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RESEARCH ARTICLE

INTERACTIVITY IN MULTIMEDIA THEATRE PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

This article considers interactivity in an intermediate theatre performance. Interactivity is a common word we can associate with 'communication'. Effective communication must be an interactive communication. Today, this term is being used in different fields such as technology, theatre performance etc. Interactive theatre is not a new genre. Multimedia interactive performance gives a wide range of interactive opportunities for actors and spectators during the performance.

INTRODUCTION

In art, performance art is a performance presented to an audience traditionally interdisciplinary. Performance may be scripted or unscripted, random or carefully orchestrated; spontaneous or otherwise carefully planned with or without audience participation. The performance can be live or via media; the performer can be present or absent. It can be any situation that involves four basic elements: time, space, the performer's body, or presence in a medium, and a relationship between performer and audience. Performance art can happen anywhere, in any venue or setting and for any length of time. The actions of an individual or a group at a particular place and in a particular time constitute the work. Interactivity signifies effective collaboration of various technologies and media in the execution of a performance. There are many art forms that exhibit the characteristics of interactivity in its performance. Kerala has got a great tradition of folk performance and culture like Theyyam, Kummattikali, Padayani...etc. Though these are not plays as such they carry a lot of resemblance with play. All these performances have high degree of interactivity. Performers and audience are interacting together as a part of the performance. Interactivity in performance arts took a turn in the advent of technology making the performance even more complex. Performances in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have often been characterized by a converging of media forms, creating pieces that blend and blur the lines between the various media these performances employ.

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In the past century, film, radio, and video technologies gave rise to new forms of dramatic expression and a global entertainment industry. In the past decade, interactive media technologies have been producing an artistic and cultural revolution of similar, if not greater, proportions (Saltz, 2001). Interactive media are giving birth to new art forms, and the practice and history of theatre has a great deal to contribute to these new forms. The way the current digital artists valorize the concept of "interactivity" relates closely to the way theatre and performance artists have long valorized the concept of "liveness." Digital artists strive to define interactive experiences in much the same way, and perhaps for many of the same reasons, as did creators of Happenings and environmental theatre in the 1960s (Saltz, "Interaction").

INTERACTIVITY AND THEATRE

Media are many and their right convergence at a single performance can enhance the audience's experience. Our society's modalities of communication are rapidly changing. Large screens are installed in many public spaces, ranging from apartments, to shopping malls, to houses, to theatre stages and museums. In same way, the age of technology has enhanced the interactive performance in theatre shape differently the thinking or mind of the people who are involved in it. Thus, Dramatic expression in the entertainment sector has got enhanced and made the theatre experience better and more interesting to the people. New Media's capacity for interactivity provides theatre practitioners fresh opportunities to include the audience in the process of creation and empower them with the ability to direct their own experience of the action.

In the twentieth century art and performance, spectators have been required to actively participate in the collaborative process of producing symbolic meaning. Interactivity offers the audience the power not only to interpret the artwork but, individually or collectively, to change, navigate, negotiate and in different ways recreate the artwork. Interests among the people in the theatre are increased because of the interactive performance only. Interactive performance is considered as the new form of theatre that takes activities and traditional theatre forms in to the new form with introduction of new technologies and activities. In relation to theatre practice, the term interactive has come to develop two particular usages. Firstly, interactivity can be used to indicate interplay between the performers and media technologies. Motion-capture technologies enable performers to interact with media programs to choreograph a performative text composed of images or sound responses, using their own movement to motivate computer-based reactions. Here the audience remain physically passive, with the effective use of interactive technologies designed to enhance the stage scenography and create a more dynamic visual and audio display.

The term interactivity in relation to theatre practice is more commonly, and historically, recognised as the relationship between the audience and the performance, and it is the participation of the audience in a performance and interactivity they experience. The audience is very much an active participant in the completion of the work, but is in no way mistaken for the creator or producer of the work. While this crucial distinction between artist and audience has been significantly eroded in some experimental performance work, it is in digital media and the internet where it has all but disappeared: a fluidity between audience and performer occurs in the online world. In traditional theatre, performance is limited to a particular stage area and the action of the play happens without any interaction with audience, they considered as passive observers. Conversely, in interactive theatre, performance may happen amidst of audience members, and often involves the audience in more active roles. They may be asked to hold props, supply performance suggestions, share the action's real-world, or become the characters in the performance. In addition, the audience may be asked to participate in altering the structure of the play altogether by taking part in a collective vote to help lead the plot in a new direction. Interactive theatre is a theatrical form that breaks the fourth wall that traditionally separates the performers from the audience both physically and verbally.

Interactive theatre is not a new genre performance, but its popularity has exploded. Tricky to define but characterised by an active, physical relationship between audience and production, it often incorporates a site-specific venue around which the audience is free to roam. Interactive theatre is extraordinary: engaging, exhilarating and transcendent. In theatre, the interactive performance is based on different things such as the acting of the participants, expression of the people, use of technology, experience, environment of the theatre, topic of the interest of the theatre, communication skills etc. these things make the theatre performance interactive and interesting (Aarseth, 1997). The invention of new technology and applications for communication in the last century totally changed the human communication system. Social networking, Video conferencing, Virtual reality etc. made these changes possible.

These technological changes affected in theatre performance also. The theatre is a performing art, in the earlier days we have a tradition of theatre performance that every one have to gathered in a particular venue at given time to share live experience of theatre performance. The convergence of theatre with new media technologies has led to this social and cultural activity taking place in a virtual world. Internet and new media technology is not only a transmission or distribution medium its used as a space for performance it self. Lots of performance are happening in real time both virtual space and real space. This creative convergence is effectively applying in theatre and new media technologies. It is not about only making a stage performance accessible to an online audience, it is about discovering new ways of making and presenting theatre, and new artist-audience relationships in these new theatrical-contexts. These inventions made revolutionary changes in the traditional theatre performance methods. Multimedia has been described as the defining medium for the twenty first century, but the inferences of the term multimedia have become many and are often non-specific, particularly when the term is used in conjunction with theatre. Multimedia theatre extends focus outside the boundary of mediated production to also include within its sphere of reference performance that occurs in real space, utilising digital technologies alongside the live performer. Such works utilise and problematic digital media whilst adhering to the conventions of staged theatre or live art. There have been many attractive titles attached to experimental performance practice that utilises technological media; cybertheatre, mixed media theatre, intermedial or transmedial theatre, as well as terms for media-based performance: 'video performance', 'networked performance', 'multimedia installation', 'new media performance', and 'computer theatre'. All these practices, including the field of virtual theatre, are grouped under the rubric of 'multimedia theatre (School of Media Film and Theatre University of New South Wales, 2007)

The term 'multimedia intermedia theatre' has been selected here for its implication that the field of study is generally characterised by the use of media technologies within a theatrical context or in a performative mode. Multimedia is defined by the collective qualities of integration, interactivity, hypermedia, immersion, and narrativity. While these qualities characterise the field of multimedia technology (School of Media Film and Theatre University of New South Wales, 2007), they are connected to and extend evolutionary trends within experimental theatre practice during the last century, suggesting that multimedia theatre is not an incidental or fortuitous phenomenon, but is a culturally embedded creative practice

Features of interactive theatre performance

- Theatre interactive performance is the role of the scripting in the theatre play. Script decides about what the play needs to be based on, what type of communication needs among the participants, and how to perform with the group of the participants, therefore scripting is a matter of fact that describes the public activity.
- The use of high end technology, in the theatre world is very important cause now the trend has been changed and for making the interactive media or theatre

performance interactive it is highly recommended to use the new or latest innovation in the media technology and theatre production.

- There is strong relation between the body, members, actions, object and technology in the theatre performance to make it more effective and interactive.

Conclusion

The primary focus of this paper, however, is the role of interactive media in theatre--"theatre" here refers to the old fashioned, non participatory performance genre in which a group of live performers gathers before a group of live spectators to enact a scripted play. Interactive theatre has brought about a paradigm shift in the concept of performance art. The new generation theatre has been leaving no stone unturned to ensure that the theatrical activity that they do

arrives a consensus between performer and audience as well as the performance and media. Media which hold a superior position here erase the boundary between expression and experience of art forms.

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