http://www.oudeis.org/status

STATUS QUO

the oudeis news

ATS 1.-/US$ 0,1- /DM 0,12
AP 0,1-/ BR 0,1-/AU$ 0,13

The Reference Edition

Reference

Theatre, Culture and the Internet

The expanding net and its ever growing importance and popularity made artists, writers and actors from all over the world explore the new artistic and theatrical possibilities, creating new ways of staging, writing and performing plays with the use of computers and international communication media. This monthly newspaper was founded in late 1996 to provide a possibility for publishing articles and essays on these developments, giving an insight into Internet culture, as well as advertisements and reviews of past, current and planned theatre projects in the Internet / by *Georg Leyrer*, Vienna, Austria

Status Quo originally set out as the ou*d*eis newsletter, keeping the members of its world wide team informed about the ongoings of this revolutionary work in progress theatre project (http:// www.oudeis.org). Because this team naturally was interested in other projects that make use of the Internet, a review section was soon included into the paper. Research and personal contacts established connections to many international artists like Rick Sacks (See page 6) and Australian based performer and actor Andrew Garton, who had an excerpt of his lecture on Theatre in Suspended Space printed in the March 1997 edition. This step outside of the ou*d*eis context soon gathered so much momentum that the Status Quo team decided in April 1997 to expand their pages from a solely ou*d*eis - internal update to a general Internet Culture newspaper. The extended Status Quo will focus on the cultural aspects of the Internet, especially on theatre and plays. It is supposed to become a discussion forum of artists and writers and to give them the chance to present their work to a world wide audience. The Status Quo pages are planned to grow into a focal point of the computer theatre scene, helping performers and artists not to get lost in the seemingly unlimited vastness of the Net, linking performers and audience and making it easier to establish contacts and working arrangements. Performances will be announced in our Computer Culture Calendar and reviewed in one of the following editions, giving artists the chance to learn about the reactions and the opinions of the audience. In addition to that, theoretical articles and essays on cultural developments, new ways of artistic expression via the Net or outside of

(continued on page 2)

it, technical innovations and solutions for certain artistic ideas, on the future of culture in the ever - accelerating pace of life and on whatever else comes to anyone's mind will be featured..

All the Status Quo editions are available in the World Wide Web at http://www.oudeis.org/status, where each of them is archived and indexed for further reference. Furthermore, every edition can be downloaded as a printable version in different printer and file formats, so that it can be easily distributed world wide.

You are welcome to contact us if you want to publish an article or announce a play of yours, or if you want to review a performance you have attended. We would appreciate it very much if you participated in enlarging our newspaper and providing a cultural meeting and discussion point.

Our mail address is **mailto: status@oudeis.org**.

Inventing Oudeis

The ten year journey of Odysseus gives an excellent metaphor for the theories of acceleration und globalisation. On real stages the elimination of spatial distance will take place, and in that, the end of travelling and the gathering of mankind in a global village / by *Gernot Lechner*, Vienna, Austria

A performance on seven stages spread across the world, worked out on a rehearsal stage, scattered in reality and combined in virtuality. The Odyssey will stand for travelling the world in routing seconds, the acceleration of ten years to one hour real time. The theatrical unity of place and time and the unity of the dimensions of space and time will be established and disolved again. The interpretation of the Odyssey is in part subordinate to the disolving of space, and also to the interaction of real and virtual actors on one stage and the interaction of several stages with each other. The actor, who normally is supposed to perform his theatrical work uninfluenced by his actual emotions and feelings, is attached to sensors measuring skin resistance, pulse and heart rate. In transposing this data into electricity and using defined parameters, the light cone representing the actor on the other stages will show his actual emotions.

Another crucial element in the artistic concept is the interactive choros which gives the world wide Internet users the possibility to participate in the performance. Between the episodia, which have been limited to seven in order to be able to abridge the Epos to a coherent storyline, the choros will take his part, which was enhanced from the active part in Greek tradegy to the interactive part in oudeis.The storyline itself arises from a restructuring of the Epos to a chronological dialogue. Several text versions have arisen, following the formal criteria of repeatability and intensity of the verses, and the similarity in sound and expression of the translations into different languages. The story has to be displayed and illustrated verbally on the screens, because by that a parallel to the verbal medium Internet is established. Long live oudeis.

Gernot Lechner is the director and artistic head of oudeis. His long experience in theatre making and directing was gathered in countless eralier projects which included an adaption of `Parzival` and, most recently, the children´s theatre project `Die Karawane`.

Material of Acting

By speaking of theater, we are speaking of an event that is made out of various materials. Creative human beings create a story and fiction for other humans, using tools like stage set or props - or actors / by *Monika Wunderer*, Vienna, Austria

Already with puppet theater a form of theater evolved that tried to replace part of the human component. Puppet shows have been a form of cultural communication for a long time before becoming a form of art in the 20th century. In this theatrical field the human body is not visible any more but still necessary behind the strings that are guiding the puppet. Influenced by the art of puppet theater, Heinrich von Kleist wrote his essay "Über das Marionettentheater" in 1810, a theoretical debate focusing on the material "human body" in theater in a more artificial way. The aesthetics of using synthetic material began to be discussed. In the 1920s, the works of the Russian director Vsevolod Meyerhold, the English theater maker Edward Gordon Craig or the Italian Enrico Prampolini show a wide range of experiments with the actor. The positions of these theories range from a total replacement of the human being to a way of showing artificial aspects in the natural human body itself. While Meyerhold tried to use the human body with its flesh, muscles and bones as a machine, Craig went even further in declaring that the actor, with his accidental nature, is obsolete and can not be used as a material for making art. And Prampolini, following the theories of Craig, suggested replacing the human actor by objects or light.

Monika Wunderer is a Vienna based theatre theoretician and dramaturge. In April 1997 she finished her thesis about theatre and the Internet. She has performed in several Internet based plays, including Steve Schrum´s Net Seduction and Twyla Mitchell - Shiner´s A Place For Souls. Current projects include oudeis - a world wide odyssey.

The understanding of the human body on stage has recently changed towards a less materialistic and more virtual point of view. The actual environment we live in is currently being enlarged by a virtual part.. Theater too is on its way exploring this new territory and the new laws of the material of an actor in virtual environments. The participants of a performance no longer have to be at the same physical place. If a theatrical piece uses the Internet as a stage - when a new view of the Internet is provided and the medium becomes a space itself - the stage design becomes the interface that the audience gets on its computer screen. Those who are acting and watching remain human beings as in real space.

Performances have already taken place in the text-based environments IRC - the Internet Relay Chat - and MOO (Multi User Object Orientated Dimension), and in even more "colorful" surroundings like the two dimensional chat place "Palace" or with the use of CU-SEEME software, which includes real time video and audio.

The material of the natural space is still included into the process of creating and shaping the virtual space. Using computer mediated communication and furthermore using and understanding the space that is created by electronic networking does not replace the human user. The human body does still exist even in a virtual environment. Theater in virtual space makes use of a new form of presence of the actor, but an actor that under this "second skin" (Gerfried Stocker) is a human being. What he or she has to bring with is new knowledge how to stage his or her body while being in the second skin. In theater, the needs and limitations of human beings have to be known when planning a performance. Not only the actor but also the spectator brings a human body to the playhouse. Works of artists like Robert Wilson have shown recently how staging a long play changes the perception of the audience and by this influences the play. Now in the enlarged environment also the dicta of the virtual presence of the human beings have to be taken into account. Theater has changed through the new Information Culture. The modified focuses of the audience makes an exploration of the presence and the usage of the human body in virtual space necessary. This is still in its very beginning but ever more theatrical productions deal successfully with new ways of including a world that has ever more virtual elements.

No Epiphany Required

It seems that as the course of an artistic project moves forward there is always a moment when the focus moves back to the fundamental questions and issues. The result of this journey, if successful, is the discovery of an old truth, or a new truth, or perhaps a new perspective of a truth / by *Dan Zellner*, Chicago, Illinois

This new discovery then drives the project to its end. So it is with Oudeis. When I joined the dialogue of the Oudeis project the discussion ranged from technical considerations to language concerns but always the dialogue would return to the fundamental questions - What is the nature of theatre? What is the nature of the Internet? And how can theatre and the Internet work together? Together, the work continues. It has become very apparent that the machines we use for communication are mere extensions of the humans that work them.

Fundamental truths of theatre collaboration hold true. Production considerations, concerns regarding the audience, and all the typical elements of theatre projects are present. These new ventures remain works of theatre. The performances are many times just as ephemeral. Computers continually develop and the tools are always being upgraded and changed.

The Greek civilization left behind marble buildings and scrolls. The Digital civilization will leave behind computer towers and discs with 1's and 0's on them. My attraction to the oudeis project stems from its combination of a classic tale with new technology. The old and the new move side by side to find a truth for us today.

With hard work and a commitment to addressing the fundamental issues no epiphany is required... it is inevitable.

Dan Zellner is currently working on several projects in his Studio Z, a nonprofit organization dedicated to bringing theatre into the 21st century using new communications technology.

StatusQuo
A monthly Internet Publication providing background information, news, reviews and links concerning the world of Internet theater and culture and the progress of
oudeis.
a world wide odyssey.

http://www.oudeis.org/status

Responsible for the contents: Monika Wunderer and Georg Leyrer

Sublime Endeavor

In the theater the playwright is god, in films the director. In oudeis the only gods you will find are those from Greek mythology. For this is a collaboration in its purest and most sublime form, a gathering of people from around the world all contributing their talents to an ambitious project that is at times frustrating but more often rewarding / by *L. H. Grant*, California, USA

Of course, collaboration does not always mean agreement. There have been heated exchanges, misunder-standings, and hurt feelings. Probably an unavoidable consequence of assembling so many gifted people with strong opinions and the ability to articulate them. Still, the overwhelming feeling generated from this enterprise has not been one of conflict but one of warmth and honesty. This is due in large measure to our team members in Vienna who have done their best to keep the lines of communication open, even in times of worker strikes, hardware problems and MOO crashes.

Now, as a playwright, my first love is the theater, where the world is one of my own making, where the artistic vision springs from a single source and where there are no creative compromises. Having said that, I must also state that working on oudeis has and will continue to be a richly rewarding experience. I have come to realize that this project is more than just a group of talented people joining together to stage a series of performances. It is about communicating with others from around the globe, learning about different ideas, and working together for a common goal. However, when all is said and done, what I will value most from this experience is the friends I have come to know and respect.

L. H. Grant, American playwright and author, is responsible for Text Design and Realisation in oudeis - a world wide odyssey. He has written and published numerous plays (`BLISS, MISFITS AND MADMEN`) and books, and also is involved in independent film making.

Music is dressed silence

in tragedy, actors sang and spoke at the same time: melopea. in tragedy, chorus' costumes were lighter, so they could dance. in oudeis, sounds may be produced in any stereo position, this way the cyberchor will dance around the stage / by *Santiago Pereson*, Buenos Aires, Argentina

in tragedy, only the chorus would sing. if music is dressed silence, any sound will be music, and silence (which is not possible) will be nakedness. in tragedy, the chorus couldn't modify the action, but would comment to it, adding meaning. in oudeis, any spectator may send a sound to the stages, colaborating in this way with the actors, adding meaning. in virtuality, everything has a cause, an origin. in oudeis, sounds produced by the cyberchor may be recorded human voices singing in greek, producing a world chorus. in tragedy, the chorus was homogeneous. in oudeis, the virtual location of a spectator may determine which voice will be heard, giving it an origin, a cause. in tragedy, there was a structure to be followed. in oudeis, the structure may determine which kind of voice will be heard, thus providing homogeneity. in oudeis, the structure may impose a limit on the amount of sounds to be produced, leaving ody-sseus alone, sensually un-dressing silence.

Santiago Pereson has studied piano, composition and arrangment in Buenos Aires. He focusses on the relation of literature and music. Currently he is work-ing on `Quisiera un castillo sangriento` – a computer generated sound based on texts by Júlio Cortázar.

The MetaMOOphosis Brings Kafka Into The Net

Rick Sacks, musician and artist, almost singlehandedly created this MOObased theater project which is inspired by Franz Kafka´s "Metamorphosis". Actors and audience move freely through the Samsa House, using selected lines from the original novella as a starting point for Kafkaesque improvisation.

Rick Sacks arranged two preview performances to fine tune the program and get rid of the last bugs (not Gregor, though). After we have had the possibility to speak to him in RL during his European tour with the Canadian group Arraymusic in late 1996, he agreed to this email interview.

Status Quo: You transformed Kafka´s Metamorphosis into Rick Sacks´ MetaMOOphosis. Why did you take a work of Kafka?

Rick Sacks: I think I first thought about Kafka as net theatre because of the term 'bug in the machine' and because The Metamorphosis has always been a favourite of mine. I first read it in high school and was sent to the principal's office when, in an inspired moment where I wanted to show my appreciation for the work, I came scuttling out from behind the classroom door vocalizing, "screeee screee" startling and irritating my teacher.

The early discussions at collab-l resulted in a number of ideas including the Metamorphosis. I 'picked up the ball' and ran with it.

Also, the text based MOO environment is ideal for The Metamorphosis in that Kafka insisted that his 'insect' never be portrayed graphically. He wanted to leave the 'vermin' to the imagination of the reader.

SQ:What is your personal perception of your position? What part would you lay the most emphasis on ?

Rick Sacks: At first I saw myself as a facilitator, an organizer who would collaborate on the project and act as a coordinator. The role of 'creator / director' developed as I found that I was alone in the MOO most of the time. I began running into programming problems but was determined to implement certain features and to learn how to program them.

After many hours I solved some problems. Working with Michael Young, I found a collaborator and now believe that my position has changed from sole creator / director to director of a work created in collaboration with Michael Young.

SQ. The Samsa's House you created exists permanently. Does this imply that the theatre performance never ends (and, thus, never starts)?

Rick Sacks: That the performance never starts or ends is certainly a possibility. The costumes are designed to return to the costume closet on the exit (from the house) of the player and anyone can grab the costume and resume. So if the house is occupied the performance continues. (if there's no one there who would know?)

Of course special event performances can have specific beginnings and endings. One of the features I will eventually implement is an apple, that embeds in Gregor's shell and eventually kill him.

SQ: Is the MetaMOOphosis theatre at all? Is the "location" in cyberspace an essential difference to conventional theatre?

Rick Sacks: The use of any space, be it a theatre, a barn or a virtual 'house' can have multiple purposes.

I intended that the Samsa House be used primarily as a theatre space for performers and audience to share a common experience but others can use the site for different purposes.

Educators can bring classrooms into the site as a supplement to the reading of The Metamorphosis.

The site can also be used as a model for other, similar sites which incorporate role playing and aliased player names to explore other literary and theatre works, philosophical tracts, religious allegory, politics and social stereotyping.