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THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEATER: BEGINNINGS TO DIGITAL THEATER

A Paper

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Dedication

To everyone who ascended the ascension of rejection

To every believer on earth

To everyone who replaced the shroud with science

*To all those who raised their index and middle
fingers in the face of injustice*

To everyone who was martyred after saying no

To Iraq

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ABSTRACT

The paper displays the development of theater from the simple wagon in the market place to the digital age where the elements are manipulated that the actor does not have to be on stage for the play to be acted.

The paper is divided into four chapters and a conclusion: Chapter One tackles the beginnings of theater. Chapter Two deals with the Shakespearean theater with its novelty of new buildings and professional actors .

After the gap in drama, Chapter Three displays the modern theater and the changes that have occurred to the concept of drama.

Chapter Four is about the digital theater which was devised in 2015 to incorporate technology in the play acting for various reasons .

The paper is summed up in the conclusion which is Chapter Five.

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CHAPTER ONE

BEGINNINGS OF THEATER

Introduction :

Theater is arguably the most expressive storytelling medium, and is constantly adapting to the shifting times , Although audiences today generally experience live-action storytelling from the comfort of our living rooms, purely for leisure, this wasn't always the case , Theater troupes of the past went to great lengths to tell their stories, and audiences had a much different experience than those today do (beacham , Richard C. 1996) .

1.1. The origins of theater :

While humanity has been passing down stories orally since we developed the use of language, the institution of the theater did not begin until much later. Ultimately, early versions of theater were wildly different than a theater performance we might attend today (Benedetti , jean 2005) .

Plays of the past had a stronger basis in religion and tradition. Early Greek and Chinese performances are especially rich with religious dedications and community traditions (Brandon , james R. 1997) .

1.2. Ancient Greek theater :

Ancient Greek history is intimately tied with theater. Early plays were performed in tribute to the god Dionysus, the god of wine, fertility, and, later, theater itself. Choruses began performing hymns written in his honor, which were dubbed dithyrambs (Benedetti , jean 2008) .

These choruses gradually began dressing up in costume or masks, but still did not resemble theater as we know it today. It wasn't until the 6th century BC, under Athenian ruler Pisistratus, that "acting" as we know it came to be. Pisistratus instituted a number of public festivals, one of which was dedicated to Dionysus (burt, Daniel S. 2008) .

The day centered around music, dance, and poetry. One man, Thespis, is reported to have burst from carts to recite poetry in-character; and this is where the word "thespian" comes from. His audiences weren't even

seeking out entertainment, they were just wandering through the festival. Setting an important precedent in history, wealthy citizens donated money to the arts in hopes of becoming influential in politics and society (Carlson , marvin 1993) .

This process would change throughout history, but wealthy Greeks sponsored plays through a special tax called a choregia. This tax enabled the creation of recognizable theaters, complete with stone benches situated outdoors. While such conditions may have been tolerable for a short period of time, Greek playwrights soon began writing much longer plays, adding additional characters and prologues to fully flesh out a character-driven story (black , joseph , ed 2010) .

Stories like Oedipus Rex are much closer to modern theater than poetry recitals, but this came at a price. Sitting or standing on stone benches for hours at a time would have been painful, and audiences would have been at the mercy of the elements. However, what the stadiums and amphitheaters sacrificed in comfort they made up for in acoustics. While movie going audiences today are used to a surround sound experience, ancient Greeks did not have that luxury, but still had an impressive, advanced audio system built right into the theater (brown, Andrew 1998) .

Greek architects deliberately raised seating to provide a better view for audiences, as well as designed the seats to reflect and amplify the sounds from the theater. As a result, thousands of people attended these performances, and most were able to not only see, but also hear, the action on the stage. The Greek classics were ultimately spread throughout multiple cultures and civilizations as a result of the conquests and formation of the Roman Empire. Apart from adopting many Greek gods and customs, the Roman Empire also continued to perform many of their plays (brockett, Oscar G. & hildy, franklin J. 2003) .

1.3. Theater in medieval Europe :

Medieval Europe had a low literacy rate, so records are few and far between. Additionally, the church opposed certain performances, so some plays were either lost to time or performed in secret. Throughout the Middle Ages, the church's grip gradually loosened on the arts, so record-keeping concerning plays eventually improved. Plays of the past had a stronger basis in religion and tradition. Early Greek and Chinese

performances are especially rich with religious dedications and community traditions (deal, William E. 2007).

1.3.1.Sacred drama :

The church did approve of some performances however, and more specifically, those related to the Bible. In order to spread their gospel to an illiterate population, the church performed stories directly from the Bible or based on the lives of saints. Though they had plenty of material to work with, most churches only performed these plays for specific religious occasions, possibly only once or twice a year (elam, keir 1980).

Audiences watched these performances in church, so their accommodations wouldn't have been much better than their Greek predecessors. Sermons could go on for hours and audience's only comfort would have been a rigid wooden bench. There was no consideration for comfort, in deep contrast to our view of theater today. Religious plays were in service to God, so if the seating was sufficient for sermons, it was sufficient enough for theater as well (gauss, Rebecca B. 1999).

1.3.2.Secular drama :

One of the most important developments in comedy was the Feast of Fools, a popular medieval festival, particularly in France. This festival had dance, song, minstrels, and mimes, but it also allowed for lower clergy to mock their superiors as well as church life. So it wasn't completely separated from the church, but it was certainly a rare opportunity to criticize holy men and texts (kovacs, david 2005).

This represented a huge step forward for comedic theater. Around the 12th century, truly secular plays began. Actors were typically normal citizens, and stages were usually outdoors. Set pieces could be transported with a cart, but there were no theater houses or troupes. As such, audiences would have stood or sat on the ground, but at least now it was for leisure purposes again (leach, Robert 2004) .

CHAPTER TWO

SHAKESPEAREAN THEATER

2.1. Shakespeare's theater :

In Shakespeare's time, a stage wasn't just one type of space; plays had to be versatile. The same play might be produced in an outdoor playhouse, an indoor theater, a royal palace—or, for a company on tour, the courtyard of an inn. (Gamini Salgado,ed.1975)

In any of these settings, men and boys played all the characters, male and female; acting in Renaissance England was an exclusively male profession. Audiences had their favorite performers, looked forward to hearing music with the productions, and relished the luxurious costumes of the leading characters. The stage itself was relatively bare. For the most part, playwrights used vivid words instead of scenery to picture the scene onstage. (Ernest Shanzer, 1956).



2.2. Playhouses and the Globe :

In 1576, when Shakespeare was still a 12-year-old in Stratford-upon-Avon, James Burbage built the Theatre just outside London. The Theatre was among the first playhouses in England since Roman times. Like the many other playhouses that followed, it was a multi-sided structure with a central, uncovered "yard" surrounded by three tiers of covered seating and a bare, raised stage at one end of the yard. Spectators could pay for seating at multiple price levels; those with the cheapest tickets simply stood for the length of the plays. (Gustav Ungerer , 1961).

Shakespeare's company, the Lord Chamberlain's Men, was one of several to perform at the Theatre, appearing there by about 1594. A few years later, the Burbages lost their lease on the Theatre site and began construction of a new, larger playhouse, the Globe, just south of the Thames. To pay for it, they shared the lease with the five partners (called actor-sharers) in the Lord Chamberlain's company, including Shakespeare. (Jonathan Bate et al.,1998).

The Globe, which opened in 1599, became the playhouse where audiences first saw some of Shakespeare's best-known plays. In 1613, it burned to the ground when the roof caught fire during a performance of Shakespeare's Henry VIII. A new, second Globe was quickly built on the same site, opening in 1614. (Gary Jay Williams , 1997).



2.3. Theaters and palaces:

Large open playhouses like the Globe are marvelous in the right weather, but indoor theaters can operate year-round, out of the sun, wind, and rain. They also offer a more intimate setting with the use of artificial light. Shakespeare's company planned for years to operate its own indoor theater, a goal that was finally achieved in 1609 when the Burbages took over London's Blackfriars theater. (Egan , Gabriel 1999).

Still more indoor productions often came during the period between Christmas and New Year, and at Shrovetide (the period before Lent) at one of the royal palaces, where Shakespeare's company and other leading companies gave command performances—a high honor that was also well-paid. (Braines,William 1924).

2.4. Audience experiences :

Playgoers in Shakespeare's day paid a penny to stand in the uncovered yard of a playhouse, or two pennies for a balcony seat. (It's hard to find exact comparisons to what a penny then is worth now, but a day's worth of food and drink for a grown man would have cost about fourpence.) Indoor theaters like the Blackfriars accommodated fewer people and cost more, with basic tickets starting at sixpence. Fashionable men about town could get a seat on the side of the stage for two shillings (24 pence). (Bowsher, Julian ; Miller, pat 2009).

Spectators liked to drink wine or ale and snack on a variety of foods as they watched the plays—modern-day excavations at the playhouses have turned up bottles, spoons, oyster shells, and the remnants of many fruits and nuts. (Mulryne, J. R; shewring, Margaret 1997) .

2.5. Actors, costumes, and staging :

While most women's roles were played by boys or young men in the all-male casts, comic female parts such as Juliet's Nurse might be reserved for a popular adult comic actor, or clown. In addition to their dramatic talents, actors in Shakespeare's time had to fence onstage with great skill, sing songs or play instruments included in the plays, and perform the vigorously athletic dances of their day. (Schoenbaum Samuel 1991).

Actors usually did not aim for historically accurate costumes, although an occasional toga may have appeared for a Roman play. Instead, they typically wore gorgeous modern dress, especially for the leading parts. Costumes, a major investment for an acting company, provided the essential "spectacle" of the plays and were often second-hand clothes once owned and worn by real-life nobles. (Orrell, John 1989).

The bare stages of Shakespeare's day had little or no scenery except for objects required by the plot, like a throne, a grave, or a bed. Exits and entrances were in plain view of the audience, but they included some vertical options: actors could descend from the "heavens" above the stage or enter and exit from the "hell" below through a trapdoor. Characters described as talking from "above" might appear in galleries midway between the stage and the heavens. (C.C Stopes , Burbage 1913) .

CHAPTER THREE

MODERN DRAMA

3.1 Introduction

The 20th century was a period of change and upheaval. The expansion of ideas in the 19th century led to relatively rapid advancements in technology. It was also a time when the world became embroiled in a series of extended wars. Not all of the wars were major world-wide conflicts. There was localized fighting somewhere in the world on virtually a daily basis. These struggles involved differences in political, social, economic, and religious ideologies.

Significant wars of the 20th century include the following:

- World War I
- Russian Revolution
- World War II
- Korean War
- Vietnamese War
- Arab-Israeli conflicts
- Afghanistan (Russia and U.S.)
- Persian Gulf
- Iraq

In addition to and sometimes as a result of the wars, technology expanded very rapidly. After millennia of relatively limited development, the 100 years of the 20th century saw a boom in technology related to transportation and communications. We went from horse and buggies to high-tech automobiles. We moved into the skies from hot air balloons to supersonic aircraft. In the 19th century, the telegraph sped up communications significantly, but in the 20th century, we went from Alexander Graham Bell's simple telephone to the cell phone in everyone's pocket.

Went progressed from relatively rudimentary radio to the on-demand society of handheld television. Computers were developed – originally being room-sized with less computing power than a basic modern calculator to internet-connected data-age handheld computers.

We found ourselves moving into the space age, from basic solid fuel rockets to a whole industry developed to send men and machines to other planets

3.2 Impact on Theatre

Theatre in the 20th century reflected all these new ideas and technologies. In fact, it was early in the 20th century that theatre came to be considered a mirror on reality – a way for the audience to reflect on the world we are all living in. The plays and methods of performance embraced the new philosophical ideas. The changes and fading of religion as a major influence on theatre, and society, was an early development of the 20th century. New ideological ideas and the influence of psychology and its study of how humans think and how the brain functions was a growing influence in theatre. The many new economic theories and practices affected theatre, too. Another major area that worked its way onto the stage was science. The discoveries of scientific principles and technological applications are a subtle, but significant element of 20th century theatre.

3.3 Beginnings of Realism

Probably most significantly in theatre, the 20th century marks the beginning of what came to be called “realism.” This idea is reflected in the plays, the acting, and the production values. The effect on acting is most notable through the analysis and writings of Stanislavski, whose methods we looked at in an earlier supplement, so they will not be revisited here.

3.4 Three playwrights who mark the beginning of “modern theatre” (Realistic Theatre)

Henrik Ibsen (Norwegian) – though we studied his plays as examples of Romantic theatre at the end of the 19th century, they were considered transitional. Mostly Romantic, they also contained elements of realism. In addition, he tackled issues that other Romantic playwrights never would cover. In the 19th century they were considered taboo, subjects such as suicide, strong women, violating social norms, etc

August Strindberg (Swedish) – his plays contained elements of Romantic playwrights, too, but they focused on human internal struggles as opposed to the more outward looking Romantic plays.

Anton Chekhov (Russian) – his plays use many realistic traits, such as very complex and overlapping characters and story lines. He is often considered the foremost writer of Tragicomedies, though many of his plays tend to be darker than that genre usually is.

Note that these playwrights are from countries that are not in the center of Europe. Those countries held onto the Romantic period for a period of time. Change happens at the fringes in theatre, and then those “new” things find their way into the center and the mainstream!

3.5 Realism & Naturalism

Realism in the theatre is meant to reflect real life, to “mirror” what the audience considers to be its reality. That is, it is meant to “look real” and to give the audience the sense that it is real by adopting the appearance of reality.

It is meant to resemble observable life, to match how people speak, how they move, how they dress, etc.

It intentionally excluded most of the non-real elements, the departures from realism, such as the **supernatural**, the use of **poetry** in dialogue, **songs** being sung by the characters (as in musicals), the use of **fantasy** elements or **dreams**.

3.6 Naturalism

In parallel to Realism, a type of extreme realism, or “hyper realism” developed that was called **Naturalism**. Naturalism took realism to the point of not just mirroring reality or the appearance of reality, it created reality on stage. This is sometimes referred to as the **slice of life** – “**cutlery in the drawer**” style of theatre. Basically, that means that the staging and production values would be so real that there would be silverware in the drawer in a kitchen set, even if the drawer were never opened during the course of the play. This style of theatre tries to **present a photographic reality to emphasize the material aspects of existence**. Plays written in this style tend to **focus on lower class** characters, and they often look at the **darker elements of human nature** – **often as satire**.

3.7 Realism vs. Naturalism

In the chart below, you can see a comparison between certain aspects of Realism and Naturalism to better understand how they differ.

Realism	Naturalism
1. representation of reality	1. reality on stage
2. walls painted to represent brick, wallpaper, etc	2. walls must be real brick, wallpaper, or whatever
3. actors acknowledge that the audience is present	3. actors do not acknowledge that the audience is present
a. project voices to be heard	a. don't project their voices
b. don't turn backs to the audience	b. turn their backs on the audience
4. continues as the major "ism" of theatre	4. virtually disappeared as a viable theatrical form

3.8 Departures from Realism

Some of the other stylistic developments of the 20th century that are considered to be non-realistic or departures from realism are listed below.

Symbolism – spirituality, imagination, dreams

Theatricalism – emphasized “theatre-ness” and conventions

Expressionism – explore spiritual awakening and suffering, episodic, often anti-father, heightened language/dialogue

Futurism - emphasized the mechanization of society and machinery

Surrealism – rejects conventions and explores the working of the subconscious – mystical/metaphysical ritual event – dream-like

Theatre of cruelty – similar to Surrealism but deals more with the physicality of mystic and metaphysic ritual – violent and erotic impulses

Epic theatre – rejected the “illusion” and “escapism” of Realism – emphasized “the play” and the intellect – **associated with Bertolt Brecht**

3.9 Totalitarianism and theatre

As in most periods of theatre history, the governments of the various countries attempted to regulate and censor theatre. However, in the 20th century several regimes that were essentially totalitarian tyrannies censored AND used theatre to advance their ideas and control over the people. These actions are most often associated with **Nazi Germany** and the former **Soviet Russia**, but it was not limited to those major governments of the 20th century. This control, or the attempt to control theatre was fairly widespread. In these totalitarian regimes, theatre was often used as **propaganda** – government-supported theatre used to show the totalitarian ideals and leaders in a positive light to try and influence audiences. They would also attempt to **suppress and censor** opposition ideas and “free thinking.” As in every attempt to control human behavior, resistance is common. However, in totalitarian regimes, it is **severely persecuted** and often takes the form of underground resistance.

3.10 Experimentation

The 20th century theatre was filled with explorations of new ideas and new genres and forms. Some of these we have discussed in previous supplements, but there were more than the ones that were ultimately successful. Many of these arose out of the psychological and sociological stresses of the early 20th century, with its many wars and the development of nuclear power and nuclear weapons. These are usually classified under the common heading of **Avant-Garde**, or “cutting edge” theatre. They include the following forms that were based in developments of similar philosophical movements of thinkers and scholars.

Existentialism – “existence precedes essence,” “your own reality dictates your actions”

Theatre of the Absurd – human existence has no meaning or purpose

Happenings – performance art, loosely structured, active audience participation – non-literary, allows for chance occurrences

Multimedia – involves film, video, music, dance, and/or images as an integral part of the action of the play

Environmental theatre – immerses the audience in the acting space by intruding into the audience space with balconies, scaffolds, ramps, etc. that invite audience participation

Eclecticism – blends various elements of different types of theatre styles

3.11 Popular Theatre

As the availability of entertainment grew in the 20th century, theatre found itself having to compete more and more frequently for the audiences it needs to exist. We see that trend continuing today, in fact probably even more so as online options proliferate.

The result was a greater attempt to appeal to the popular tastes of the audience. Not just to reflect their reality, but to also appeal directly to what the audience wants and values in its entertainment. There is a concerted effort to truly appeal to the audiences' entertainment, and often at the expense of some of the other purposes of theatre, that becomes to primary focus of popular theatre.

3.12 Musical Theatre

The American response to this dilemma is the quintessential dramatic form of the **Musical**. The musical as a dramatic form is probably the most popular form of theatre in America and is growing in popularity around the world. When most of think of theatre, we think of Broadway and hit musicals. They garner much of the entertainment headlines, especially in conjunction with Disney and other popular franchise offerings (such as graphic novels and video game tie-ins) being made into this form of live theatre.

3.13 Globalization

Another trend that began in the 20th century was the globalization of theatre. As transportation and communication technology improved, the inevitable encounters with other cultural and socio-political influences on theatre happened. The result is that during the latter part of the 20th century there was a growth in the **cross-cultural exchange of ideas, products and services, language, and art** across the world of theatre. These ideas are shared across all cultures **east to west and north to south**.

Today's Theatre: Global, Diverse, & Eclectic

Our World – the 20th & 21st Centuries

The last part of this unit is to look at the world of theatre today. Since our first two units in this course explored the elements of today's theatre, we will focus here on a few of the historically significant contexts of theatre today.

First of all, the world has continued to change quite drastically. For example, in the last 25-30 years we have seen the fall of **Communism** in the former Soviet Union. The Berlin Wall has come down and Germany is unified again. We have endured the Rise of Terrorism and the events that led to and resulted from the **9/11/2001** tragedy of the World Trade Center and Pentagon. There have been ongoing wars and violence in the **Middle East, Africa, and Asia**. **ISIS** has become a common term on the news and in the world of terror and the conflicts involving the U.S. There has been a surge in the number of **Domestic Terrorism** events and mass shootings.

3.14 Theatrical Diversity

The theatre of our world reflects the growing diversity of ideas, viewpoints, opinions, and socio-cultural developments that are happening every day.

One new style of theatre that has become a large part of the theatrical scene is known as **Performance Art**. It focuses on the performer instead of the text. It allows a degree of experimentation with a variety of theatrical and performance methods, too. This form of theatre is often quite **autobiographical**. That is, it reflects a very personal approach, on the part of the performer, to the performance and to the story or experience being portrayed.

Another new idea of the latter 20th and early 21st centuries is the philosophy of **Postmodernism**. Since the early 20th century was labelled as the "Modern" period what follows it in terms of art and culture and theatre is labelled as Postmodern, that is "what follows modern." In terms of theatre, postmodernism generally **questions the modernist/realist approach to theatre**. That is, it **rejects the "power" and "authority" of the past** literature and practices. In rejecting the "norms" of the modern period, the postmodern period **explores the multiplicity of "authors"** and even questions what an author is. Isn't every performance actually "authored" by the actors and the production team? It will **deconstruct the text** breaking it down much like the description of the Postmodern Director in an earlier supplement. Since the postmodernist rejects the norms of previous theatrical categories, they **reject categorization of the text** into any particular type or genre.

3.15 Alternative theatres

Not all theatre in the 21st century is postmodern. In fact, most mainstream theatre continues to explore the nature and promise of popular theatre. There have been some very important developments to expand the availability of popular theatre as well. One of these developments is the **alternative to the “Broadway” contemporary commercial theatres**. These alternative theatres consist of **Regional Theatre – major centers of theatre culture (i.e., Atlanta, Chicago, Minneapolis, Dallas, Houston, Denver, etc.) that produce traditional and “new” theatre**

Another alternative to the big Broadway theatres is known as **Off-Broadway** and **Off-Off Broadway**. These are essentially regional theatres also in New York, alongside the big Broadway theatres. They provide an **alternative to the costly and highly commercialized Broadway theatre**. Frequently, they are also spaces for “new” plays to get “tried out” to see whether they will be popular. If they are, then they may move into one of the larger Broadway theaters.

3.16 African American theatre – 1900-1950

Though African American theatre is not new in the latter part of the 20th century, its recent explosion of popularity can be examined as a relatively “modern” phenomenon. The historical development of African American theatre in America can be broken down into two timeframes – before 1950, and after 1950.

In the first half of the 20th century, black theatre grew out of the popularity of Black culture among white Americans. This interest led to a number of developments in terms of music (Ragtime, Jazz, Blues, Rock and Roll, for example) which in turn, gave rise to several Black theatre developments. **Black musical comedies grew out of Ragtime and other traditionally “black music” types**. In a sad commentary on the America of the early 20th century, most white Americans enjoyed Black culture and music, but they did not like to associate with African American people. As a result, most Black-themed plays were performed by whites wearing black-face and playing very negative stereotypes. Still, despite that barrier to Blacks working in theatre, especially on stage, there were some inroads into mainstream theatre. There were some all-black acting companies who would perform for Blacks-only audiences. There were also a handful of black-themed plays that became popular and afforded a limited number of Black actors access to mainstream theatre. Finally, there were some black playwrights who had success in mainstream theatre, and even on Broadway.

African American performers and theatre workers benefitted from the 1930s WPA program, **the Federal Theatre Project**. During the Depression, in order to help put men to work, the WPA put together and helped to support **Black theatre companies in 22 cities** across America. The drawback is that these companies were subject to separation and segregation laws in the various states.

3.17 African American theatre – since 1950

Since 1950, however, the situation has begun to change significantly. There has been a virtual explosion of African American playwrights and plays – and performers – making their way to mainstream theatres. After the soldiers returned home from World War II, many of whom were African American, there was a strong movement to keep their access to the full spectrum of American culture and opportunities alive. That's what led, in large part, to the **Civil Rights movement of the 1960s**. The movement was scary and sometimes violent, but it was also ultimately successful in breaking through the segregationist barriers of the early part of the century and affording Black actors and playwrights a huge foothold in the industry. Just look around at the number of Black actors and actresses in theatre and the movies today. Essentially, it was the increase in numbers of black audience members that created the cause & effect of this expansion of black themed plays and black acting companies, and actors.

CHAPTER FOUR

DIGITAL THEATRE

4.1 Introduction

Digital theatre is primarily identified by the coexistence of “live” performers and digital media in the same unbroken space with a co-present audience. In addition to the necessity that its performance must be simultaneously “live” and digital, the event’s secondary characteristics are that its content should retain some recognizable theatre roles (through limiting the level of interactivity) and a narrative element of spoken language or text. The four conditions of digital theatre are:

1. It is a “live” performance placing at least some performers in the same shared physical space with an audience.
2. The performance must use digital technology as an essential part of the primary artistic event.
3. The performance contains only limited levels of interactivity, in that its content is shaped primarily by the artist(s) for an audience.
4. The performance’s content should contain either spoken language or text which might constitute a narrative or story, differentiating it from other events which are distinctly dance, art, or music.

4.2 “Live,” digital media, interactivity, and narrative

A brief clarification of these terms in relation to digital theatre is in order. The significance of the terms “live” or “liveness” as they occur in theatre can not be over-emphasized, as it is set in opposition to digital in order to indicate the presence of both types of communication, human and computer-created. Rather than considering the real-time or temporality of events, digital theatre concerns the interactions of people (audience and actors) sharing the same physical space (in at least one location, if multiple audiences exist). In the case of mass broadcast, it is essential that this sharing of public space occurs at the site of the primary artistic event. The next necessary condition for creating digital theatre is the presence of digital media in the performance. Digital media is not defined through the presence of one type of technology hardware or software configuration, but by its characteristics of being flexible, mutable, easily adapted, and able to be processed in real-time. It is the ability to change not only sound and light, but also images, video, animation, and other content into triggered,

manipulated, and reconstituted data which is relayed or transmitted in relation to other impulses which defines the essential nature of the digital format. Digital information has the quality of pure computational potential, which can be seen as parallel to the potential of human imagination.

The remaining characteristics of limited interactivity and narrative or spoken word are secondary and less distinct parameters. While interactivity can apply to both the interaction between humans and machines and between humans, digital theatre is primarily concerned with the levels of interactivity occurring between audience and performers (as it is facilitated through technology). It is in this type of interactivity, similar to other types of heightened audience participation, that the roles of message sender and receiver can dissolve to that of equal conversers, causing theatre to dissipate into conversation. The term “interactive” refers to any mutually or reciprocally active communication, whether it be a human-human or a human-machine communication.

The criteria of having narrative content through spoken language or text as part of the theatrical event is meant not to limit the range of what is already considered standard theatre (as there are examples in the works of Samuel Beckett in which the limits of verbal expression are tested), but to differentiate between that which is digital theatre and the currently more developed fields of digital dance⁹ and Art Technology. This is necessary because of the mutability between art forms utilizing technology. It is also meant to suggest a wide range of works including dance theatre involving technology and spoken words such as Troika Ranch’s *The Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz* (Troika Ranch, 2000), to the creation of original text-based works online by performers like the Plain Text Players or collaborations such as Art Grid’s *Interplay: Hallucinations*, to pre-scripted works such as the classics (*A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *The Tempest*) staged with technology at the University of Kansas and the University of Georgia.

The Participatory Virtual Theatre efforts at the Rochester Institute of Technology take a different approach by have live actors use motion capture to control avatars on a virtual stage. Audience responses are designed into the software that supports the performance. In the 2004 production, "What's the Buzz?" , a single node motion capture device controlled the performance of a swarm of bees. Later performances use two motion capture systems located in different buildings controlling the performance on a single virtual stage .

These criteria or limiting parameters are flexible enough to allow for a wide range of theatrical activities while refining the scope of events to

those which most resemble the hybrid “live”/mediated form of theatre described as digital theatre. digital theatre is separated from the larger category of digital performance (as expressed in the overabundance of a variety of items including installations, dance concerts, Compact discs, robot fights and other events found in the Digital Performance Archive).

4.3 History

In the early 1980s, video, satellites, fax machines, and other communications equipment began to be used as methods of creating art and performance. The groups Fluxus and John Cage were among the early leaders in expanding what was considered art, technology, and performance. With the adaptation of personal computers in the 1980s, new possibilities for creating performance communications was born. Artists like Sherrie Rabinowitz and Kit Galloway began to transition from earlier, more costly experiments with satellite transmission to experiments with the developing internet. Online communities such as The Well and interactive writing offered new models for artistic creativity. With the ‘Dot Com’ boom of the 1990s, telematic artists including Roy Ascott began to develop greater significance as theatre groups like George Coates Performance Works and Gertrude Stein Repertory Theatre established partnerships with software and hardware companies encouraged by the technology boom. In Australia in the early 1990s Julie Martin's Virtual Reality Theatre presented works at the Sydney Opera House, featuring the first hybrid human digital avatars, in 1996 "A Midsummer Nights Dream featured Augmented Reality Stage sets designed and produced by her company. Researchers such as Claudio Pinanhez at MIT, David Saltz of The Interactive Performance Laboratory at the University of Georgia, and Mark Reaney head of the Virtual Reality Theatre Lab at the University of Kansas, as well as significant dance technology partnerships (including Riverbed and Riverbed's work with Merce Cunningham) led to an unprecedented expansion in the use of digital technology in creating media-rich performances (including the use of motion capture, 3D stereoscopic animation, and virtual reality as in The Virtual Theatricality Lab's production of *The Skriker* at Henry Ford Community College under the direction of Dr. George Popovich. Another example is the sense:less project by Stenslie/Mork/Watz/Pendry using virtual actors that users would engage with inside a VR environment. The project was shown at ELECTRA, Henie Onstad Art Center, Norway, DEAF 1996 in Rotterdam and the Fifth Istanbul Biennial (1997).

Early use of mechanical and projection devices for theatrical entertainments have a long history tracing back to mechanicals of ancient

Greece and medieval magic lanterns. But the most significant precursors of digital theatre can be seen in the works of the early 20th century. It is in the ideas of artists including Edward Gordon Craig, Erwin Piscator (and to a limited degree Bertolt Brecht in their joint work on Epic Theatre), Josef Svoboda, and the Bauhaus and Futurists movements that we can see the strongest connections between today's use of digital media and live actors, and earlier, experimental theatrical use of non-human actors, broadcast technology, and filmic projections.

The presence of these theatrical progenitors using analog media, such as filmic projection, provides a bridge between Theatre and many of today's vast array of computer-art-performance-communication experiments. These past examples of theatre artists integrating their modern technology with theatre strengthens the argument that theatrical entertainment does not have to be either purist involving only "live" actors on stage, or be consumed by the dominant televisual mass media, but can gain from the strengths of bot.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Tracing the development of theater may sound easy and traditional. However, the paper displays the minute features which were accepted at a certain time then developed later to keep up with the fast developing societies .

Drama has developed from a simple act on a wagon in the marketplace by a group of unprofessional people, to a full theatrical performance by professional actors at the Shakespearean age. Moreover, the characters have developed from being the high-born unlucky people to 'everyman'. The characters in modern drama can be anyone from a king to a beggar. Later, digital technologies were incorporated to heighten the sense of the act and make it available to people with special needs.

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