

Theatre Performance and the Digital – what’s the connection? an intermedial approach

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Abstract

Theatre and machines share a deep genetic and ontological relationship. The theatre stage not only uses technology but is also a physical and perceptual space, itself mediated, and mediating the visual and acoustic relationship between the worlds of stage and audience. Dramatic, make-believe play is a cognitive machine, allowing the animation of synthetic, fictional agents. Performance, with its broad spectre and typology, provides the intentional, agential and subjective matrix for any “doing”. The machine, on the other hand, reciprocates this investment, by providing itself either as an automaton or puppet, or as a “software” solution, as in acting and directing.

The dynamic of the theatre-machine relationship accumulates in the digital revolution. Indeed, already before B. Laurel’s book *Computers as Theatre* (1993), the digital showed its first co-fabrications with the analogue on the theatre stage or the computer screen. Mostly on a spectacle and plot level, the digital and the theatre/performance/drama triplet became intertwined so as to give rise to various manifestations of their synergy, digital theatre, cyberformance and cyberdrama, to name but a few. Lately, new evolvments brought forth by emerging extended or mixed reality technologies, including augmented and virtual reality ones, promise even more immersion to the contemporary performing and spectating subject, while AI deluges the public sphere and global culture.

What are the terms of the correlation between theatre/drama/performance and the digital? How may an intermedial approach contribute to the negotiation of the space between the analogue, the digital and the virtual, or between arts, technology and media? What are the latest lessons in adopting a theatrical frame when contemplating digital culture? The lecture is expected to explore the potential of an expanded role of intermediality in such discussion and highlight how the intermedial perspective may be deemed as a possible route for comparing “cabbages and kings”.

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Bio

Eleni Timplalexi teaches at the Department of Communication & Media Studies, NKUA. She holds a post doc in Digital Media and Theatre, Department of Theatre Studies, NKUA, awarded with the IKY Fellowship of Excellence for postgraduate studies in Greece-Siemens Program (2015-16). She completed her PhD in the same department with an IKY PhD scholarship (2010-14). She was a Alexander C. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation Scholar in Theatre Practice (2005-07). Recently, a post doc guest researcher with Linnaeus University Centre for Intermedial and Multimodal Studies and with the Division of Intermedia Studies, University of Lund, Sweden. She also is an awarded playwright, theatre director and artist, currently involved in Magenta Artistic Collaboration and collaborating with the Spatial Media