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舞蹈意象：探討從舞蹈創作過程到舞台表演的動作體現

Dance Imagery: Embodying Movements from the Process of
Dance-Making to Stage Performance

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Dedication

I genuinely dedicate this journey to my fellow dancers, who experience the same struggle yet keep on going forward to discover and explore their potentials.



摘要

本論文分別描述了由賈西亞創作的《邊緣》及沈亞彤所創作的《回憶錄》之舞蹈表演經驗。身為兩個作品的舞者之一，我在舞蹈創過程中特別強調「流體技巧 (*liquid technique*) 來運用舞蹈意象。理解意象的參考架構是基於「流體技巧」-想像軀幹猶如水中飄動的一張紙；由林文中教授的舞蹈訓練整理而成。此技巧著重於限制中的身體、環形運動及即興舞蹈的運用。這項實踐研究希望反映編舞中探索動作體現之意象使用，因而了解意象是舞者想像與體現動作的有效工具。

關鍵字：舞蹈意象、流體技巧、動作探索、創作過程、舞蹈表演

Abstract

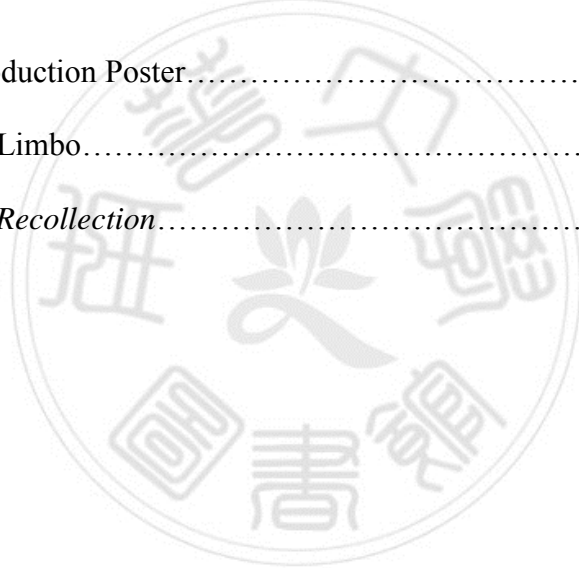
This thesis narrates the experience of performing *Limbo* and *Recollection* choreographed by Al Bernard Garcia and Alexes Sandino, respectively. As one of the dancers for the two choreographies, utilizing the dance imagery with particular emphasis on *liquid technique* was applied in the dance making. The frame of reference of understanding imagery is based on the *liquid technique*- imaging the torso as a floating paper in the water; configured from dance training taught by Professor Wen-Chung Lin. This technique highlights the use of body restriction, circular movements, and improvisation. This practice-based research hopes to reflect the use of imagery in embodying the movements as explored in the choreography. Thus, this posits that imagery is an effective tool for the dancer to visualize and embody the movement.

Keywords: Dance Imagery, *Liquid Technique*, Movement Exploration, Creative Process, Dance Performance

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INTRODUCTION

“Liquid Technique”

“Moving our torso as a piece of paper floating in the water can be articulated sequentially. It has four corners- from the two sides of the shoulders down to the two sides of the pelvis. This allows the body to create liquid movement”.

(Lin, Wen Chung, 2019)

This research is based upon my experience of using imagery in my dance practice. Although imagery is commonly used in professional dance training, my interest in this study is to focus on understanding how the *liquid technique*- one of the techniques that utilize imagery usher in the imaging of the torso like a floating paper; how it is explored in dance choreographies and performances. It started when our Professor in contemporary dance emphasized his own technique in teaching movements. In this thesis, this approach will be termed generally as the *liquid technique*. This study was a great part of a suggestion from our Professor, and upon further investigation on how this approach affects my performance of dancing in different choreographies, I decided that it may be worth something.

In September 2019, I started my MFA dance training in a contemporary dance class at Nanhua University, Taiwan, under the Ethnomusicology department. The *liquid technique* became the focus of exploration in dance training and the dance composition course. The technique was gathered from his experiences of being a choreographer in many dance companies. Through his experiences, he gathered all his observations and applied them in his teachings. Using the image of a floating paper is a prompt for *liquid technique* movements. According to him, our torso is like a piece of paper with four corners- “from the two sides of the shoulders down to the two sides of the pelvis.” These corners can serve as a point of focus

where the dancer can pay attention while moving. He believes that every movement has a starting point that the dancer can think about and contemplate how it affects every other part of the body. By being responsive, it makes the body lucid, which can further create different textures of movements. The certain body part used to initiate movement must be articulated “sequentially” and not as the whole body moving together. It means that our torso should be seen as having similar qualities of that of a paper in terms of moving in motion. In the context of paper imagery, thinking about it can transform a flat figure of the body into complex forms. The *liquid technique* can be used to trigger the body to move in a series or in sequential order. It allows every single part of the dancer’s body to freely move. The technique also permits the dancers to discern which body part is the focus of the movement.

Paying attention to applying imagery in my practice is quite different from my previous approach to dancing. It allows me to pay particular attention to every movement that I am doing. During my undergraduate studies, I usually performed in accordance with what the choreographer demands of me. I executed the movements as limited to what I have learned “technically.” My performance was compromised because of overthinking the alignment and balance rather than interpreting the movement in my own way. This perplexing situation might be an initial response to being a late bloomer. Imagery becomes my lens to see movement beyond its steps in order that I may embody it thoroughly.

With my late engagement in the field of dancing, it is definitely a laborious task to catch up and learn the technical backgrounds. My first impression as a novice dancer was that of being overwhelmed. When I entered the dance studio, I felt intimidated and had a daunting experience seeing the ballet bars. At first, as I was surrounded by many aspiring dancers who knew exactly what they were doing, it made me feel unsure where to start moving. Seeing my teacher execute every exercise can be likened to a similar experience I had while reading a book, and its without comprehension. Honestly, I was like a baby learning how to dance-- as if

I just started knowing my body parts and their functions. It felt like my biggest hurdle of engaging in dance. I assumed that I performed well in terms of lengthening the back of the neck, pushing down the shoulders and straightening the knees. These customary reminders that I recalled during my undergraduate years have limited my understanding of moving the body. I was too anxious, which made me insensitive to “feeling the sensation” of the body. I disregarded the involuntary reaction of my body when I did the movement. I directed my own body rather than liberating it. The planned or premeditated movements from technical skills overlapped the capacity of exploring my own potential. Learning the *liquid technique*

enlightens me about the significance of having a personal input in dancing. It is also as important as the technicalities --to know how the body moves in order to balance both factors.

Anatomically, the human body is different from one another. It means that our body has unlimited ways of creating movements. The specific difficulties such as alignment, flexibility, coordination, and balance were my concerns since I started dancing. Every time I moved my body, I was apprehensive about moving and which part of the body I was supposed to move. Having enough knowledge to unravel my dancing struggles took time to figure it out. As part of the adjustment, I composed myself to be open-minded to get into the swing of the situation until I began to make improvements. This feeling of awkwardness was addressed by imagery. Imaging the body while dancing will somewhat reduce the struggle that the body usually encounters if movements are unfamiliar.

This *liquid technique* made a big impact on how I process movements into my own interpretation. It became the basis of movement in dance making. I found out that this idea is formulated from dance imagery, which will be discussed further in the next section. Usually, imagery serves as a tool to establish the desired technique for an extended period of training. It is commonly done in dance companies, training dancers to be equipped with the technique they wanted to explore.

In this study, the idea of imagery is not only limited to the understanding of *liquid technique* but it also considers the definition from literature. A dancer commonly practices the movement in order to address similar conflicts that I have experienced. The practice is where they facilitate movement exploration. Chapter 1 discusses my explanation of how the imageries of *liquid technique* are explored, particularly in the given exercises. As components of *liquid technique*, these imageries include body restrictions, circular movements, and feet improvisation. In assessment, the process of using imagery from dance training/rehearsals to performance will specify how the technique manifested and explored in every choreography and how it is being observed. At some point of exploration, this thesis will unveil significant impacts of imageries implication in dance practice through the said technique.

Theory and Methodology

Imagery is a multiperspective, multisensory mental representation of a movement, past or future scenarios, or motivational state.

(Franklin, 2014, p. 4)

Throughout the centuries, there are many studies presented with regards to improving dance skills or performances. One of these approaches is imagery which means “an intentional mental representation of motor skills used either without or in combination with physical movement” (Pavlik & Nordin-Bates, 2016, p. 51). It is not only limited to dance but also in the other field of expertise. At times, other fields define it in accordance with how they apply it in their practices. Researchers using imagery have their own understanding of imagery-based training dependent on their own way of interpretation. In our case, it is focused on the concept of imagery concentrated in the *liquid technique* approach.

The following sections will provide existing related literature of imagery. Different descriptions of imageries will be elaborated and how it is applied in the process of exploration. Some of the important fields that implement imageries in their practices are also discussed. Through this, the study will be guided by the chosen pieces of literature that relate to the focus of the study.

Dance Imagery

Part of the dance process is to think about something while moving. The mental representation created in the consciousness will manifest through the movement. The imagery becomes the impetus for the body to move and follow what is happening in the dancer's imagination. Imagery may be compared or share similarities to visualization, yet imagery has deeper meaning in processing it, including sensory modalities such as visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile, gustatory, and kinesthetic (Nordin & Cumming, 2005). This entails the relevance of choreographic elements used in heightening the dancer's imagination upon rehearsals. Through time, energy, and space can be the focus in the process of exploration. These also involve the rhythm, dynamics, and syncopation of movements that can create an intricate visual effect. The dancer's images about movement are typically through visual perception and how it is felt by the dancer while moving. The feeling is vital in the dancer's imaging so that the quality of movement will be recognizable. The movement varies from the sub-context of the dancer's mental representation. Most often, visuals will be the initial basis that triggers me to think an image out of what I see. It corresponds to how I execute the movement given. Putting all together the stimulus of movement imagery can compose variations of movements that can keep the audience's focus so engaged.

According to Nordin & Cumming (2007), imagery has been part of dancer's practice in prior, before and after training, rehearsals, and performances. It means that imagery is highly

part of a dancer's process of understanding movement. It is subjective and can be done even without moving the body. With the help of imagery, the dance can preserve the energy by not always rehearsing the movement and moving the body. Through thinking and going over the steps in mind, this can alter the physical rehearsal. It is one of the significances of imagery in dance practice. It provides another venue for the dancer to be physically aware and mentally attentive. The dancer's personal interpretation of imagery is unique-- how they perceive and apply it in practice could be seemingly different.

There are different ways of applying imagery in practice. Many specialists, researchers, and choreographers even express their curiosity by doing intensive research about it. As a result, imagery becomes an available source for physical healing, body alignment, and enhancing dance skills.

Imagery in Practice

Imagery is not only limited to dancers but also applicable to teachers who most often use this in movements, technique, and goals. Dance teachers describe using more kinesthetic imagery during training. For instance, our professor even danced the movements to what he meant by the "sequential order" of moving. In fact, the imagery used by teachers focuses on augmenting their dancer's technique and creativity. This manifested that movement could hardly tell enough through words. Not all movements can be exactly explained by putting them in words. It signifies how the body mystically communicates with other bodies. Dance teachers likewise have reported that they use imagery during class as a teaching tool. This is precisely what happened in our class. Through imagery, our teacher was able to relay what he wanted us to do. Imagery became the key to cover up some lapses in terms of communicating since both teacher and students are not native English speakers. Imagery can be used to emphasize the concentration of movement focus. Regarding the mentioned principle above, it assisted

effectively the process of interaction among teachers and dancers. The more the dancer becomes familiar with his/her experiences, the imagery perception is also enhanced. When the dancers already embody the principle being taught, the teacher will offer other imagery to expand the dancers' understanding of movement.

The following are different kinds of imagery applications used to improve dance techniques: ideokinetic imagery, intuitive imagery, and mental simulation of movement. These will be discussed in detail in the following sections.

Ideokinetic Imagery

Ideokinetic was developed by movement educators Mabel Todd, Lulu Sweigard, Barbara Clark, and Andre Bernard. Using images by metaphors to improve neuromuscular coordination is the focus of this imagery. It corrects the alignment and balance of muscle functions around the joints. Hook-lying position or constructive rest position; lying supine on the floor with knees at right angles and feet resting on the floor, is the common exercise of practicing this imagery (Franklin, 2004, p. 18).

It has been found that this dance technique assists every dancer to be safe in executing the movement. The slow pace of moving is part of their practice to repattern bad habits. Its primary concentrations are tactile and kinaesthetic imaging. Udow (2004) describes ideokinesis as a learning process used to attain good posture. It functions as re-aligning body structure by knowing what is efficient and appropriate, which can help contribute to achieving good posture.

Intuitive Imagery

The imagery comes from the mental state of the body which provides information on how to improve movement. Using the external factor and experiencing it physically can be the way towards personal movement interpretation. This is similar to Mabel Todd's *The Thinking Body* (Franklin, 2004, p.19).

Mental Simulation of Movement

Imagining yourself performing the dance steps to physicalize it is called Mental Simulation of Movement (MSM) by Professor David Collins. Creating a clear imagery about movement is essential to answer the following factors: how it feels to move, what the surroundings are like, which steps are required, and emotion. It is very important to acknowledge those factors, most especially in performance. Taking time to create an image of the movement through MSM can help improve execution of the movement. It is essential to reflect the image through the physical being. It is best applicable for rehearsing the movement (Franklin, 2004, p.20).

Imagery becomes an integral part of the study that fully encompasses many types of imagery found within dance. It is such an essential skill that a dancer should be aware of in order to enhance performance quality and technique. Also, to understand the process of how much movement should be done through imagery.

The Conceptual Framework

The diagram below will serve as a guide how the imagery has become the source of creation. Laying out the structure of the imagery becomes the tool for configuring the *liquid technique* through various exercises. The choreographer imagery is developed from the choreographic elements used in the dance making. The dancer has only movement as the basis of imagery corresponding to the explored choreography. The exploration will revolve around the significance of discovered imageries along the creative process.

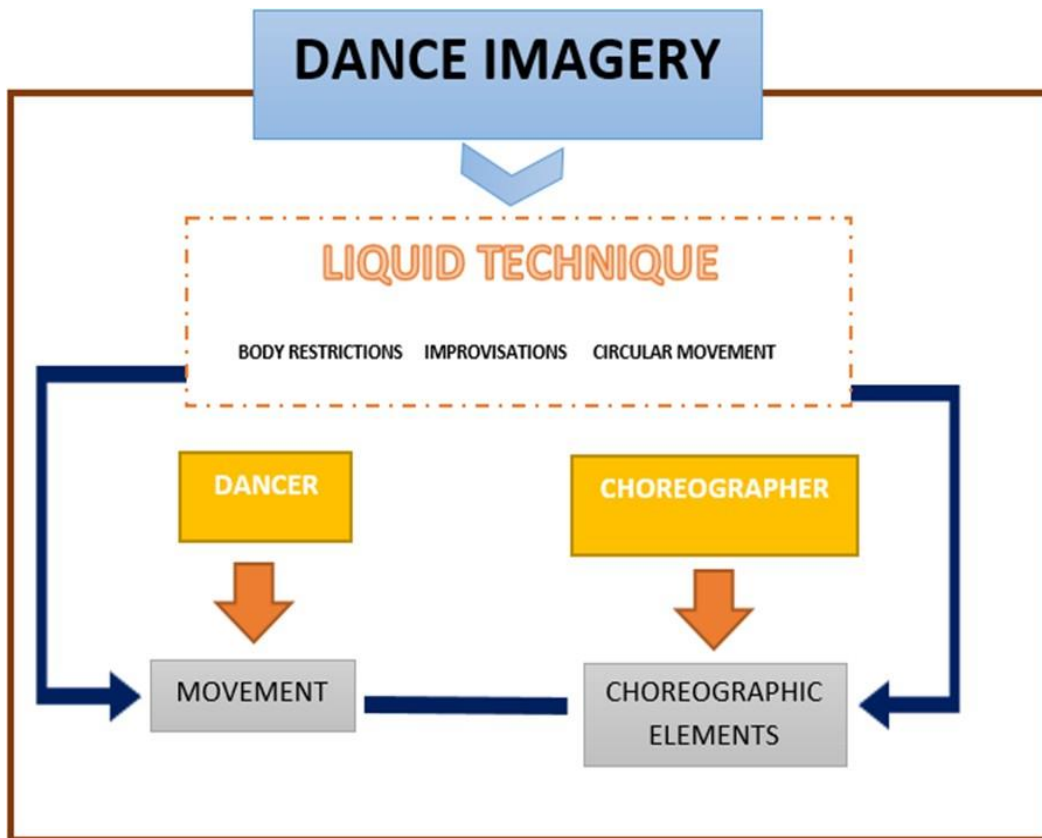


Figure 1. A conceptual model describing the approach phases of Dance Imagery: Embodying Movements from the Process of Dance Making to Stage Performance

The conceptual modeling is divided into four phases and is described into subsequent sections. The model is developed starting from the dance imagery as the main idea that facilitates the process of dance making. Through dance imagery, *liquid technique* is formed and can be evaluated through its own elements such as body restrictions, circular movement, and improvisations. The movement used by the dancers and the choreographic elements of the choreographers was facilitated in order to configure the use of *liquid technique* into dance pieces.

CHAPTER 1: *LIQUID TECHNIQUE* EXERCISES

This chapter will address how the dancer is applying imagery in employing liquid technique during dance making. Professor Wen-Chung Lin demonstrated the technique through dance exercises and repertoires. I observed that this technique is framed by chance. By observing the dancers' movements, Professor Wen-Chung Lin noticed some problems with how the dancers moved their bodies. This discovered problem becomes the stimulus for the different exercises to be part of the training. The idea of this imagery-based method is a self-discovered process gathered through his dance experiences in performance and choreography. It is similar to how I became aware that imagery is an essential part of improving my dancing skills. The process of applying it in my training is where I grasp the opportunity to fill in the gap that connected my inner self with my body. It allows me to learn from my body's potential rather than just merely imitating the choreographed movements. Imagery has become a valuable tool for learning and understanding movement for every dancer. In this case, imagery is explored through different exercises used as prompts to create movements or for choreography. It includes body restrictions, circular motions, and improvisations. With these stimuli, the *liquid technique* is the center of movement creation. Every dancer should be aware of this factor while moving their body. It comes up during productive collaborations. It allows the dancers to execute their understanding of the technique during the dance composition course.

In dance repertoires, I came up with the first solo piece which I performed during the end of my first semester of my first year of Graduate studies, focusing on the constraint of the right hand holding the knee throughout the dance choreography. This restriction is about limiting the right hand and the right leg from being separated from one another. The next choreography is *Wo[men]*, a collaborative duet choreography with Cyril Valeriano that incorporated the exploration of circular movements and at some point, contact improvisation.

It shows more of the relationship of two bodies and the tension between each other. The *Long River* is a choreography of Professor Wen-Chung Lin, which uses improvisation in developing the movement. It is also one of his choreographies that shows the *liquid technique* in choreography.

1.1 Body Restriction



Figure 2. My first solo choreography and performance of “*Eyes of Mercy*” in Dance Composition class under Wen-Chung Lin. Photo taken by Wen-Chung Lin

Body restriction is one of the exercises that delimit the dancer’s movement from using the chosen body part. It is relatively similar to imaging yourself to be disabled. For example, dancing with one leg, tangling arms in your neck, or holding your opposite knee. These are just a few instances where one can demonstrate body restriction. Every dancer has their own will to choose which body part/s they prefer to be controlled. This practice aims to break the habit of using the body freely. It also provides a starting point for movement exploration going beyond the conventional way of moving the body. Many choreographers usually do it to discover different forms, techniques, and points of view relative to the body. It can also be associated with the notion that “the mind is free, but not the body.” Aside from enabling the

body to generate unusual movements, forms, and tricks that the body can do, it determines that the body's capacity is limitless.

With this prompt, I came up with an almost four-minute choreography entitled *Eyes of Mercy*. This was made from the process of exploring body restriction (knee). It shows not only movement limitations alone but also the beauty of unexpected possibilities of the moving body. This choreography is inspired by the verse of Cope by Faith:

Lord, look upon me with eyes of mercy. May your healing hand rest upon me, may Your life-giving powers flow into every cell of my body and into the depths of my soul, cleansing, purifying, restoring me to wholeness and strength for service in Your Kingdom. Amen.

The chosen restriction restrains me to a habitual way of standing, walking, and dancing. This made me realize that our bodies can possibly create a wide range of movements. There is no way to get stagnant in moving the body in the usual manner. Through body restriction, I initially thought of certain things such as balance, movements, and forms. It made me worried about how I can possibly move with restrictions to initiate movements. I assumed that if the body is restrained, the accumulation of movements is also limited. However, this edifies my belief that restriction does not mean that the creation will also be compromised. Instead, it reveals the other approach of utilizing the body. From the beginning of the exploration, it might interfere with the will of the body to move. But along the way of exploring, the body will inevitably accept the limitation. It is through the process of acknowledging the fact that the body is in a state of restriction. The form of adjustment is where I realized that withdrawing from the movement problem is the most crucial factor to expound on it. With the idea of imagery, breathing on the tight part of my body facilitated how I was able to overcome the initial struggle. Such struggle was felt until the restricted knee became familiar with my body's function. It is at this point that the exploration became creative. The limitation resulted in

exquisite explored movements which are interesting and uncommon. It means that imaginative imagery assists the restriction to be managed by the body. The limitation has been the boundary of exploration, which proposes an innovative choreographic approach.

1.2 Circular Movements



Figure 3. The beginning of “*Wo[men]*” choreography of a duet showing tension which was performed by Mary Evangeline Recto and Cyril Valeriano in Dance Composition class under Wen-Chung Lin. Photo taken by Wen-Chung Lin

Circular movement is another factor that explores the continuity of effort in motion. It includes the circular gesture from the body, tracing a circle in space, and the momentum of the body. Forming a circular shape is where the dancer puts more attention in order to achieve a plane figure. The movement should be determined by points equidistant from the focal point. The goal is to draw a series of circular figures at any direction and level of movement. To make it clearer, this tool for movement exploration does not only mean that arms and legs are performed in a circular design. It encourages the dancer to expose the extremities of limbs and torso. For example, drawing a circle in the air by pointing a finger should also affect the rotation

of the limbs. It tries to transform a simple movement of arms alone into arms that are lengthened by involving the movement of the four corners of the torso.

Circular movement exploration determines how the starting point of movement affects the centerline of the torso. This attempts to keep the totality of the body constantly flowing. The maximum count of circles required is twenty-time expressed with varying dynamics, power, and quality of execution. This should reach the continuity of circular gestures connected from one movement to another. For these exercises, showing lines is prohibited in order to avoid sudden interruption of the circle in progress. Creating an imaginary circle is essential in this practice. With this, the dancer will use that imagination to be guided in forming interconnected circles. To be precise, the dancer should concentrate in which body part is moving and the focal point of the shape. Even the eye focus can draw attention as an audience guide. Isolation is also significant in this movement exploration such that the picture of round imagery will be apparently. Through the application of this measure, the dancer can avoid confusion and be focused on performing the movement. Imagery facilitates this process by allowing the body to follow through using the momentum. However, the form must be maintained. The counting of the drawing circle should also be equal from one movement to another to avoid breaking the form. It is part of the exercise procedure to always complete the drawn circle despite the energy used in forming them.

Wo[men] is a circular movement-based exploration that combines contact improvisation. It is a duet with my co-dancer named Cyril Valeriano. We are both taking dance performances which challenge us to be versatile. Circular movement is the initial study of this exploration, but it was combined with other prompts demanded by the necessity of creation along the process. Since it is done in a duet, the choreography also included contact improvisation to achieve correct weight contribution in stillness or in motion. Upon choreographing the movement, the relationship of the two-body collaboration is being established and developed.

The different styles of the two bodies' movement provide a new mode of exploration. It goes beyond the comfort zone and takes the risk of experiencing another impulse of transferring the energy to one another.

1.3 Feet Improvisation



Figure 4. The “*Long River*” group dance choreographed by Wen-Chung Lin. Photo taken by Wen-Chung Lin

There are different kinds of improvisation. In this training, the main focus of the body is the feet. It explores how the feet widely affect and manipulate the upper body. Through feet improvisation, it can establish a different approach to moving the body. Improvisation is where the movement is created spontaneously. It ranges from freeform to highly structured movements that embrace the elements of chance. This is yet another choreographic tool that tries to achieve how the body is freed from habitual tendencies of moving it. It discovers other ways of a conservative act of using different parts of the foot. This opts to expand the various forms of standing, which avoids being in a centered position. The other parts of the foot, such as toe, sole, ball, instep, arch, and heel are classified into points of attention to the step. The

foot is not seen as a single entity but having various points to hit. This provides another area of awareness. If the attention is driven to a particular area of exploration, specifically the foot, it can make a difference in balance, alignment, and attention. The motion is coming from a specific part of the foot which avoids being steady. It attempts to show falling and recovering but not wholly towards the ground. The goal is to create an unstable yet prevailing movement that is significant in *liquid technique*. The line of gravity is sustained in motion by absorbing how it was supposed to show the effortless quality of movement.

Breathing is the critical component of this technique. Breathing improves the core stability and visual effects of action. This factor emphasizes the relation between the inhaling and exhaling processes. To show its impact in the body, the limbs and shoulders are also exaggeratedly inflating and deflating. In fact, breathing facilitates the process of moving. It aids in the shift or displacement. Being aware of the connection of breathing in sustaining the movement gives the illusion of connecting one step to another step or action.

The *Long River* is a contemporary dance choreographed by Professor Wen-Chung Lin. It has been a popular choreography and performed by many Taiwanese dancers which manifest water quality of movement through the body. This choreography is a manifestation of what he meant by *liquid technique*. It has slow motion but keeps on elongating and moving. The sharp movement expresses the travel of action rather than its direction. Moreover, the process of performing this piece has been challenging, lasting about four months of learning the dance excerpt. The primary method of learning the dance was through recorded video. The later part was where the details, quality, form, and formation were identified and corrected. Every dancer must learn to imagine their body as flowing water with other dancers. Executing the movement should reflect the imagery of water as fluid including it being gentle.

In this performance, everyone auditioned for a particular role, most especially the solos and duets. To be cast as a soloist, it gave me a nerve-racking experience that in a way stressed

me out because of the required quality of movement. This compelled me to find a method that can help me to embody the movements' choreographed. The key point in order to showcase the dance and highlight the potential of this piece is to adopt the "Chinese folk-dance culture". So, I imaged how they move their body, which is mostly done at a slow pace with elongated motion. The quality of movement that I observed from them became my initial step in doing the dance routine.

According to the choreographer, the movement was structured originally for Taiwanese dancers with high technical standards. It is very meditative in terms of moving each part of the body. This must be applied in any aspect of dance for the audience to see and experience the energy created while dancing. Stillness, in this case, means the cessation of moving which is expressed through suspension. It creates an endless action, yet the appearance seen by the audience is pleasing. Having experienced performing the well-known choreography of our professor which contained many difficult routines, it nonetheless gave me bountiful learning. These learnings helped enhance my tolerance and self-discipline. Another factor that has been developed in this creation is moving as one. It is a must to be synchronized in the way we release effort and travel movement for each dance pattern. Its choreographic measure is to move coherently as a prerequisite for each dancer. Thus, *Long River* not only delivers the choreography; but also highlights self-discipline as a substantial element in dance.

CHAPTER 2: IMAGERY IN THE CREATIVE PROCESS

This chapter addresses the significance of imagery in embodying movement from dance training to performance. As one of the dancers in the two choreographies, I used imagery to understand the concept of each creation. The two dance choreography students made *Limbo* and *Recollection* as graduation projects, which took over six month's duration to accomplish.

They manipulated the exercises of *liquid technique*, which helped to examine how the choreographers established their own imagery towards their creation. The two dance pieces will be discussed further in this chapter. In particular how they expound on the contribution of dance imagery in the process of dancing the masterpieces. It attempts to answer how *liquid technique* transformed as imagery in general and became the tool for utilizing and codifying movements.

By referring to imagery as a choreographic concept, the gathered observations of the dancer's experiences are presented into two sections: the rehearsal process and the final performance. The first section is the creative process of dance-making which focuses on how the choreographers' input of imagery affects the dancer's understanding of movement along with the choreographic exploration. It includes the choreographic concept process as imagery in aid of understanding the movements.

Section two discusses the entirety of expressing or processing those imageries from choreography during the final performance. It provides an answer on how each choreographic imagery is embodied through actual performance. Also, along the process, many impacts of imageries have been observed and acknowledged as a significant factor in creation.

Liquid technique as choreographic tool

Being able to process the mind-body connection, including the smallest cell of the body, while dancing is considered as the way of becoming towards the highest potential of dancing.

It is highly significant, as a dancer, to recognize how the mind functions and patterns it to the physical being. Managing disturbing thoughts attentively and thinking them rationally is one way to connect with the body's wisdom (Franklin, 2004, p.16). In response to that, I usually create imagery while moving my body. It includes how my visualized experience was felt by my body. It is my intention as a dancer, to seek and see how this conscious ability is manifested through movements.

As I stated in the previous chapter, it is my initial attempt to apply imagery in my training. Although I have been practicing it already in my dance routines, it was not deeply understood. I was not aware at first that it has its advantages. Now it has become a necessity for me. I used it to focus and address my problems in movement interpretation. Considering imagery as the main focus of my practice, I observed how it affects my dance performance. Along this process, discoveries are being encountered that expand my understanding of the essence of imagery in dance practice, not only in dancing but also in choreographing. In most of the literature I read, I noticed that the intention of using imagery is intended solely from the dancer's perspective. In this practice-based research, I also acknowledged imagery as highly applicable in choreography. It can support the process of conceptualizing the dance itself.

In the following sections, I will elaborate on the various impacts of imagery from its making to final performance. There are important points that I indicated per section to highlight choreographic concepts as the motive of imagery in every choreography. These will emphasize my own interpretation on how imagery facilitated my understanding of processing the movement through my body. The whole process of this dance making acknowledges that imagery has been an integral part and is embedded throughout the process. The following procedures insist that understanding imagery is a personal interpretation, which means it is subjective.

2.1. *Limbo*



Figure 5. The “*Limbo*” choreographed by Al Bernard Garcia. Photo taken by Zhi-Yan Liao

Limbo is a choreography of Mr. Al Bernard Garcia which defines it as:

“An uncertain period of waiting for a decision or resolution. A temporary state or condition. A place in-between and unknown. A place where time and space are known. It takes inspiration from Olivier Messiaen’s work which resonates a feeling of transcendence--beyond time and space, beyond life. This musical work was written while he was a prisoner of war under German captivity in Gorlitz, Germany where he spent quite some time during the war”.

According to him, his masterpiece manifests the relevance of the pandemic in Messiaen’s piece by using his music, and creative work as Messiaen did during the time of war. Garcia’s goal is “to give people hope, and to release them from all the anxiety, hatred, and fear.” It is established by dancers being preset on stage moving in slow-paced motion. The tangled bodies are gently unfolding the abstract forms of the body. The quality of movement signifies the hope

of a mystical blossoming --the anxiety that goes away from a certain state. These imageries demonstrate the immensity of the *Limbo*.

2.1.1. Rehearsal

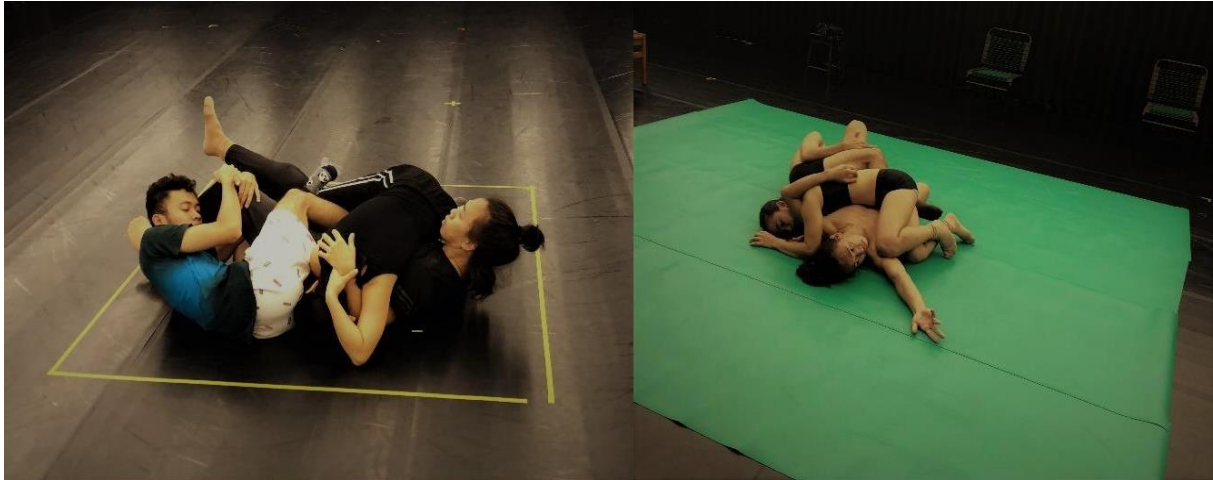


Figure 6. The starting point of *Limbo* choreography. Dancers were situated inside the quadrilateral as boundary of movement execution. Along the process, the square shaped was replaced by green mats. Photo taken by Al Garcia

The initial choreographic prompt of *Limbo* is from the body restrictions and space. It started by drawing a square around the parameter of intertwined bodies. It is like weaving together to convert three bodies into one. Within the limited space, the dancer can feel each other's skin with its texture, breathing, and even smell can be sensed. These connected bodies forming one entity are the tool for movement invention. As a dancer, it is my primary source of using imagery in moving the body. One movement can trigger others to move as well. This makes an inexhaustible action that appears to be effortlessly done. A simple movement of hands touching other body parts can help draw attention from one place to another body. This approach made me capable of visualizing the image and making it visible to movement. From a gestural beginning, the image is interpreted from inner experience going outward, thereby translating images into movements. The process of articulating the image into the body is recognizable because of its clarity which in turn creates a picture of the scenario.

The process of accumulating movements does not always mean that it comes from the creator's idea. The body alone can suggest stimulating dance patterns. It is the body that formulates the way how it should move to the next figure. Allowing the body to be moved by another body enables the choreographer to see the possibilities of movement exploration. This way of choreographing consents the flow of movement to be harmonized. The gently caressing of the body is necessary for this manner to fulfill the intention of having an effortless transformation of movement. The lightness and firm quality of moving established another approach of body articulation. It is part of the *liquid technique* impact, which is to move in sequence.

To intentionally emphasize which part of the body is moving brings the audience's attention to follow through the development of execution. This brings a different interpretation of imageries in the body. The focus of the dancer's movement and audience attention is stressed out in *liquid technique*. At some point, the choreographer also refused the organic flow of movement to lead to another mode of exploration. It is the choice of the choreographer to either agree on what he is seeing or impose what he is thinking. The asset of this choreography is about respecting the instinct, feeling, and agency of dancers to personally deliver their interpretation through being receptive to a chance circumstance. It pertains to the transient nature of dance that makes it unique.

Based on my observations, I dwell on the choreographic concepts that the choreographer usually makes mention to us every after rehearsal. It may not be appropriately termed but I discovered it upon exploring the choreography. By classifying it, the imagery was apparent and efficient when it was processed through my movements.

Femininity and Masculinity of the Body

Being the only female dancer in this choreography is a new experience for me since it gave me the window for an intimate connection between two male bodies. It gave me an avenue

to image my body so it can blend with their physicality. The femininity and masculinity of the dancer's physical appearance will offer different perspectives towards the audience and the piece itself. Instead of focusing on its differences, I imagined myself linking together with other bodies in order to lessen the emphasis. It corresponds to the imaging concept that the choreographer aims to achieve. It also allows the body to move in a fluid way and thus be able to meet the goal of the dance piece- to be seen coordinated.

From the concept that the body should be intact with one another, I pictured it out as the body quality having a somewhat 'malleable' property. I imagined the body being inside of circulating space. It influenced my execution of movement as it seemed to have no edges or stops. The body should be kept in constant motion even if it does not move. It is parallel to the idea of circular movement. I realized that the body has an inner spherical drive that allows it to interweave. It was such a logical experience that the dance started from physical contact so that the relationship between them would be established and felt.

Active and Passive Movement Exploration

During the process of exploration, it is applicable to try active and passive body exploration. Being an active body is important in initiating the impulse of movement. Then, the passive body will follow through with the movement initiation. It is usually practiced in contact improvisation. One dancer should lead, and others will follow. By following the motion, awareness in moving is also significant. Every individual should take care and be responsible for every action because this piece makes the dancer prone to injury. Nonetheless, the movements are delicately designed; such as being inclined in one's back, lifting one's body using feet forces, and other tricks that are not habitually done. Strength is necessary, but training the muscle consciously to be aware of control is much desired. Franklin (2004) states that consciously training muscles to have efficient movement patterns can help in avoiding injury (p. 23). Also, the biggest reminder is to prioritize safety over any matters. Even the

passive body must be attentive in radiating the energy with the opposing body. Avoiding injuries is part of the benefits of using the imagery technique. Franklin (2014) states that healing is one of the main uses of imagery. It strengthens the awareness of the dancer towards their body.

The Rawness or Freshness of Movement

In this choreography, the “rawness or freshness” of the dance should be preserved according to the choreographer. It means that the execution of movement should be experiential instead of technical. This is a big realization during the rehearsal; to value the rawness of movement. How could I consistently embody the rawness that the choreographer wants to achieve? This question bothered me in the beginning because I thought the movement would be in a state of rawness if it is newly established from the body. This quality of movement is essentially holistic in order to provide a new texture of movement. At times, moving like “organic” or subjective is difficult compared to doing technical movements. It may indeed be self-contradicting since dancing, because rawness, should be authentic within the body. A somewhat weird feeling will occur often due to the uncomfortable reaction that it stimulates. In response, “being so beautiful is boring in some ways” is a common phrase heard while exploring the movements.

At first I was conscious, but at the same time, I kept on thinking about how I could overcome that awkwardness in my body. Similar to what I had encountered when I was newly introduced in dance technicalities. Treating the body as a vessel to express rather than owning the body as a complex property is a necessary mindset that I used to dwell more on the creation. The feeling is distressing when thoughts are running in my mind while exploring. It is such a struggle that I have to undergo even though I am not yet used to the choreographic approach being applied. Liberating the self from disturbing thoughts helped me to focus more on how three-bodies can create unusual connections. This intimacy of movement led me to think

beyond what I was doing physically. I endured the awkwardness of moving so as to transform it into an interesting feeling. This choreography does not require the physique to form straight lines. Instead, this dance puts more value on the natural reaction of the body. It gave me courage to help make *Limbo* be felt internally and be seen externally by the choreographer.

Awkward feeling entails a state of uncertainty. It makes the movement unique in its own way. Being surrounded by male bodies, the awkwardness was a prevailing feeling especially so when the body is restricted. This feeling was the first impression I experienced when I did the exercise on body restriction. I overcame it by “breathing” on the restricted part, specifically the joints. The image of *Limbo* was absorbed through internal contemplation of movement. The manner of executing it may be way outside the placement of the three bodies.

Nowadays, the interest of people in dance has become abstract. They preferred to watch the dancer’s explorative movement style rather than just the conventional manner. These conditions led me to ponder that dancing has to be imaginative. Finding the way towards one’s groove is an important consideration in order to create and discover one’s movement style. Dancing comfortably will be a hindrance in the process of discovering another way of moving the body. It will be a factor of being stuck on the way to discovering personal style. To put it more simply, the raw feeling of moving can be considered a factor contributing to self-development in terms of dancing. It will lead the body to continue exploring for whatever possible approach can be done along the way.

2.1.2 Final Performance

Unlike the other dance piece, *Limbo* has been performed many times. But the choreographic structure has always been changing. This made me realize that in choreography, if the idea is concrete, the exploration will be adventurous. The first thing that matters in the

creative process is to maximize the established idea. The meaning of the movement will follow if the prompt is also complementing the theme to be conveyed.

The uncertain state of *Limbo* transpired through well- animated choreography. Franklin (2014) agrees that even a particular image that does not exist in actuality can still be perceived through metaphors and resemblances of ideas. Through the uneven body-shaped, it signifies the clarity of the idea that is being unseen. It refers to the *Limbo*, which does not exist in reality. The powerful imagery that is projected through forms, props, and the body itself corresponds to the piece that is in the state of *Limbo*. Even the stage deliberately shows what it meant and the movement through how it was executed. This parallels how imagery intrinsically exists in the creative process. The most crucial aspect that should always be delivered in every performance is the ambiance that it creates. It is vital to have a calm mind before starting the movement. The preparation during the final performance is different from the previous experiences. Maybe, it is because of the tension and pressure felt by every dancer.

Self-Efficacy in Performance

Upon performing the final performance, the presence of my co-dancers felt undeniably different from the previous performances I had with this piece. There are possible factors to consider since the body is totally exposed to the theater's cold temperature. The muscle condition was disturbed. Dancers only wore beige underclothing that is physically liberating. The nervousness while waiting for the performance to start prolonged the agony. The social environment interrupted the way I conditioned my well-being. The tendency of the body is to become tense hence it felt that it was difficult to move.

How could I handle the performance pressure? It is but a common feeling in every performance I encountered. I knew that I felt nervous whenever there was a performance. Using imagery, specifically the Movement Simulation Movement (MSM), maintaining a calm center and conscious control is a reminder for me to overcome this struggle. It allowed me to release

tension and shift my focus in order to perform well. Even in executing complex movements, I realized that I need to have self-control in exerting effort if I am grounded. This way of concentration is one of the possible solutions to overcoming my fear. It takes time to manage it, but I believe it can improve my way of performing with consistency.

To lessen those circumstances, I also did proper warm-ups to empower my body. It has become my routine to always condition my body before a performance. However, it was not enough. Also, being conscious of my costume did not hinder me from not projecting the intention of wearing such clothing. It exposes the bare muscle moving gestural movement from the beginning of the choreography. To seem naked is another element used to convey the context of *Limbo*. The execution of movement became the extension of the dancers' bodies. Each dancer can showcase their understanding of movement through their personal artistic style.

Green Mats as Space Imagery

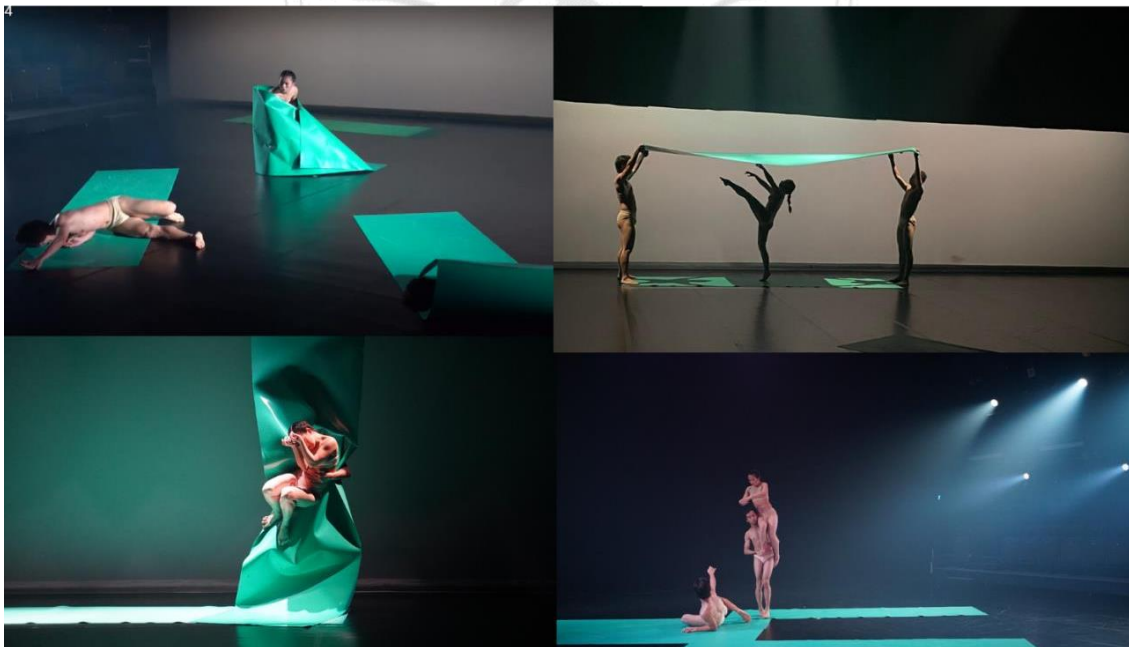


Figure 7. Green mats were deconstructed to different forms and manifest *Limbo*. Photo taken by Zhi- Yan Liao & Wen-Chung Lin

Going back to the significance of the green mats in this choreography, it is definitely stunning. It absolutely contributes a lot to building the imaginary space of *Limbo* in dancing.

The color of it at first is distracting because of its bright color. As time went by, when I became familiar and equipped with knowledge for its purpose. Props were the elements that completed the choreography. Most of the visual images are driven by it, especially in building the space. The impact of shaping it through different forms tour the audience from different angles and levels of *Limbo*. It established a powerful negotiation with the audience together with the dancers. The more that the mats are being manipulated creates unlimited imagery that suggests random ideas from the audience perspective. Also, it offers every dancer an endless mode of exploration, creating various forms and structures. Unfortunately, dancing with the mats is a bit tricky. The mats are slippery most of the time. It can cause floor burn that might affect the awareness of the dancers while moving. Thus, presence of mind is much needed when utilizing it. Moreover, there are restrictions that dancers should be aware of in using the mats. In the beginning, the mats are visibly seen in square lopsided. It must be maintained in a similar position until the dancers separate from one another. Following this rule, the illusion of seeing it as a whole entity is important to be able to introduce space. Another challenge of manipulating the mats is making it three- dimensional. Dancers should make the mats stand in different forms to add layers of mats manipulation.

The Value of Change

Change is one of the essential factors in choreography. It shows the uncertainty or in-between state of performance. The choreographer is not strictly implementing the movement to be executed precisely. Instead, he valued the feeling, not only of the dancer but the dance in general. It is reasonably related to how Franklin (2004) viewed the body and mind as subjects that are constantly changing. The body will be in different conditions from time to time, so is the mind. The personal experience of every dancer builds impact in creating the new condition. Consciousness over control is the compatible method to reciprocate with the subtle shift of images (Ibid).

As a dancer, the imagery of change from the piece is reflected when I imagined waking up in different spaces. I perceived the space as a momentary place where form did not stay as it is. Everything keeps on evolving and changing into other forms. When the form changes, the feeling or emotion also differs from moment to moment. In spite of the fact that this piece has been performed many times, the sense of executing the movement even develops into another image. The awkward feeling is remarkably suggested by the choreographer to be felt in every performance. Through the value of change, it also encourages the dancer to be free. Since this piece has a slow pace of movement, the dancer has the freedom to interpret the choreography in his or her own way. This approach creates fluidity, not only in the movement but also in time when the concept facilitates the entire dance piece.

2.2. *Recollection*



Figure 8. *Recollection* choreography by Alexes Sandino performed during final performance at Chiayi Performing Arts Center. Photo taken by Wen-Chung Lin

Recollection is a creation of Alexes Sandino. The piece carries “the process of dance-making which is based on our existence in the present. The overlap of collecting present

thoughts with the continuous recollection of memory. The process does not stop when movement does. Dance keeps on moving on". This concept is significantly related to the process of how it was made. It does not define alone the outcome but more likely the way by which it was created. The successive changes that happened during the process encompass the possibilities of discoveries. I am convinced that the rehearsal process is part of the performance. It is where the performance begins when the choreographer starts to put up his idea in the studio. *Recollection* reflects on the process of how this dance was created, which is basically structured from different prompts. Most of the movements were from improvisation and restriction from the choreographer's movement style.

Improvisation widely contributes to establishing the movement. The choreographer continuously gives possible movements that match the concept that he wanted. Movements are made out from the collaboration of dancers and choreographers. Dancers' potential in dancing was highlighted in every solo part. He acknowledges the movement style of each dancer while asserting his own choreographic approach. He provides structure but not strictly insisting his movement in the dancer's body. The methods used by the choreographer in selecting, ordering and refining movement are based on the collaboration of both sides- the choreographer and the dancers. This process recognized the significance of having equal contribution-- seeing the dancers' capacity as an element to create a diverse collection of skills.

Collaboration became the aid for structuring the process into a coherent exploration. There are multiple ways that can be applied to address the conflicts that occurred. The choreographer's personal preference in transforming his composition relies on the problem being encountered during the making of the movement. Applying the *liquid technique* guide the choreographer's overall approach by considering the prompts explored during the dance training. The collaborative approach between the dancer and choreographer signifies freedom of expression. The choreographer can share ideas used by the dancer to converse with each

other. The choreography does not rely alone on the choreographer's choice but it works effectively when dancers and choreographers collaborate.

There is no "absolute knowledge" in choreography. However, the decision-making is the first and last choice to make as a creator. Choreography seems like a puzzle on creating ways to figure out the suitable one for the image to be completed. Imagery can be a factor to consider in conceptualizing the dance. It may be adequate to realize the appropriate way of fixing and composing the desired idea to be seen in choreography.

2.2.1. Dance Rehearsal

As I observed, *Recollection* is an exploratory process in terms of shaping the dance into one with a desirable outcome. It went through a lot of revisions which laid the foundation of figuring out the concept. The concept has been changed into a new approach and likewise the movement. If the concept is not clear, so is the movement. The unstable concept that has not been established will create an enormous impact on the entire process. Through experiments, I could see the importance of imagery for dancers and even in the choreographer's point of view. It is important that the choreographer has a vivid understanding of his idea before the rehearsal takes place. In order to achieve his or her goal, this will perhaps require an outline of the ideas which can be done during the planning stage.

Experimental Process

The most significant part of the choreography of *Recollection* is the experimental process. This is done until the concept can be seen through the output. The most important part of this choreography is the struggle of finding its concept and motif. Establishing the concept is not as easy as entertaining thoughts running in the choreographer's mind. It is about making ideas which can be effective and which can work for exploration. To come up with the concept, the choreographer maximizes his creativity by exploring movements and effectively structuring

the dance. In terms of concept, the dance itself merely starts from a movement exploration. It is not the usual process of putting concepts into practice. The unlimited rehearsal provides time to figure out if the dance motif is what the dance concept means. Through movement exploration, the motion will shape the output of this dance. At some point, it is confusing on the part of a dancer because the blueprint for movement to exist in the dancers' bodies is not yet clear. It is one of the significant parts of applying imagery in practice--to have an explicit imagery or a mental representation in order to associate that visualized movement into practice.

Imagery in Conceptualizing Ideas

In the conceptualizing process, one of the challenging parts is to manifest ideas through movements. It will not go smoothly if the choreographer will just execute the movements per se. The feeling or quality of moving should be apparent visually. It is beneficial if the choreographer explains the physical action's sensation and asks the dancer about their feelings. Using imagery can make the inner sense realistic. Sometimes, it is difficult to explain through words the present state of the body. Thus, the application of the concept to the movement should be clearly conveyed by the choreographer in order to achieve his or her expectations. There are times that the concept does not visibly correspond to the idea of the choreography.

Since this was done in a collaborative way, the choreographic approach varies from one person to another. There are guidelines written but sometimes, it is not effective for one person to follow it. This choreography has different methods of choreographic devices to shape movement materials. In this case, the choreographer also acts as one of the five dancers. It causes him difficulties in the process of establishing the aim and concept of the piece. These factors are important during the first stage of choreography-- making the imagination happen in existence. Generating movement should be the next stage, however, the context of dance is not yet clear. It interrupts the flow of creation. This means, as in this case, that the choreographer to solely decide is not commendable. The choreographer suggested making it

more democratic, where the creative choices and decision making are shared equally to account for the dancers' opinions. This could lead to a shift in movement exploration and thus not be able to prioritize the concept. Dancers and choreographers help each other in shaping movement materials depending on the impulse wanted by the choreographer. Even though the choreographer is part of the dance, he still serves as an external observer. Due to some changes, the choreographer decides to explore solo parts as personal interpretation by the designated dancer. Whilst, in group dance is a collaborative accumulation of movement. It is the obligation of the choreographer to validate if the suggested movement is coherent with his goal.

Absence of Concept

One of the interesting aspects of the *Recollection* process is working without a concept. How could a dance create a concept by itself? The choreographer tried the *liquid technique* exercises such as body restriction and improvisation, however, it did not go efficiently. It is not enough to support the necessity of the choreographer in making his style become apparent in the choreography. It is important on the choreographer's side to also know the suitable style of choreography he should have. In the middle of structuring, the choreographer's viewpoint is still underrated in the process. Our mentor advised us to take the process slowly, and contemplate on what he really desired to do. This recommendation reminds everybody to start from what is available and convenient--the choreographer's own dancing style. I can see how the process was maximized when changes lead one's exploration into another discovery. In the proceeding rehearsal, the choreographer decided to begin with the idea of an absence of concept. Nonetheless, the choreographer focuses on the most important element of dance, the movement. First, the choreographer assigned each one of us to create a new movement coming from our own body impetus. It is divided into two parts; solo and duet. Creating your own style improves the structuring process. It became clearer on what movement should be explored. It was an intact collaboration on both sides--the dancers and choreographer. Part of the process

is the task-based method which is effective in terms of maximizing the ideas for creation. Both sides balance the exchanging power or authority that employs progress of molding the output.

According to the choreographer, he realized his desired concept upon seeing the dancers in motion. He did not know yet what to do, so he stopped and observed the dancers moving. He discerned that his choreography is about the collection of memories. It is similar when a person is dreaming, images are rather unclear and in an abstract state of imagination. With the help of tentative studio lights, he was motivated to deliver his concept by flashing back the memories.

2.2.2. Dance Performance

In the final performance, the experience is distinctive. It cannot be concluded as complete as the set goal because some unfamiliar elements were only seen in the theater. This situation has unexpectedly contributed to the attainment of the dance's meaning. It entails that not everything happened solely inside the studio but beyond. There should always be room for improvement. Most of the time, the whole imagery of choreography will be seen when it is on the theatre stage already. As the dance piece is being staged, possible adjustments from space orientation and additional designs are needed. From the start of my solo performance and with the help of the light design, it made a big impact in my imaging process. It corresponds to the dance imagery concept of Nordin & Cumming (2005) that is not only similar to visualization, but also includes the sensory modalities. It enriches the imaginary experience by the dancer. Usually, visual components and kinesthetic responses are the main factor of imagery where the dancer utilized more.

Recollection has a different approach in terms of movements, technique, and dynamics. This means that I needed to shift the image I imagined while dancing. Most of the movements were hard-edges and sharps in which I misinterpreted. I immediately jumped to the endpoint

of the movement rather than feeling the process. For example, in the group dance, both hands were quickly shifting right to left opposite with the head. My idea was centered on the opposition of moving the hand and head. By doing so, I felt stiff in the upper torso rather than thinking of it as isolation. In solving this, I realized that the emphasis should be on the sensation. I should be aware of isolating the shift of hands in the body.

Being a Thinking Dancer

Since I am particularly applying imagery in my practice, it matters already in my process of embodying movement. During the lights plotting, my stage direction was adjusted. I need to comply with the light designed for my solo part. Visually, the imagery is powerful when light is fading in, I was bothered by movement adjustment but not in orientation. I needed to remove some movements that might not be effective in this particular performance. It implies that the exploration does not stop when leaving the studio. Even in the last minute of preparation before the performance happens, the choreographer can still suggest some changes for their choreography. The exploration of movement never stops, not even in the final performance. There should always be a new feeling that will drive the body to keep moving aside from the structured one. I was mentally disturbed yet capable of managing it. In processing imagery, it is advisable to avoid thinking about the problem because it can increase negative emotions. Franklin (2004) suggested being aware of strong emotions that can cause slow progress of improvement. It is important to dwell on what is needed to visualize. Applying imagery with enough intensity, clarity, and power can pave the way towards efficacy (p. 23).

Moreover, if the choreographer states no image, it is a responsibility to think for substitute imagery to be effective as a thinking dancer. Dancing to a piece that has no fixed concept is a challenge. I should know my takeaways as a dancer in every process. By knowing it, I became aware of what I need to prioritize in terms of improving my performance. Most often, I was suggesting movements that I thought corresponded to the choreography. It helped the

choreographer distinguish the importance of the dancer's intuition. For every run-through, the mentor was seeking originality and a variety of compositions. Originality is such a big word to meet head on. It requires a lot of experience to discover one's choreographic style. Persistently finding an identical approach is somehow an excellent chance to experiment and explore possibilities.

Based on my experience, performing is equally similar to choreographing. It is an advantage to know how to assess the dance, identify problems, and provide solutions to contribute in achieving the goal. This can also be useful in being fully aware of the process so that understanding movement will be fulfilled. Moving the movements given alone is not enough to supplement the choreographer's assumptions.

Through applying imagery in my performance, it imposes maturity in terms of internal and external awareness. Internally, the body will naturally process the image through movement, whereas external awareness will follow. Space will not be treated as the usual space itself. By imaging subconsciously, the fingertips can sense the spatial surroundings. Putting energy to the tip of the finger is a particular context within the *liquid technique*. By being aware of the fingertips, the complexity of movement, the imaging process will be determined. However, it takes time to realize the changes to happen. What is more explicit for me was that I effectively applied imagery in my practice by being aware that my mental state is actively functioning while I was exploring. This was the most significant difference from my previous method of dancing. I was using my sensory modalities not only because I was anxious to know how they functioned but also used it actively to discover how significant it is in processing my performance. Having a positive mind that I can improve led me to build personal imagery, instead of imitating others.

Imagery in Solo Performance



Figure 9. The beginning of *Recollection* choreography. My solo performance. Photo taken by Zhi- Yan Liao

In terms of the impact of imagery in my solo, imagery became the focus of my attention rather than my feeling of being overly self-conscious. This method helped me in refining my movement execution. Imagery did not only enhance my performance skills but also provided me an in-depth understanding of why I am dancing. It potentially brings me a genuine feeling where I can acknowledge every element used in choreography. By taking imagery as a useful tool, the radical changes of choreography will not interrupt my movement execution. There will always come a time that the choreography will not have a smooth flow. For instance, choreographers can restructure the movement into different parts.

Based on my experience, dancing alone on stage can provide a venue to express my own statement. It became an arena to show the individual identity that the body innately has. It is called a personal statement or dancing identity. The body capacity is highlighted because it can execute its own style of moving. In terms of space, when the living body is exposed alone in larger space, the movement also varies. The energy must be equivalent to the movement of the

group. The body must carry the high level of energy established by other dancers. Meaning to say, being a soloist, one has the responsibility to maintain or excel from the ambiance created. It is like owning the stage whenever there is an opportunity to move.

“You are free to move, but you must be aware of how to move”

When I am dancing my solo, I feel like I need to go against the audience’s perspective since their eyes focus on every single movement of my body. I need to control what must be the essential movement that they should focus on. The control of breathing has great contributions in executing movements. In terms of relaxing my body, I learned while reviewing the movements that there is a difference between the relaxed bodies of a dancer compared to the ordinary person. The dancer, by just standing, must establish a presence on stage to fill in the empty space. The energy must work all around the dancer’s body. Through improvisation, the body is allowed to be free from insecurities and anxiety. It is an effective tool to release such disturbances and be able to understand the movement.

Movement-driven Choreography

According to the choreographer, *Recollection* is more movement-driven than conceptual-driven. Abstraction and representation are the choreographic elements that he used to address his problem. It resolves his struggle in conceptualizing his choreography, though many methods were tried and did not work during the exploration. By going back to his own style of dancing-- the popping, he was able to modify it as movement impetus. Popping is the fundamental element of movement exploration. When he structured it with the dancers, the quality of energy in popping is not as similar to how the choreographer popped. This instance led the choreographer to modify his movement in tune with the dancer’s body interpretation. The power exerted in popping varies in each dancer’s capacity. So, the choreographer interchanged it with a fast speed for the energy to come out. This tactic assisted the dance-making to generate movement with dynamics. Mostly, quick, sharp, and firm movements are

emphasized in accumulating movements. The force of popping has driven the concern of making movements. At some point, the resistance and elongation were set aside. In structuring dance, solo part and group dance presented the dancer's potential. The solo section is provided for the soloist to interpret a modified style of popping with the dynamic changes. The group section is designed with vigorous movements that are usually done at a fast speed. Moreover, group dance has no significant difference in performing solo. Despite many dancing bodies, unity and oneness are what the audience usually wanted to see. Many bodies should perform as one body exaggeratedly. Meaning there must be balance in terms of movement and energy. The beauty of group dance is shown when the body moves together but does not see too much movement. Overall, the idea of dancing is for the body to move as one, even if there are two or more dancers. It is just one factor of performing group dance. In *Recollection*, the movement is given for the dancers to provide their own personal interpretation. The way that the group dance is being performed mainly was modified rather than in unison. It exposes the diversity of performing bodies that are different from one another.

CHAPTER 3: FEEDBACK AND CONCLUSION

This chapter presents the feedback and conclusion based on the observations in Chapter 2. Feedback from the audience is highly acknowledged in this section so as to measure the influence of imagery in the dancer's performance. The comments and suggestions are gathered from the two respected panelists, audiences, and my self-assessment. In conclusion, it streamlines how imagery facilitated the process of choreography and dance performance. It includes the significance of imagery in both practices in order to understand the movement. Also, the practical limitations during the process will be identified, which did not restrict but challenge the exploration. Moreso, by using dance imagery to understand movement processes, there were lots of realizations that occurred. This thesis is intended to be useful for every dancer seeking to understand personal ways of moving their bodies.

Feedback

This section will discuss the gathered random feedback from respected people who shall remain anonymous. They witnessed the creation of two dance pieces. Most of them have been present during the process of dance-making until the final performance. The significance of including their point of view in this thesis is to assess how my performance was observed throughout the practice.

One of the factors to consider in performance evaluation is getting other people's feedback, especially those who never attended the rehearsals. The naivety of their perception varies from those who observed the development of the dance pieces. They are the audiences and panelists who barely watched the final performance. It drives my curiosity to know their interpretation regarding my performance. The commentary session happened during casual conversation right after the performance production at the theater lobby.

The panelists shared their comments and suggestions about every dance piece. One of the critical comments was about my solo performance. Panel A said that the first solo (a part in *Limbo*) was a bit tense on movement execution and the second solo (beginning of *Recollection*) was much more relaxed than the first one.

This comment refers to the first performance called *Limbo*. As I mentioned in the *Limbo* section of Chapter 2, my emotional state was a challenge during the preparation before the performance started. It greatly affected my performance, even though I was able to execute all the movements. In terms of physicality, specifically the costumes, the naked bodies of three dancers made an impact on how they connected their bodies. The relationship of different bodies became intimate and firm. Also, the interval of performing this choreography is vital for the dancer to refresh their understanding of movement. The constant changes happening during the process make the choreography so subjective for the dance. It allows the bodies to be part of the dance rather than executing the movement alone.

However, in terms of the sensation created from the body, it was strange. When I did my warm-up beforehand, my body felt waning. It feels like the entire body is so relaxed that I cannot even feel the power exerted while working out the muscles. With this experience, it manifested on stage. The execution is correct, but the internal process of movement is distracted. The non-dancer audience might not notice it, but they might observe it from others who are more physically aware.

Another comment is how the dance *Limbo* ended. They suggested that the ending might be better if all the dancers come together instead of ending with a solo. They preferred that the dancers would be in contact from body to body to add focus. With that, it can be done with just the lady (referring to me) alone will release and come out of the piece. The choreographer also accepts suggestions, such as the green mats that can be more dimension like a sculpture and design the space to be more interesting.

Based on non-dancer audiences who were able to see the creation process commented that the growth of *Limbo* is observable from its interesting movements that tell more about the story of the dance. The moment that the dancers move is their chance to interpret the storyline. The movement became the basis of their understanding of the dance concept. It posits that movement has a strong impact in fostering imageries. In addition, they appreciated both *Limbo* and *Recollection*; dancers seem to be excellent in offering the movements that help them imagine what is going on in the piece. For instance, *Limbo* offered a unique way of storytelling through the dancer's movement and their relation with the green mats. Their bodies react with the presence of the mats-- the dancers have to be aware of this all the time. Nevertheless, the dancers did not show that the presence of mats affects their movement. It even offers a clear imagery to understand the piece.

In *Recollection*, the panelist perceived that *Limbo* and the third piece *Recollection* were "pretty much similar". This observation is not as similar to the way I perceived the dances. I saw their differences in terms of movement qualities. Perhaps this is due to the choreographic structure that started in a solo. They encourage the choreographer to modify a movement that has a craving feeling. It can be done by emphasizing the suspension of movement rather than a direct approach. Even if the movements are vigorous, this can still be executed with resistance instead of exerting so much effort. The piece's ambiance will be heightened and will express the excitement of delivering the ideas.

As one of the dancers, I experienced the feeling the choreographer wanted to deliver. It is about the recollection of memories of the past to present, which are unstable. Everything continuously passes by. Since this piece underwent multiple revisions, the rehearsal process manipulated the creation. Even with the imagination of the choreographer's concept, setting up did not go so easy, the rehearsal as a preparatory fragment of experimenting with new methods facilitated for making the concept or idea into creative output, challenges the creator's ideas of

physical exploration. It is also where the discoveries arose and theories are proven. Based on my observation as a dancer, rehearsal is the most challenging part of many of the performance processes which were taken for granted. Belittling its purpose affects the process of establishing the concept during rehearsals. It is where the theories are learned and must be practiced to transform it into corporeality. This method is the crucial part for the creator and the doer. In the same light, this aspect refers to how mentally genius the choreographer's manifest what ideas they have by providing dancers with the movement materials to make things happen. Also, it ushers the transformation of the concept to the dancer's embodiment. Perhaps, this includes a lot of trial and error and the assertion of determination and perseverance. By all means, delivering the dance using different elements is just another approach to fulfill the choreography.

Discovered limitation and Implication

The limitations I encountered in applying imagery in the entire process that we are discussing, specifically the technical part of movement, shall be captured in my elaboration of my experiences. How I felt the effect of imagery in processing my performance and how I perceived the language of imagery of the choreographer in developing his concept. Also, imagery requires consistent practice and allows the self to be surrounded by information in order to create a detailed awareness in the body. Knowing what type of dancing I would like to pursue in my future career could help develop my style. It will be another approach to have a personal choice of which movement style I wanted to follow and explore. It can contribute to going over or correcting the lapses I needed to correct or understand by resolutely applying imagery and figuring out my unique approach as a dancer.

Conclusion

Imagery undeniably plays a vital role in dance practice, most especially in enhancing dance skills. Dancers and choreographers need to establish their creativity. Dance imagery becomes the main component of this study which leads to the configuration of *liquid technique*. This technique is framed from the choreographer's personal experience after being engaged in various dance companies. Through different observations for the encountered experiences, imagery served as a tool to establish this technique. Imagery is interpreted personally and provides new ways of embodying movements and choreographic approaches.

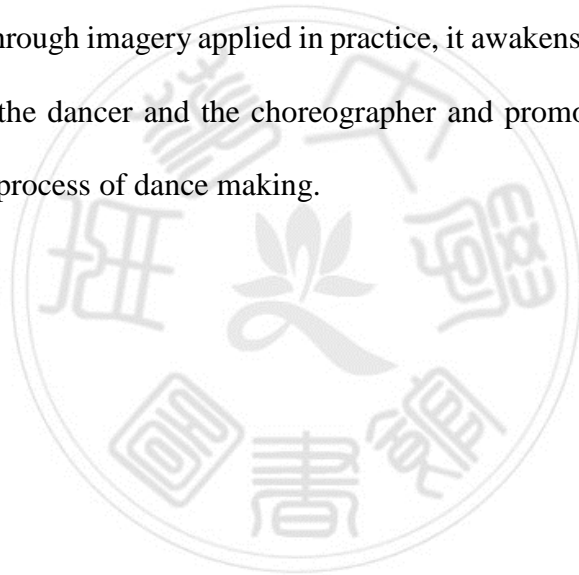
Imagery is an internal experience that is less assured to be seen as how an individual is processing it. However, through the execution of the movement, others can tell that imagery employs improvement. Imagery may be an intuitive part of exploration but is set as less priority by others because of their inadequate knowledge on this approach. It comes naturally in the process of exploration. More often than not, it requires a leader to govern how it should be processed. In the rehearsals, the choreographers initiate the dancer's development of imagery along the creation process, which changes over some time. It does not stay as it is, yet, even developed if it becomes part of the dancer's priority. Imagery is narrowed down into the approach of the *liquid technique*, which images the torso as a floating paper in water.

The *liquid technique* initially aimed at producing an explored movement that is articulated, sequential and understood as a movement of the body. The outlined kinesthetic value is manipulated from body restriction, circular movements, and improvisation, which are interpreted differently. The implication of it in practice is not similar from one dancer to another, however its outcomes may seem identical. This implies that the inherent characteristic of the dancer's body creates a diversity of exploration. It offers multiple facets of how imagery is enacted in the development of discovering an artistic standpoint.

As I write this last section of the thesis, the image of a long path referred to the journey is about to end. It is much similar to writing closing remarks with all the happenings encountered during the creative process. Writing this part provides me with a vast canvas and allows me to gather all the learnings I had garnered from the past two years of intensive training. I assumed that I might have overlooked the most important thing: the value of each experience and transforming it into a source of growth. The journey of doing this thesis is extensive, demanding, and challenging. Most of the time, I silently ponder on how I even made things possible. Being a fresh undergraduate immediately proceeding to further studies is laden with risks. This doubt added hurdles in pursuing this thesis which inspired me to be even more determined and courageous. The two-year span of fulfilling this journey is relatively short in order to grasp the learnings and embrace each moment of progress from the dance training and other exposures. Imagining oneself progressing day by day can indeed lead to the fulfillment of goals. There are many aspects that I should discuss from my experiences but imagery associated with *liquid technique* has a profound impact in my dance practice as a performance major.

Imagery has a significant impact in configuring the technique. It is also used in building solid imagery for choreography. Dance has become too personal to me. Its definition goes beyond what I acquired from its practices. It continuously teaches me to be human in the sense that I became more aware of the body. Being disciplined enough to understand the body's necessity which pertains to embodying the movement, is indispensable. Along the process, imagery leads me to use it as a key to discovering my interpretation of moving the body. Doing the movement is not only about execution but also more about allowing the body to have its interpretation. Imagery assisted me in discovering and exploring the limitless potential of the body. It addresses my own self desire to alter my mindset that dance is limited to technical techniques and encourages self-discovery of movement style.

In times of innovation in dance, most specifically contemporary dance, it becomes a unique way of expressing subjective sentiments. Movement is not only limited to the creation of the choreographer but it highly encourages the dancer's contribution. This is when I realized that imagery is considered a dancer's method of personal contribution in choreography. By imaging the choreographer's concept, the dancer can share the imagery perceived upon expressing it through the movement materials. Imagery can support the dilemma encountered in the creative process, such as decision-making, problem-solving, and conceptualizing. Also, it employs the dancer's aesthetic, which is considered an essential factor in performing. The imageries are projected upon the body embodying the movement being explored and choreographed. Thus, through imagery applied in practice, it awakens every individual to break the hierarchy between the dancer and the choreographer and promotes building harmonious relationships along the process of dance making.



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APPENDIX A

A.1 Performance Production Poster



Figure 10. The dance production poster designed by Yu Xian Zhi

A.2 Other Photos of *Limbo*



Figure 11. The beginning of *Limbo*. Dancers were preset on stage. Screened shot from the video taken by Zhi Yan Liao



Figure 12. Dancers' movement for first music cue. Screened shot from the video taken by Zhi Yan Liao



Figure 13. The first raising movement where I image myself like a sprout. Photo taken by Zhi Yan Liao



Figure 14. The first lifting which I felt reaching to another realm of *Limbo*. Photo taken by Zhi Yan Liao

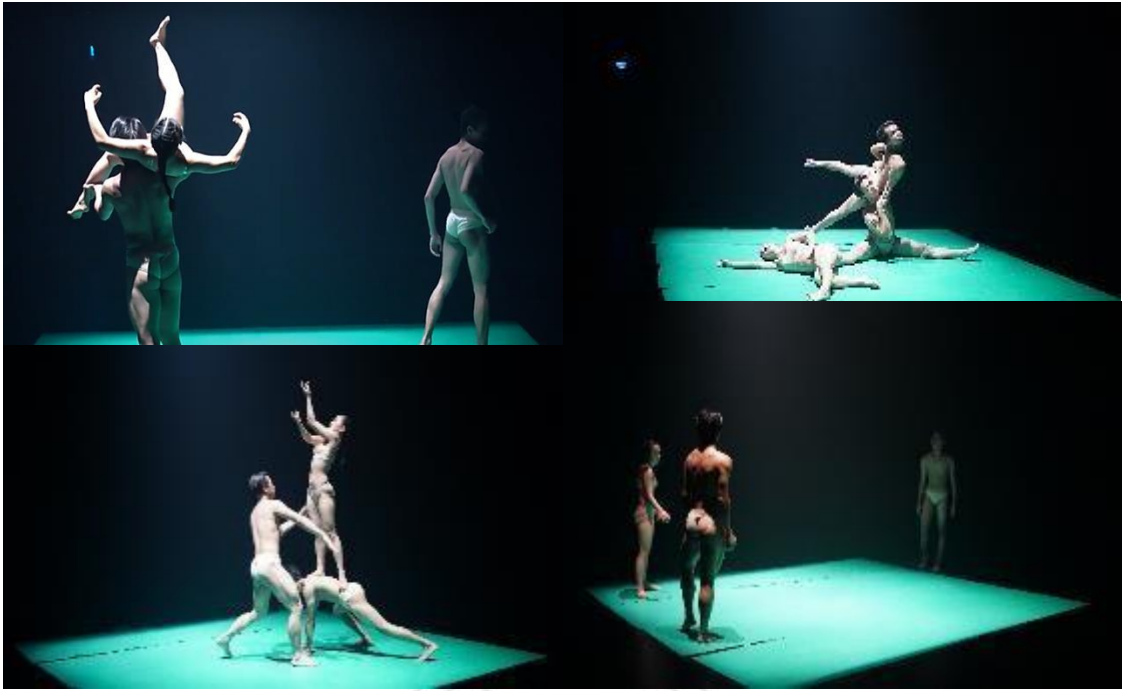


Figure 15. The execution of movements became extensive and bold. Also, the intertwined bodies were untangled. Photo taken by Zhi Yan Liao



Figure 16. Exploring different spaces and levels. Green mats were utilized into different forms. Photo taken by Zhi Yan Liao

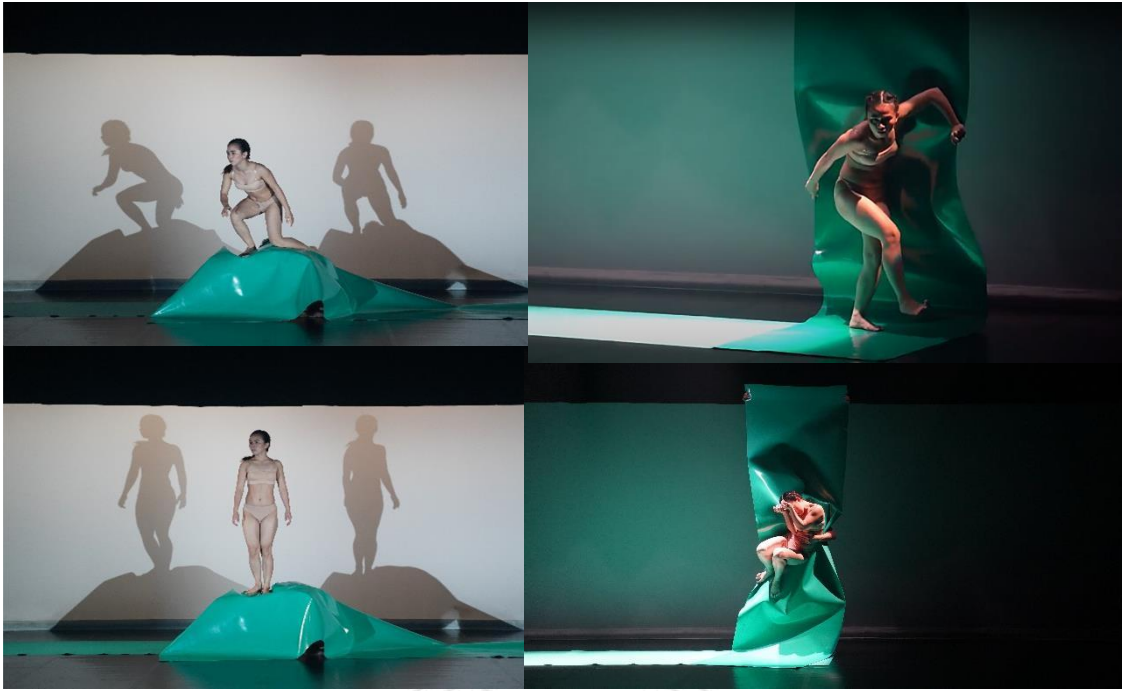


Figure 17. Imaging myself being alone in a vast space. Photo taken by Zhi Yan Liao

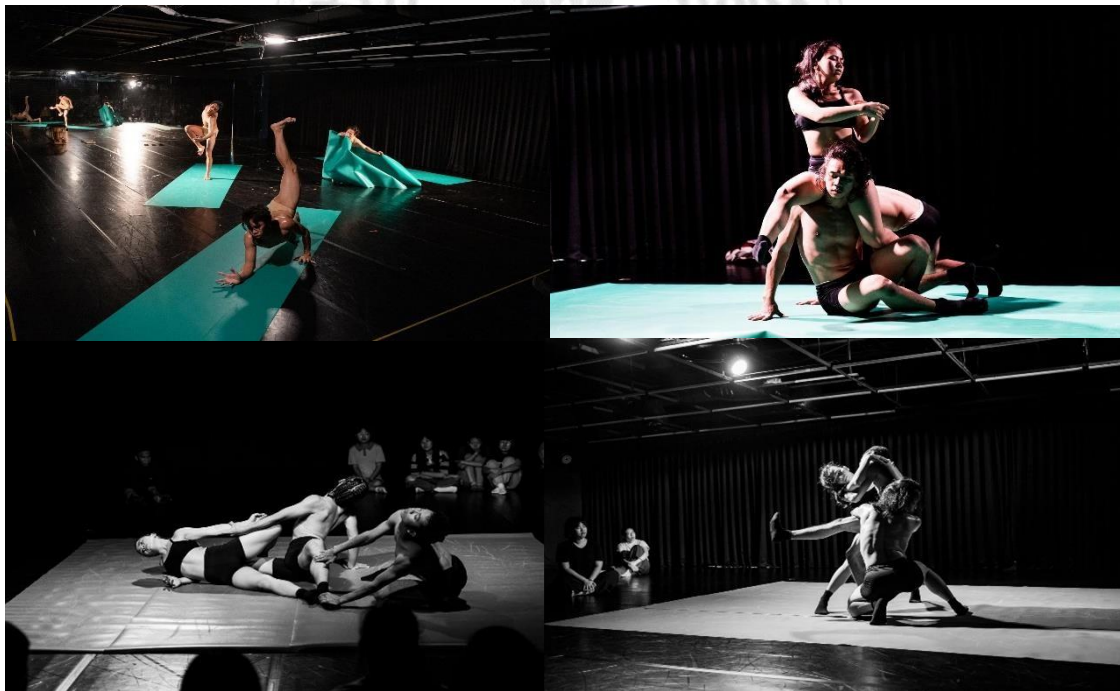


Figure 18. Different performances of *Limbo* at Dance studio of Nan Hua University. Photo taken by Wen Chung-Lin

A.3 Other Photos of *Recollection*



Figure 19. Other photos of my solo performance in *Recollection*. Screened shot from the video taken by Zhi Yan Liao



Figure 20. Other photos of group performance. Photo taken by Zhi Yan Liao



Figure 21. Some photos of rehearsals and run-through. Photo taken by Heidi Emelo



Figure 22. A duet section in *Recollection* with Wynvel Anguren. Photo taken by Zhi Yan Liao



Figure 23. Meeting with panelists and visitors after performance production at Experimental Theater, Lobby. Photo taken by Heidi Emelo