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the oudeis news

The March 1997 First Edition

March 1997

March made us travel and left us colourful...

The changing of the perception of theatre produces a new form: Theatre as Suspended Space

Which leaves quite a few Austrian students stunned...

Choros leader and best man Santiago became a proud father...

And the Ars Electronica Festival increased our travel expenses

Theatre As Suspended Space

The stage in its traditional from, the physical space comprised of prosarch, rigging, curtain-calls, seating etc., is under attack. The 20th Century brought with the ability to transform theatre to the screen and, more recently, on to the Internet / by *Andrew Garton*

Cubism rejected the way of seeing; the Futurists attempted to transcend the doctrines of capitalism, bourgeois individuality and utilitarianism. As capitalism was settling in for the forthcoming century, artists throughout Europe were gaining ground in their pursuit for new forms of expression. They would deconstruct the art and function of representation and challenge the status quo with a critique that established the avant garde, the fringe and experimental arts as essential to the free-flow of imagination.

Traditionally the performing arts is comprised of three essential components - the performer, the audience, the stage. The performer engages the attention of the audience; the audience observes and responds to the gestures and prose articulated by the performer; the stage provides a formal structure within which the realtionship bewteen performer and audience is cultivated and sustained. Separation from the creative process is perpetuated whilst the stage imposes its own criteria upon it, but this is rapidly changing.

Theatre as suspended space works towards disengaging both audience and performer from traditional forms of theatre and the production there-of, towards a “spacial poetry“ (Antonin Artaud).

Suspending assumption, or belief within the context of theatre and the stage we find the suspended space. Nowhere is it more explored than in the interconnections of communi-cation and information media, like a spider on caffeine, frantically encircling the globe. Some would call it Cyberspace, but this already contains far too many assumptions, most of which have little to do with the media-sphere, and in particular, the Internet. Both the computer and the modem have given artists the means with which to explore entirely new spaces (space suspended in a notion of time we have yet fully come to grasp), virtual constructs and of course, the imagination. The concept of Internet Theatre was probably best introduced into the world by The Hamnet Players. In December 1993 they created a *participatory performance* with a production of Hamnet, a 80-line version of Hamlet.

The composer Tod Machover and the MIT Media Labs premiered The Brain Opera in New York, July 1996. Described as an all-encompassing emotional and psychological experience, both online and live (audiences) were able to participate in the evolution of the opera. Although the success of the process was hard to gauge, there was an attempt to redefine the traditional notion of opera and performance space. It would draw its audience "into the mysteries of music and the human mind, to discover and explore the interplay of sensory perception, musical structure, language, memory, thinking and emotion, and actively take part in creating a mutlimedia work of art in which the composer´s musical concepts will be enhanced and transformed by material emerging from the individual and collective contributions of the audience."

The author is currently producing two net-based performance installations, the web opera Ausländer und Staatenlose and The Sensorium. Ausländer und Staatenlose is comprised of an interrelated series of images, sounds and text viewed in real-time over the Internet. A live performance will be net-worked to various locations including the Ars Electronica Centre in November 1997. The score is totally generative meaning that it may never be heard the same twice. The Sensorium, the culmination of several projects, is a living multi-media space, an immersive hyper-reality space evolving out of real-time events processed into an ever mutating experience. Three Sensorium projects have been produced, one of which, Sensorium Connect, is a radio - Internet composition which will be broadcast simultaneously on national radio in Australia and over the Internet. Afterwards, the piece will remain accessible via a web site as mutating soundscape, re-generating itself 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for up to 4 months. The Sensorium, scheduled for release at Ars Electronica 1998, is perhaps the definitive theatre as suspended space, but it is also space as instrument. The audience, upon entering the Sensorium, will immediately be integrated into the space. The mere presence will add to the evolution of the space, its visual and aural components, diminishing further the separation bewteen audience and performer / performance.

Theatre Change

The theatre is changing. Not before our eyes, but in our perception of its traditional physical space. It is a participatory change. Reading this article contributes to the process, engaging the space, whether you participate via the INternet, or never have anything to do with computers. The suspended space is expanding and the physical world as we believe we know will change. The distance between audience and performer is fast becoming reclaimed physical space. We are all engaged in the space of change, "giving birth to a spectacle (to) fascinate the mind".

This article is an abridged version of a lecture held in Vienna in March 1997. For a longer version, see the web version of Status Quo (at http://www.oudeis.org/status), from where links will point to the other projects mentioned.
Andrew Garton´s net opera "Ausländer und Staatenlose" can be visited at http://www.peg.apc.org/~agarton/auslander

Austria Emends Cooperation

The Ars Electronica´s interest in oudeis has triggered many new developments. The financial possibilites provided by the biggest computer arts festival in Austria are not easily ignored, and so, a delegation of Oudeis Vienna have twice made their way to Linz, where the Ars is located. What happened on this quadruple journey (twice in real life and twice virtually), is an epos of its own / by *Karin Mayer*

On February 25, 1997, Monika, Gernot and I drove to Linz, towards our first RL meeting with Gerfried Stocker, head of the Ars Electronica Center (AEC) since 1995. I only knew him from official photographs in the Ars´ prospects, a young man with long, brown hair and a pleasant aura. But none of us knew how the meeting would turn out. We guessed and hoped that he would not be the typical clerk type, in his interviews and statements he sounded quite open minded. We hoped that this would not turn out to be another talk with someone who had hardly heard the word Internet before, because we were tired of that - and we needed money. On the highway, someone suddenly asked ""What do we actually want from him?" We decided that the best answer to that would be "All that he can give us!" After having shown our great technical skills at the check in of the AEC, we climbed the stairs of the blue hallway to the second floor, where Stocker´s office was. A friendly hand shake and an invitation to the sunny cafe of the AEC helped us to enjoy the relaxed atmosphere, even more so, because the AEC was closed for the public that day and we were undisturbed. The AEC is situated right at the banks of the Danube, and so we could watch the lazy waters and the boats passing, which were accompanied by circling doves. Gernot explained our project once again to Gerfried, and for the first time we had the impression that someone actually understood our project and had an open mind for our problems. Gerfried immediately offered cooperation with the Ars, leaving it to us to decide how this was to be done after a discussion with our world wide partners. Possibilities were to show a prototype on Ars 1997 and premiere our play in 1998, in the course of the European Culture Month. That would mean to postpone our premiere for a year! What would our partners say to that? It is possible that Gerfried was slightly puzzled by our cool reactions to his generous offers, but we were worried and, also, could not grasp the importance of these offers at once. On our way home, we kept repeating: We do the Ars Electronica! We are going to be on the Ars Electronica! On that very evening we had our regular MOOMeeting, in the course of which we discussed the new perspectives with our world wide partners. There were many ifs and buts, but no decision was made. On May 18 we had our next RL meeting. Professional as we are we managed to check in and found ourselves in the cafe again. We talked about the possibility of staging a prototype on Ars 1997: two stages (either Linz / Linz or Linz / Vienna), on which two or three scenes are performed, and a video or CD-ROM documentation of the process (which we could use for the search for further sponsoring). This way, we could set a meeting with our world wide partners during rehearsals in August 97 and try to solve remaining problems face to face. April 7, we will be returning to Linz in order to present our plans to Gerfried. Afterwards, we will know whether we will have a location to rehearse our play in Linz and who of the Ars will work with us. In any way, it will be a good and interesting cooperation we are all looking foward to.

A theaterproject that shows Odysseus´ journey all around the world on RL stages and one Cyberstage - at the same time, connected via the Internet.
Work in progress.

A Monthly Internet Publication providing background information, news and links concerning **Computer Culture** and the progress of
oudeis.
A World Wide Odyssey.

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Responsible for the contents: Monika Wunderer and Georg Leyrer

Silence in Suspended Space

Vienna's Department of Theater is becoming a non-traditional Theaterspace? What would you think of that / by Monika Wunderer

Visiting Australian composer, writer and performer Andrew Garton transformed Vienna´s Lecture room into a demonstration of *Suspended Space* at March 21st after a long night at Public Netbase / t0 (*see Status Quo February 1997*), where he appeared amidst an installation of new media work, animation and multimedia from graduates of the Centre for Animation and Interactive Media, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. Two times people in Vienna had the opportunity to see short films, animation and a performance of some pieces Andrew has composed recently. Since 1978, Garton has worked extensively within the fields of experimental electronic composition and avant garde theatre. In the past year, Garton has collaborated with the artist Stelarc on his Internet based performance and installation, Ping Body, as well as creating generative soundscapes for Stelarc's performance at the Cybermind Conference, Perth, Australia. Garton's 30 minute generative composition for radio and real-time audio streaming over the Internet, Sensorium Connect, is being produced by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's The Listening Room. It will be broadcast from mid-May, 1997.

Vienna's audience followed Andrews performance of his shouting pieces in a distanced way. They saw him lit by two small torches, scanning around like a mouse on a computer screen. He used only two blue buckets as props - a simple way of transforming any room into a theater space. This performance, left the students of Vienna's Department of Theater in deep silence. Andrew stepped out of the theater space, beginning his lecture. But not even his questions after the interest of the people coming to his lecture could break the silence. It took another half an hour until people began to talk to him. Still, with the willingness to let an innovative event like this in the beautiful ancient Lecture rooms be organized, it was shown how to step out of the dust that easily covers a study like this and to give people visiting our country the opportunity to show their work.