into the dance project take place?

The idea took shape along the process. When going through the dancers' descriptions of the paintings in words and phrases, I thought it would be fascinating to put them into poems. Originally I was looking for published poems. When looking at the words, I felt they preserve the feeling of Sylvia's paintings and I believed we could use what we had. When beginning to choreograph each painting, I would lay the painting on the floor and invite the dancers to examine it and one by one tell us what they saw. I scribbled verbatim into my notebook. Then I would ruminate over my notes, adjoining the phrases with conjunctions and verbs to let the sentences flow, and adding in lines based on my reflection of the painting that assisted the storytelling and complete the scene.

However, the poem accompanying *Alpha (+1)* was not assembled from the dancers' words. It was from a collection of poems written by Marielle's father. Marielle joined the group slightly later. When she came to rehearsal, I had already started with Jeanne and Laura. I told Marielle that we were collecting words from the paintings and asked if she could share with us words that came to her mind. At the next rehearsal, Marielle brought back her father's poem and told us that “I can't come up with words, but my father's poem.” Marielle then inquired if we could incorporate her father's poem into the painting. I immediately reckoned it a wonderful idea and I asked if she could read or present the poem to honor the memory of her father who had passed away. Marielle meditated on it and offered she could sign it. Coincidentally, my academic

advisor and her colleagues who came to see the show on a different day said Marielle's sign language was their favorite moment of the performance which they appreciated dearly, and so did I.

Omega (15) was another instance of the poem not made out of the dancers' words. The poem we used was one I curated for another performance, in the Grand Corridor years ago. I was collaborating with Alexandra Davis, faculty of art and design who was instructing students in a mixed media art class. The performance was for that class only and it was the reversed process of this project, having the dances being the point of departure for the artwork that the students of her class were to create. I asked the dance company what they are inspired by. As they were sharing their thoughts, I quickly wrote them down and curated the poem. I reorganized their phrases into different sections based on the theme—concrete objects, abstract ideas, process, et cetera. When we began the choreography, Sylvia was still creating *Omega* (15). I remembered that poem and found it to be appropriate. As the finale of the dance project, it would benefit to leave the audience with space to think for themselves just as Sylvia's process was leaving us—an unrevealed canvas with all its potential. Inspiration exists in everything. Inspiration is everything. I want to share this with all that was present.

As I am thinking back now, if I was to interpret the painting into words on my own, I would probably come up with similar words as with the dancers, maybe something a little different. But I always find the rehearsal room an intriguing space. When one dancer began to speak, the others gravitated towards the coalescing vision. The contribution from individuals kept shaping and being shaped by the collaborative process.

7. How did you choreograph the dances based on the paintings?

I used the same method throughout the project. Before the rehearsals, I would come up with a basic phrase referring to my understanding of the paintings. It was usually four movements or sixteen counts worth of choreography to teach all members of the cast. The idea was everyone would have the phrase in the body. Then we would start to work on the pieces and proceed to variations. For instance, different dancers may begin the same set of movements at different points in time, then be brought back in unison. In given moments, someone would alternate the side, mirroring the rest of the ensemble. Or I would assign consecutive movements from the basic phrase to each dancer, exploring the floor pattern, and playing with motion and stillness. The dancers were encouraged to discuss their thoughts, whether they find the experiments conform to or challenge the feelings evoked by the paintings while moving across the space. I never wished to have the project be restricted to a single vision, my vision, and I found the contributions from the dancers have facilitated the collective interpretation of Sylvia's paintings. I would task the dancers with homework, asking them to come back with small samples of their own choreography or movement phrases springing from what we learned. We would go over what they bring in, weave and use portions of their offerings into the work.

In *Alpha (+1)*, my thought went to chairs at the start—I envisioned the dancers sitting on chairs, hanging on the chairs, standing up from then returning back to the chairs. The chairs were arranged in a line facing front, which made up the shoreline, with the departure and returns coming across as rising tides and ebbing. The dance was anchored with circular motions, turns,

and rounded body trajectories interweaved, imitating the motion of waves and the spinning red rose.

In +2, I wanted more unison. The abstracted hand gestures stretching to alternative sides, the pushing of the palms, the extending arms, and the throw with the back leg lifted echoed with the stormy night, the blurry lights, the conduction, and the transfer of energy projected from the painting. The movements were unified and synchronized, yet as the performers were traveling, the motions were radiating in different directions at varying amplitudes. It was the union that creates the world of chaos.

In +3, I positioned the chairs according to the layout of the portals that made up Sylvia's non-frames. Three chairs were grouped together. The dancers began by sitting on their chairs and performing the phrases extracted from the paintings one by one. A fourth chair was set on the other side. At the end of the full sequence, the solo dancer in the fourth chair would repeat the whole thing—beginning with the introduction, then from “mountain”, to “sunrise”, to “sea spread” to “morning”. Later, I added the transition and coordinate the traveling.

In -4, I saw the same thing as everybody else saw. There were the white splashes as flood, as momentum, the royal blue strip as the tombstone, memorial, the yellow spread as sunlight, as flowers, yellow duck... I put on the music and was experimenting in the studio. It came to me that this choreography would be on the floor. As the ensemble climbed on their hands to the floor, the solo dancer wearing magenta rolled over to the center stage and then changed the speed as the red color splattered across the arctic blue at the bottom of the painting. The three dancers at the back, as the three parallel strips of colors, were doing the basic phrase in each other's window.

In *Omega* (15), I incorporated the two goals. Firstly, it was the last painting and I would love to somehow have the individual dancer present themselves through their personal bows. Secondly, in the choreography class taught I was taking, we had an interesting exercise of creating our name through a string of movements, to communicate the meaning of our names, who we are, and what are our dispositions. I was thinking about incorporating it into this dance project. Besides, we hadn't yet seen the painting as Sylvia was still composing. I was drawn to the practice of painters signing their names on canvas when finishing the painting, and the choreography of the dancers' names for the last piece shared the same concept. It would not really conflict with whatever Sylvia eventually was to present to us and the audience.

The beginning of the dances was vastly dissimilar. I wanted +2, +3, and -4 to be totally different so as not to confuse the dancers—knowing the order was to be mixed up when inviting the audience to randomly determine which dance was to be performed next. To achieve this, in +2, I asked Maddie to step from her chair to examine the painting and used it as a cue. In +3, the sequence of three chairs one placed after another contrasted with +2 and -4. In -4, the arrangement was to have all dancers standing and facing back, and turning front one by one. The difference helped the dancers to adjust quickly.

8. How did you incorporate music with the choreography?

Earlier in the process, the movements we developed were based on the paintings as some of the music was not yet ready. Also, from the initial stage, it would be helpful to come up with choreography free from the influence of the music. Later when the music was added in, I would

guide the dancers to listen and feel the music. This helped to match the movements with Neva's composition. Knowing that the music was also generated from the paintings, I continued to use music to inform and refine the choreography.

9. What comes into your mind when you look at the paintings?

It is feelings first. Then half of the time, I feel struck by some words and expressions which sparkle the movements. The other half of the time, I gravitate toward movements. I would suddenly find my arm stretching this way, my head turning, and my torso bending. For instance, when I look at this picture on the wall here that Sylvia painted, the orange loop comes to me as the "sun". Then my mind begins to make sense of the environment as the "sky", the "celestial atmosphere", the dots become "small asteroids" and "stars", and the pale grey strip become "clouds" and "air". While I am exploring, I would associate the "sun" with being rounded and experiment with circular shapes and movements such as swirls and loops. Usually, one aspect of the painting captures my attention and unconsciously I would pursue it as the point of entry to the world of the painting. This is especially true when working with abstract paintings. It is always feeling and the later steps seem to be trying to understand why I feel how I feel as I feel.

6.2.4) Interview with Interpreter/Dancer Laura Ulrich

Sunday, Oct 30 2022 1:20-1:35 pm.

Anderson Center Grand Corridor

(Conducted and edited by Yangzhou Bian in consultation with discussions of and video recordings made during the rehearsal process.)

Laura Ulrich was a special Ed teacher and an office manager before retiring. She began to dance at the age of seven and has kept up dancing as her hobby for over sixty years. Ulrich graduated from Binghamton University and was exposed to modern dance there through the physical education program. Ulrich had participated in multiple musical theater productions. Musical theater and jazz are amongst her favorite dance styles.

1. Could you describe how the words that make up the poems come up from the paintings?

When the rehearsal began way back then, René showed us printouts of the paintings. The colors were not as vibrant as the paintings hanging behind us. In +2, the dark background and the spatter of dots made me think of "stormy nights". The yellow and white were like "blurry lights". The big "swirl" in the center and the commingling of contrasting colors gave the feeling of disorder and "chaos", and in the picture, there was "motion". René put these words together along with interpretations from others and made the poem that accompanied the dance. Most nouns were from the participants and how René connected them made the lines poetic.

I was healing from my injury and not there when the others were working on +3 and -4, so I didn't get to contribute. I wasn't able to dance for a couple of weeks. To accommodate the situation, René asked me to be the narrator to read the poems for each dance. I do feel the poems are telling the same stories as the paintings.

2. How did you choreograph the poetic images assigned by the choreographer?

I made the first sixteen counts of +2 and René used it as the beginning of the piece after Maddie had examined the painting on the wall. It began with the right leg crossed over the left leg following the leg hand stretching to the side at the level of the waist. The next two counts repeated the first two on the other side. Then the right palm dived down and reached up until the arm straightened with the body turning to the left. Again, the movements repeated on the left side. The second eight counts began with a series of gliding, consecutive steps to the front side left with the arms scooping up the air. Next was an inside turn with arms held up in a V shape. The phrase concluded with the arms swinging horizontally to the side and the head tilting in the same direction with the feet step-touch to the left and another step-touch to the right. The turns were inspired by the swirls and the feeling of chaos and motion of a stormy night.

3. How did you translate your name into choreography?

The choreography is really about the things that are important to me. I live a longer life than others and it is interesting that the choreography comes to be longer as well. The choreography began with the feet together, knees bending and palms closed in the front of the body at the level of the chest to indicate I love to read. Then my arms traced the shape of my initials “L” and “U”. I further stretched the arms to the fourth ballet position to the left and gracefully the left arm reached up and the right arm reached down to show my training in ballet. The next part represented my training in jazz, I stepped forward with the Jazz hand followed by the jazz square stepping left, right, left, right. Then came the phrase for the experience in musical theater. It was where I started and I had choreographed in many. For this, I chose the Bob Fosse steps from “All That Jazz”. Then was my wedding. My husband Tom is my rock and my soul. I turned around and walked forward with a bouquet of flowers in hand, mimicking walking down the aisle. Then followed our “honeymoon”. The two of us were part of a Polish Folk Dance group. Right after getting married, we went dancing with the team at a folk festival. The step-touch with both wrists resting on the side of the waist and chassé with one arm reaching up are signature moves from Polish folk dance. After that, I taught as a special education teacher for twelve years. So, I turned my back to the audience and began to draw “A”, “B”, and “C” on the imagined wall with my left hand and then erase the letters one by one with my right hand. After retiring, we always take summer vacations on the beach. I moved forward several steps and then backward, bending from the waist with the elbows rolling over one another to show the waves coming upon the shore and receding. The small jump and kick to the left, then to the right was kicking the surf. Last, I turned around and closed the book, ending in the position I began with. It signified the end of the chapter.

4. Why do you choose turquoise for the performance costumes?

If to be completely honest, it was one of the options available in my wardrobe. It happened that René liked the shirt for the performance. If I have to make up the reason, turquoise is a shade of green, the color of the rainforest and mountain. It reflects elements from +3.

6.2.5) Interview with Dancer Jeanne Norton

Thursday, Oct 27 2022 7:10-7:40 pm.

Anderson Center Grand Corridor

(Conducted and edited by Yangzhou Bian in consultation with discussions of and video recordings made during the rehearsal process.)

Jeanne Norton was a caseworker for the Broome County Department of Social Services whose work was based on child welfare. Norton had her training in tap at the age of five and jazz at the age of twelve and was fond of cheerleading and gymnastics.

1. Could you describe how the words that make up the poems come up from the paintings?

It usually begins with René showing us the paintings and letting us talk about what we see. In *Alpha (+1)*, I saw life in it and motion, too.

When we were doing +2, the novel *The Water Dancer* by Ta-Nehisi Coates which I had just finished reading immediately came to my mind. It was a story about an underground railroad and the history of African Americans, the history of heritage in the form of a myth, and slavery. The protagonist was a young boy who learned that he has a power called conduction, a power shared by the great escape artist Harriet Tubman, whom the enslaved people call Moses. On contact with water, the boy could use it to transport himself and other people across great distances. This transfer of energy took the people from the danger of the South to the shelter of the North. The white and blue made me think of water. The swirl of dark colors in the background and the bright colors of the foreground somehow reminded me of the theme of *The Water Dancer*. So when it was my turn to share, I said “conduction and transference of energy”.

When we were doing +3, the patches of green came to me as “mountains”, the pale yellow and peach as “light” and the smashes of blue reminded me of “water”.

In -4, the expanse of yellow with browns revealing from the corners came to me as “flowers in a cardboard box”. The shapes reminded me of inanimate objects and the painting gave me the feeling of some “still life”.

I must say it was different looking at the physical paintings, the real-life thing than the papers with Sylvia’s paintings printed.

2. How did you choreograph the poetic images assigned by the choreographer?

In +2, my choreography was inspired by the conduction and transference of energy as discussed before. Influenced by the circular motion of the painting, it began with a head roll to the right. Next, as I was thinking about the underground railroad, the right arm reached up and pulled from the earth. The left arm reached up and pulled from the earth. The knees bent when both arms came down. In the last part, the arms extended forward with a throwing motion. The right leg was lifted at the back with the body slightly bending forward, balancing on the left leg. It was about the idea of deliverance—to reach, connect, give it away and get over there.

In +3, René asked us to choreograph “Mountain”, “Sunrise”, “Ocean”, “Sea Spread” and “Morning”. For “Mountain”, when it was my turn, I stood up facing stage left and placed my left

foot on the seat. My left arm was on the back of the chair and my right arm was leveled at the shoulder, pointing to the left. Standing indicated the height of the mountain. My head was kept straight, symbolizing the summit. For “Sunrise”, I touched the floor and raised up with my palms heralding the sun from below the horizon and gradually looking up. For “Ocean”, I stepped forward away from the chairs, with my left hand covering my nose. Like the seaweed, my right arm was undulating as I slowly came down, kneeling and then crouching on the floor. For “Sea Spread”, I was hearing the sound of the ocean and visualizing the crashing of the waves and the splashing of water. I stood on my knees, releasing the tension from my arms, and gently swung my body from side to side. At first, the arms were arriving low around the pelvic area, then as the momentum was building, the swinging grew faster and the arms were flinging at the level of the shoulders. For “Morning”, I rolled on my back, crouching in a fetal position. Suddenly, I opened up my arms and legs forming two paralleling Vs. It was like a child waking up and waving hello to the world.

In -4, I had a solo part after the ensemble. It was a collaborative effort between René and me. We were trying to figure out how to show the big bouquet of flowers that I saw in the painting through movements. Slowly, I rolled up from the floor, with my right arm reaching up high. The same arm led my body to swing to a standing position, with my left facing the audience. Then I flung the right arm to the right side of the pelvic bone twice. It was like a flower growing up from the earth and spreading its leaves. I stood facing front with my legs open. My left palm came through the right fist in front of my chest, with the fingers of the left-hand fanning to right at the same pace and the same direction as the head roll three times. This was adapted from the word “Grow” from American Sign Language that Marielle taught us. Then I walked four steps backward beginning with my right foot. I hold the standing position for a period of time and repeated the second basic phase René devised for the beginning, and walked forward to center stage revisiting the ending part of the “conduction and transference of energy” that I choreographed.

3. How did you translate your name into choreography?

The choreography or “Name Study” was not much of the name. It was more of my memory of growing up. I was raised on a farm. When I was a kid, I liked playing in the dirt. So the choreography began with me crouching, my palms sweeping the floor, meddling with the soil and sand. Then I stepped back on my left foot, pushed back with my arms, did a stretch, and rose up, indicating growing up. I swung my arms and legs to mimic kicking cans. It was a fun thing to do and I did it all the time. The next movement was holding the rein. Dad trained me and we went to see horse racing every week. I held both elbows up at shoulder level with the palms facing down meeting at the top of the chest. Then I turned to the left, extending my left arm and drawing my right elbow back to mimic pulling the bow. Shooting archery was what I did back then. Then I was doing cheerleading. My left foot stepped to the left with my left arm drawing the invisible pompom and swung it to the left and my right foot stepped to the right with my right arm doing the same thing. Led by the right arm, my body flung around and now I was facing right, showing the big turn in my life. One by one, I held out my arms and pointed them in front while walking forward, indicating moving on. I held my palm to my heart. That was when I fell in love. Then I had three babies. Now I was facing the front. I held my arms as if carrying a

baby in my arms. My left foot took a small step to the left and followed by the right foot crossing front and I repeated it three times. I had worked with hundreds of people. The experience was about giving and sharing. So I stood with my feet together and bent my knees as the arms were reaching out. When the arms came back to the sides, my right foot took a step back. I crossed my fingers together and stretched my arms above my head. The end is to say, I am still here, I am still learning, and I am still growing.

6.2.6) Interview with Interpreter/Dancer Marielle Zuccolo

Friday, Oct 28 2022 7:10-7:40 pm.

Saturday, Oct 29 2022 7:00-7:30 pm.

Sunday, Oct 30 2022 1:10-1:20 pm.

Anderson Center Grand Corridor

(Conducted and edited by Yangzhou Bian in consultation with discussions of and video recordings during the rehearsal process.)

Marielle Zuccolo is a registered dietitian working with individuals with special needs. She began dancing ballet from the age of five to the age of seven and later she was introduced to tap and jazz.

1. What has inspired the incorporation of Angelo Zuccolo's poetry "The Ocean Rose" in *Alpha (+I)*?

I was "late on the game" and unaware of how the group has approached the painting in the earlier phases during the rehearsal several months back in the summer. When I was introduced to Skok's picture, the swirls of color immediately reminded me of a poem I had read years ago. It was written by my father Angelo Zuccolo. It is the title poem in his published collection "The Ocean Rose: Poems of Love Found and Love Lost". At that moment, I realized the poem and the painting were meant to be a match as everything came together. In the painting, the splashes of white and different shades of blue transferred me to the sea. In the bottom left corner, the spinning blob of baby blue forms the swirl that incarnated the momentum of the water that broke up the tranquil surface. In the middle of the painting grew the lonely red rose rising above the waves in the center of the ocean. The prepossessing colors reaffirmed that the wondrous sight existed only in the dream world or a mystical land. Black vines stretching out from the center were smeared off by translucent brush strokes. They were the representation of the strenuous draft of the chilly season. Tiny colored dots spattering around the drop of red were like nurturing raindrops. The stripe of red on the top right corner and the vivid yellow and mellowing orange floating on the expanse of white indicated the sunlight of summertime undulating along the surface of the sea. The concomitant feeling of lightness and darkness created a strong sense of hope breaking through a hanging gloominess. Suddenly the red drop became a heart, throbbing and pumping vigorously. The ocean became the sky and the slender white slips at the bottom of the circle were the streaming tears that sparkle through the

firmament. At the enlightening moment, they have been transformed into stars. The poem reads:
“

Rarely had the sun and the moon
and the sea and the surf
and the soft summer rain
and the strong winter wind
all gathered together at one moment
to marvel at a most wonderful sighting
A rose
growing in the center of oceans
alone in its beauty
delicate in its strength
alive in its passion
confident of its renaissance in such an unlikely garden
and all of those dwelling in the sky
and in and below the waves
and nearby and faraway, too
smiled
and the ocean rose
with the happiest of teardrops
looked
and touched the stars”

2. What is the process of interpreting the poem in American Sign Language?

I am a student of American Sign Language. My teacher is a mentor from the deaf community. According to what I have learned, there are two ways of interpreting a written text in American Sign Language. One is called fingerspelling, the representation of the letters of a written system using only hands. The other is signing employing both manual and nonmanual expressions such as facial expression and the positionality of the body. When translating “The Ocean Rose” into ASL, I fingerspelled the letters of my father’s name “Angelo Zuccolo” with corresponding hand signs. Then I interpreted “The Ocean Rose” line by line as Laura was reading the poem to the audience. What I was doing is not signed English, the “word-for-word” translation of the source text. Instead, when translating into ASL, conjunctions such as “and”, “or”, and “but” were taken out or worked into the holistic meaning the sentence imparts. When preparing the translation, I would analyze the poem line by line. Most of the attention was paid to the nouns and verbs which were indicative of the main topic. I would then draw a succinct summary that encapsulates the idea and feeling of the line. Then she would select vocabulary from ASL and organize the sequence of hand gestures and expressions in a sequence of movements that works within the time constraint as the interpretation was meant to be spontaneous. I had also to an extent taken some liberty when working with specific words and expressions. Sometimes, there were several ways to sign the same vocabulary. In this case, I would turn to the one that would connect most effectively with the phrase before and the phrase afterward. Sometimes, I would omit elements that contributed less substantially to the sentences.

In the third line, I signed only “soft rain” for “and the soft summer rain”. Sometimes, I would need to slightly adapt and even reinvent a gesture when the existing options could not be adopted because of the limited time allowed. In the eighteenth line, I rephrased “with the happiest of teardrops” as “the heart swells” and indicated it with the dominant hand over the left side of the chest and the fingers gradually opening up from the O shape. Sometimes, I would replace the general concept with its part or particulars. For example, I used the hand sign of “waves” to represent the word “ocean” to indicate the motion and expanse exhibited through *Alpha (+I)*.

Having choreographed the draft, I visited my instructor in ASL and revised my interpretation based on the comments she gave.

3. Could you demonstrate the interpretation line by line?

The title “The Ocean Rose” was signed as “Waves” with two palms mimicking the motion of waves chasing one another, followed by “Rose” with the right hand touching the right nostril, and then the left.

The name of the poet “Angelo Zuccolo” was made of finger spelling of the letters “A”, “N”, “G”, “E”, “L”, “O”, “Z”, “U”, “C”, “C”, “L”, “O”.

Line one “Rarely had the sun and the moon” was signed as “Rarely” with the supporting hand palm up and the dominant residing over and flips inward twice, and opening up; “Sun” with dominant fist twirls and open up; “Moon” with dominant hand forming a crescent over the forehead and then move out.

Line two “and the sea and the surf” was signed as “Waves” and “Surf” with the supporting hand palm down and the dominant palm brushing over the back of the supporting hand twice as if the sea spread crashing over rocks.

Line three “and the soft summer rain” was signed as “Gentle rain” with both hands patting downward gently with restrained magnitude.

Line four “and the strong winter wind” was signed as “Cold” with both elbows parallel to the body, hands in fists, and shiver; and “Wind” with two palms facing inward towards one another and smearing from the right to the left and the left to the right.

Line five “all gathered together at one moment” was signed as “Gather” with two hands reaching out, grabbing and drawing in; and “Together” with both hands forming a flower opening up.

Line six “to marvel at a most wonderful sighting” was signed as “Amazed” with both fists drawn close to face then open up and the fingers shaking very subtly; “See”, with the dominant hand with fingers closed drawing a circle over the face and the fingers open in the shape of high five drawing another circle over the face; and “Wonderful” with both palms pushing forward then move up once and down once.

Line seven “a rose” was signed as “Rose” with the dominant hand touching the right nostril and then moving over to the left nostril and smells.

Line eight “growing in the center of oceans” was signed as “Growing (as out of the soil)” with two fists touching and fingers opening upward; “Center (as of geographic space)” with the supporting hand stretching outward from the middle of the body and the dominating hand spreading over the palm of the supporting hand; and “Waves”.

Line nine “alone in its beauty” was signed as “Alone” with one turn of the dominant hand in the shape of a fist with the index finger pointing up; “Beauty” with the dominant hand in the shape of a high five coming over the face and ending in a flat O shape over the chin; and “Here” with the dominant hand signaling as a pointed finger.

Line ten “delicate in its strength” was signed as “Delicate” with both hands facing inward and open close twice; and “Life print/savviness” with two hands touching the shoulder and moving outward at the shoulder level in fists.

Line eleven “alive in its passion” was signed as “alive” with both palms facing upward cupped together and raises from the chest to the neck and forward.

Line twelve “confident of its renaissance in such an unlikely garden” was signed as “Confident” with the fist of the dominant hand punching over the fist of the supporting hand; “Show” with the dominant hand pointing to the palm of the supporting hand facing outward; “To be found” with the dominant hand in peacock eye shape pulling at the pointed index finger of the supporting hand; “Strange place” with the dominant hand in C shape coming over the pointed index of the supporting hand, the dominant hand changed to the palm shape and smashed over.

Line thirteen “and all of those dwelling in the sky” was signed as “All” with the dominant palm going around the supporting palm for one circle; and “Sky/Heaven” with the dominant palm facing the interpreter and vertically moving up above head level.

Line fourteen “and in and below the waves” was signed as “In ” with the supporting hand indicating the surface level, the dominant hand coming down touching the supporting hand; “Below” with the dominant hand continuing to travel downward; and “Waves”.

Line fifteen “and nearby and faraway, too” was signed as “Near” with the dominant hand palm sweeping over the supporting hand palm facing down next to the body; and “Far” with the dominant hand repeating the sweeping motion stretching further away from the body.

Line sixteen “smiled” was signed as “Smile” with the interpreter nodding to the right side and smiling.

Line seventeen “and the ocean rose” was signed as “Waves” and “Rose”.

Line eighteen “with the happiest of teardrops” was signed as “The heart swells” with the dominant hand over the left side of the chest and the fingers gradually opening up from the O hand shape.

Line nineteen “looked” was signed as the interpreter looking above over the right shoulder.

Line twenty “and touched the stars” was signed as “Soar” with the dominant hand sliding up from the supporting hand towards the space above the right shoulder followed by “Stars” with the back of the hands facing the body and both index fingers pointing up intermittently for two times each.

4. How did you translate your name into choreography?

I started with my family “Zuccolo”. In Italian, it means “the crown”. So the choreography began with the right palm wrapping around the head. Then to choreograph my given name, I stretched my arms towards the lower right, and came up, indicating the bend of the letter “M”. “A” was looking over the left shoulder and flinging the arms upward. Next, the right leg made a turn from the side of the knee and pointed out, mimicking the shape of the letter “R”. For “I”, I

stood up tall, crouching with the arms drawn to stomach areas making the dot. To get to “E”, double “L” and “E”, I stretched further forward holding the back leg up. I sustained the posture for a period of time to show there is more than one of each letter. I patted the left thigh to sign the word “dog” to refer to my pet dog and my mother’s maiden name which means “wolf”. Then I tapped the palm of one hand with the middle finger of the other, and vice-versa to sign “Jesus”, representing my faith. Next, I used the left and right index fingers to point across at the elbow to form another “M”. The turn and the excerpt of tap steps were to show the dance styles I am passionate about. It concluded with both arms reaching up and coming back to the chest with palms closed as I returned to a peaceful state.

4. How did you choreograph the poetic images assigned by the choreographer?

I wasn’t there when the performers were interpreting +2 and contributing to the choreography. When I look at +2 and perform it, I hear the rainfall.

In +3, I saw the spatters of red and orange above the green as orange poppies in the garden, and the swirl of whites and blues as the wings of a snow angel. Then René had us choreograph our impression of the words “Mountain”, “Sunrise”, “Ocean”, “Sea spread” and “Morning”. My “Mountain” was inspired by yoga movements. I sat in a chair crossed-legged. Then the legs dropped to the ground. The two feet opened to the sides and came back to the closed position. The arms fell to the side, with the head forming the summit of the mountain. I felt grounded and rooted in the earth. My “Sunrise” was choreographed with the arms extending toward the floor. While the body came up, the arms open up crossing one another at the chest. The head was bending backward, with eyes closed, facing up. The movements was showing the coming up from the earth and basking in the sun. My “Ocean” began with the left foot pointing out and coming back. Then led by the right foot and then the right arm, the body rotated to the right side of the chair and made a full circle until I sat on the floor. I was lying on my back with my left hand drawing a circle over my head. The rotation was similar to the roaring surfs. While on the floor, I drew up my knees and move them from left to right and then right to left as if the waves and ripples were undulating back and forth to indicate “Sea Spread”. My “Morning” was sitting up, stretching both arms led by the palms pushing to the toes, then coming up and pushing down again as if rising from the bed.

In -4, I saw the yellow colors to the left being carved out of the darker colors to the right in the shape of a duck.

I have synesthesia. During the dances, I saw the movements as a flow of colors with different temperatures like the ones being released from the paintings.

5. What message have you received/ are you trying to deliver through the “translating” experience?

The message that kept to be in my mind throughout the experience was being in the moment, and being true to my feelings.

6.2.7) Interview with Dancer Yingmang Meng

Wednesday, Nov 16 2022 10:45-11:14 pm.

Thursday, Nov 17 2022 5:00-6:00 pm.
Home.

(Conducted and edited by Yangzhou Bian in consultation with discussions of and video recordings made during the rehearsal process.)

Yingmang Meng is the performance personae of Yangzhou Bian, a graduate student at Binghamton University, studying theater and translation. Yingmang Meng is Bian's mother, who had to give up pursuing a professional career in dancing due to social and economic constraints. Bian was exposed to dancing at an early age yet she was never fond of it until began to receive professional training in ballet, jazz, classic, and ethnic Chinese dances in her early twenties.

1. Could you describe how the words that make up the poems come up from the paintings?

I joined the group when René and the other dancers began to interpret +3. René set the painting on the floor, the red colors above the green came to me as the sun rose above the mountains. The splashes of whites were like the surfs and sea spread. It was like an abstract naturalistic painting with elements trespassing the boundaries of their shapes and stealing into the spaces already occupied by the adjoining figures.

In -4, the light blue spreading over from the lower center to the bottom quarter of the painting stroke me as a flood breaking out from the blockage of rocks. The strip of navy blue clipped in between the large rectangle of scarlet and the strip of black stood out to me like a tombstone, the entrance from the world of the mortals into the world of the deceased. The semi-circle of oranges, reds, and yellows was like a giant, surrealistic sun—an overpowering sovereign, a despot harrowed by the shades of his own thought. It felt like muted violence with its shattered but gripping persistence.

2. How did you choreograph the poetic images assigned by the choreographer?

In *Alpha (+1)*, I was shaking my body and relaxing the muscles in an enjoyable way after sitting for too long. The series of random shoulder and chest movements draw René's attention and she asked me if I could extract from what I did and make it into something that goes along with the painting and choreography we had just learned. René said the merry spirit bouncing off that moment was simply moving and delightful to watch. While other dancers were working on their parts, I seemed to be imbued in my own world and the music ringing from the inside started to echo in my bones. I suppose what happened was I unconsciously embodied the mesmerizing ocean rose written by Marielle's father, and for a moment lived her beauty, her passion, her strength, totally unaware of the change of the celestial sphere. I duplicated and adapted the movements of the first eight counts, yet both René and I felt what was touching at the moment was the internal joy and buoyancy. Because of the shared comprehension, from then on till the end when the ensemble was drawing the arms up from the side and sending out our appreciation for the solitude enabled in a shared space, it came to me that I shall not bind myself by any script but the mellowness of the ocean rose—crouching, extending, reposing, shuddering, growing; and let Neva's beautiful composition carry my torso and my limbs as the soft summer rain and the strong winter wind patting on the leaves and the stem of the ethereal flower. Yet the analysis was

likely retrospective. At the moment, the decisions made were mostly led by a primeval instinct. Whether it was the mind that was compelled to make the connection or the connection that existed prior to the cerebrum processing was really something uncanny. Somehow, either following the mind or following the body, what was meant to be would arrive at the same destination.

In +3, René gave us in-class and after-school assignments to choreograph the words “Mountain”, “Sunrise”, “Ocean”, “Sea Spread” and “Morning”. I have always been suspected to have an uncommon version of attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder that keeping still was nearly impossible. When I hopped on the chair, for a sufficient amount of time I refused to come down. Then René said choreograph to what impression the word “Mountain” gave us, I reached my right arm down and lifted my left leg up from the kneeling posture I was holding on the chair. Then I made up the explanation that the line the body formed looked like the slope and the pointed feet indicated the rocky surface of the mountain. René liked it and we called it a day. For “Sunrise”, I had to save myself from sustaining the physically demanding position I came up with for “Mountain”. So I put down my left leg and withdraw my right arm, but managed to do it gracefully as if my palm was heralding the sun from his underground bed-chamber and windmilled him to his office in the sky. When came to “Ocean”, I always think of my father trying to teach me how to float, to relax on top of the blanket made by the billows. So I slowly slipped down from the chair and spread over the floor with my left knee bending up and arms opening to the side. For “Sea Spread”, I curved my palms from the wrist one here and one there. Surfs were mischievous, they would rarely restrain themselves to certain landing places. Then I sat up and took a series of rolls on my knees away from the chair to the center as if being pushed by the surge of giant waves. I was wearing magenta for the performance which coincidentally matched the red and orange dots in the painting. After a couple more curved motions of the palm, I came down on my back and rolled over on my stomach, resting my head over my arms. The “sleeping” was in preparation for waking up for which I gradually stretch my arms and legs, revealing myself from the imaginary quilt as my head rose from my forearm which I used as the pillow. This was the choreography for “Morning”.

3. How did you translate your name into choreography?

I choreographed the three characters of “Meng”, “Ying”, and “Mang” from my mother’s name. I chose the style of Dai ethnic dance of Yunnan province. Yunnan was next to own hometown Sichuan and most importantly, it was the first dance I learned and performed with my mother. Dai ethnic dance is characterized by agile hand movements and the arches formed by the body and the limbs. Mother’s family name “Meng 孟” is the homophone of “Meng 梦” which means dream. The choreography began in a standing position with the left cheek resting over the back of the left hand. Then followed by the arms stretching and a jumping step forward to indicate waking up. The two characters of my mother’s given name were closely tied to the social disturbance in China at the time. “Ying 迎” means to welcome. “Mang 芒” means the mangos. Mother was born amidst the cultural revolution and her name was indicating a political event when Chair Mao was sending a basket of mangos he received from the diplomats of Pakistan to workers all over the country as a gift. When the mangos arrived in the towns, they

were treated as the chairman himself and handled with extreme care and reverence. To reciprocate the chairman's generosity, mangos were made into specimen and wax models. The fervor over the exotic fruit exhibited throughout the country was far beyond madness could describe. When choreographing, I chose to erase the collective trauma the country had suffered and restricted the reenactment solely to the representation of the fruit and the hospitality the word "Mang" imparts. I extended my left palm to the front and my right hand led the swirl around the wrist to indicate the growing on the branch and picking it off. It was followed by a turn to the right, a swing of the hip to the left, and then to the right. Each time my arms would cross in front of the corresponding side of the pelvic bone. Having harvested the mangos, I made another turn to the left with my arms coming down to the side of the waist from above my head, mimicking the mango tree. To choreograph "to welcome", I took a tiny step back, impersonating the jolly surprise of noticing a friend appearing in the distance. Then I walked forward with my head slightly bending and palms touching in front of the chest in the prayer position to show the blessing and warm regards towards the guest. Then, I placed my arms to the side of the body and made a series of turns to the left, indicating leading the visitor home. Lastly, I rested my right cheek over the back of my right hand, signaling going back to sleep. Mother was hesitant when I asked if I could use her name and more so her identity. Nonetheless, she agreed as she did not own the letters if I insisted to adopt them as a pseudonym. I wanted to acknowledge mother yet I wanted to respect her wishes of being invisible. So I asked Marielle if she could teach me how to sign "this is my mother" in American Sign Language and added a preface to the choreography with me crouching on the ground and then raising up and sitting on my knees to communicate the message. The meaning of the characters was the structural components of the choreography, the style of the dance and the vibe of the movements were more revealing of the character of my mother—innocent, vivid, and generous in nature.

6.2.8) Interview with Dancer Madisyn Mercado

Monday, Oct 31 2022 2:40-3:00 pm

Monday, Nov 14 2022 3:00-3:20 pm

Theater Department Main Office Reception Room

(Conducted and edited by Yangzhou Bian in consultation with discussions of and video recordings made during the rehearsal process.)

Madisyn Mercado is a sophomore at Binghamton University studying Economics and Theater. She began her formal training in dancing as a child and took a period of time off before coming back to it at the age of eighteen. Mercado is familiar with tap, modern, jazz, and ballet.

1. Could you describe how the words that make up the poems come up from the paintings?

I try not to put too much thought when looking at the paintings and I say immediately what I feel. I believe the more you analyze, the more the feelings change and deviate from the initial reaction. If I look at those paintings at this moment, I could not guarantee coming up with exactly the same response as when I was first introduced to the paintings. I was not there when

the group began to interpret +2. I joined at the end of August. It was when the semester had just started. We were not on campus either. It was in Jet Fit Studio. René showed us the paintings on her phone and we did not see the physical paintings until the General Interest Meeting.

Retrospectively, I remember that in +2, the blue and white dots at the bottom of the painting instantaneously came to me as raindrops. In +3, the triangle painted in green that is upside down was like a mountain and the swing of pale blue was like the mountain lake. In -4, the vibrant colors gave me the feeling of the exotic birds and the tropical rainforest.

2. How did you choreograph the poetic images assigned by the choreographer?

In +2, the choreography was provided by René and the other cast members who were on the project earlier. In +3, René wanted me to repeat the sequence of movements the other three performers had come up with for the reiteration of “Mountain” and “Sunrise”. Then she asked me to choreograph my “Ocean” and “Sea Spread”. When I thought of the sea, I thought of diving. So I stood up from the chair with my feet closed, and arms stretching toward the sky and opening up in preparation for the dive. Then I plunged forward, supporting myself with both palms and lifting the left leg, mimicking the tail of a mermaid. René had me add a whistling sound as a cue to the other dancers who were laying on the floor waiting to proceed with “Morning”. For my “Morning”, I sat on my knees. First, I threaded my right arm to the right side of my body, then repeated with the left arm. After that, my hands touched the floor, and the arms came up crossing at the center and then opening to the sides. It was like waking up from a dream and yawning. In -4, a large part of the choreography was determined by René. But Marielle, Yingmang, and I came up with the ensemble piece at the end when Jeanne was doing her solo. We literally choreographed the last four lines of the poem of -4. When everyone came down to the ground, lying on the side, Marielle, Yingmang, and I gathered around back to back, making a unit of three. The unit rotated three times clockwise. Each time, the two dancers at the front would bend forward, and the third dancer would raise up and improvise her own thing. It was like someone opening a cardboard box and revealing a bouquet of flowers. Next, we stood on our feet and roll up slowly, “impersonating a still life”. After repeating a portion of the basic unit that felt like the leitmotif of “a flood of water gathers momentum”, we formed the stage picture of “a yellow duck holds an umbrella” with Yangmang at the front rowing a boat, I stood with my knees half bent holding an imaginary umbrella and, Marielle used her arms to show the wings of a bird.

3. How did you translate your name into choreography?

I took the letters of my nickname “Maddie”. Seriously I mimicked the letters through the dance moves. I stepped out with my left leg and left arm and grabbed my left hand into a fist while drawing the elbow to the chest. I repeated the movements on the right side to form the shape of “M”. Then from the standing position, I swept my arms to the side. At the same time, my body came down with my legs open and knees bent to mimic the shape of “A” which was more abstract. For the two “D”s, I began to hop with one leg landing behind another four times. Then I added a high kick with my right leg. It was followed by an inward turn. That was the “I”. After that, inspired by René’s demonstration of her name, I came up with a turn on my right foot and land with my left foot standing out as “E”. René wanted it to be slightly longer. So I

incorporated a *Changement de pied*, a jump starting and ending with the feet crossed but with their positions interchanged that ended in the fifth position of ballet. It indicated my favorite color “Pink”. Pink makes me happy and when I am happy I jump. Then I came up with a quick turn to the left with my head leading and my arms crossed. This was “Lasagna”. It was nice and delicious—when I have a yummy meal I would grab my tummy, feeling content. The choreography ended with standing on the right leg with the left leg pointing to the side.

4. When you are dancing what comes into your mind?

I think you have asked this question before. I didn’t think about anything, just the choreography. I didn't feel anything in particular. I did not know if it was either excitement or nervousness. I just wanted to get through the show.

6.3) Link to the Rehearsal Recordings

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1cfytbvJskv9aTq1ZkCfS0qmjapUloxA1?usp=share_link

6.4) Project Poster of *Whispers*

