

Motion Capture in the Metaverse - embodied co-present hybrid theater

Vistisen, Peter; Krishnasamy, Rameshnath; Nikolic, Lana Tankosa

Published in:
Synaesthetic Syntax Symposium IV

Publication date:
2023

[Link to publication from Aalborg University](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Vistisen, P., Krishnasamy, R., & Nikolic, L. T. (2023). Motion Capture in the Metaverse - embodied co-present hybrid theater. In J. Hagler, W. Hochleitner, & B. Hosea (Eds.), *Synaesthetic Syntax Symposium IV: The Ghost vs the Machine*

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal -

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us at vbn@aub.aau.dk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Motion Capture in the Metaverse - embodied co-present hybrid theater

Peter Vistisen, Aalborg University

Rameshnath Krishnasamy, Aalborg University

Lana Nikolic, White Hole Theater

ABSTRACT

We present the 'Metastage' - a hybrid stage composed of a physical performance space, mediated and augmented through Metaverse-enabling technologies such as motion capture, virtual reality, and virtual production. We adopt a broad definition of 'The Metaverse' as an emerging concept, encompassing not only 100% virtual worlds, but also virtual, augmented and mixed reality. As such, we examine the Metaverse as various interconnected digital platforms (Ritterbusch & Teichmann 2023) enabling new forms of human connections and real-time performative potentials across multiple devices and platforms (Proulx et al 2022; Park & Kim, 2022).

The Metastage is a conceptual platform designed for hybrid theatrical performances, which involve actors wearing motion-capture suits, performing in front of live audiences who experience the performance through both physical and virtual reality elements, while also being live streamed to virtual reality audiences at other locations. The audience is able to participate in the performance through game-like interactions at crucial points, affecting various parts of the performance. Thus, the Metastage constitutes a mix of live non-digital performance, augmented virtual reality motion-capture performances, and distributed virtual reality to remote audiences - affected by the audience's interactions throughout. The case for the Meta-stage is the experimental theater platform, White Hole Theater, and the three danish digital hybrid performances: 'Valdemars Story', 'The Battle #1', and 'The Battle #2'. We present how the Metastage has been utilized in the three cultural heritage-inspired theater performances in 2021-2023, where historical dramatic events from Denmark in 1146 are mixed into modern day life through the hybrid performance (White Hole Theater 2023).

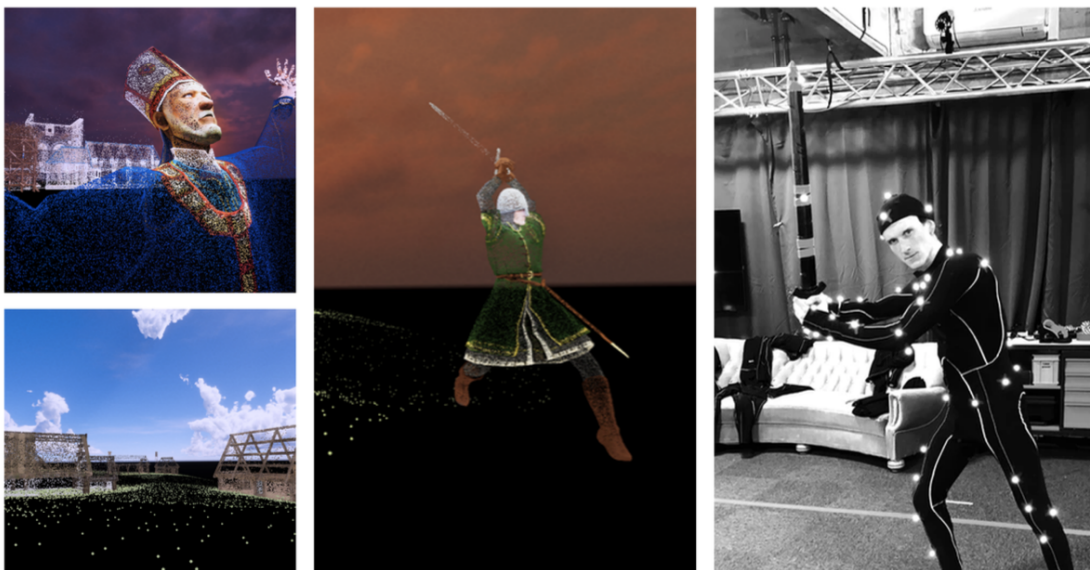


Figure 1: Footage from both inside and outside the Metastage during the production of 'The Battle #2'.

We position this among current contemporary state of art in exploring immersive mediums as part of live performance arts (Montagud et al 2020, Iudova-Romanov 2023) and the role of virtuality in theatrical performances as a whole (Popat 2016). The performative arts have long been trail blazers in combining digital technologies with live performances (Dixon, 2014; Jernigan et al., 2014; PluginHUMAN, Delbridge & Timpkins 2012), and recent examples show how audience participation and performative interactions can be part of live theater performance.

The project's central challenge has been to create engaging shared experiences for both live and remote audiences, while balancing the physical presence of the actors and their motion capture and animated counterparts. This addresses a persistent issue of virtuality in performance arts - the question of choreography becoming intertwined with animation (e.g. Calvert & Mah 1996) and whether the embodied experience of theater is affected by the 'noise' of immersive interfaces (Krivospitskaya 2011; Smith 2019; Popat 2016). This is in turn to be judged against the augmentation potential of animating the performance space, as well as the inclusive potential of audiences interacting and participating remotely, making culture available beyond the availability of the physical stage itself.

From audience research, production post mortems, and plans for further iterations of the Metastage, we discuss these issues, and propose that the potential for embodied, co-present hybrid stages stretches beyond theater alone, but sets the stage for new ways of utilizing animation and digital media for a broad range of performative live events.

REFERENCES

- Dixon, S. (2006). A history of virtual reality in performance. *International Journal of Performance Arts and Digital Media*, 2(1), 23–54. <https://doi.org/10.1386/padm.2.1.23/1>
- Jernigan, D., Fernandez, S., Pensyl, R., & Shangping, L. (2009). Digitally augmented reality characters in live theatre performances. *International Journal of Performance Arts and Digital Media*, 5(1), 35–49. https://doi.org/10.1386/padm.5.1.35_1
- Montagud M., Segura-Garcia J., De Rus J. A., and Jordaoón R. F.. 2020. Towards an Immersive and Accessible Virtual Reconstruction of Theatres from the Early Modern: Bringing Back Cultural Heritage from the Past. *Association for Computing Machinery*.
- Krivospitskaya Ya. V.. 2011. Contemporary theatre art as a phenomenon of virtual reality. *Bulletin of Culture and Arts* 2, 26 (2011), 79–80
- Calvert T. W. and Mah S. H.. 1996. *Choreographers as Animators: Systems to Support Composition of Dance*. Prentice-Hall.
- Iudova-Romanov Kateryna, Humenyuk Tetiana, Horevalov Serhii, Honcharuk Serhii, and Mykhalov Volodymyr. 2023. Virtual Reality in Contemporary Theatre. *J. Comput. Cult. Herit.* 15, 4, Article 75 <https://doi.org/10.1145/3524024>
- Smith, M. (2019). Shifting modes: Spectatorship, theatrical virtual reality and motion capture through the experience of Fatherland XR. *Virtual Creativity*, 9(1–2), 43–61. https://doi.org/10.1386/vcr_00004_1
- Popat, S. (2016). Missing in Action: Embodied Experience and Virtual Reality. *Theatre Journal*, 68(3), 357–378.

Ritterbusch, G. D., & Teichmann, M. R. (2023). Defining the Metaverse: A Systematic Literature Review. IEEE Access, 11, 12368–12377. <https://doi.org/10.1109/ACCESS.2023.3241809>

Park, S.-M., & Kim, Y.-G. (2022). A Metaverse: Taxonomy, Components, Applications, and Open Challenges. IEEE Access, 10, 4209–4251. <https://doi.org/10.1109/ACCESS.2021.3140175>

Proulx, M., Ask, J., Bennet, M., Gownder, J. P., & Truog, D. (2022). The State Of The Metaverse. Forrester. <https://www.forrester.com/report/the-state-of-the-metaverse/RES177277>

PluginHUMAN - Immersive Art. (n.d.). PluginHUMAN. Retrieved September 14, 2022, from <https://pluginhuman.com/>

White Hole Theater. 2023. <https://www.whiteholetheater.dk/watch>. Accessed 23.5.2023

Delbridge, M. J. and J. Tompkins (2012). Reproduction, Mediation, and Experience: Virtual Reality, Motion Capture and Early Modern Theatre. SPACE-EVENT-AGENCY- EXPERIENCE. online, Centre for Practise as Research in Theatre, University of Tampere.