# CyPosium celebrates cyberformance

*An online symposium on 12 October 2012 will celebrate and discuss the field of cyberformance - live, online performance - that has evolved over the last two decades.*

The CyPosium aims to create a space for artists, researchers and interested participants to discuss the field of cyberformance, referring to and remembering past works. The programme includes nine presentations and an introduction, and facilitated discussion sessions. Some of the pioneers of online performance will discuss live internet works created in chatrooms during the mid-1990s, alongside artists currently working in a variety of purpose-built cyberformance platforms.

The number and quality of proposals received made the selection process challenging, but this was also an affirmation of the timeliness of this event. There is now a considerable body of work, research and critical thinking in this field, and a desire amongst practitioners to share and discuss their experiences with their peers.

The CyPosium will open with an introduction by Maria Chatzichristodoulou, who is a cultural practitioner and digital performance scholar at the University of Hull (UK). There will then be three blocks, each consisting of three presentations followed by a facilitated discussion with the online audience, and breaks between each of the blocks. The CyPosium will begin at 15.00 GMT on Friday 12 October and finish at about 2am GMT; the complete schedule is available on the CyPosium web site. The CyPosium is free to attend and will be accessible via a standard internet connection and web browser.

For more information, visit www.cyposium.net or email info@cyposium.net

## Selected Presentations
(bios and abstracts are below)

**Introduction**
*Cyberformance? Digital or Networked Performance? Cybertheaters? Or Virtual Theatres? … or all of the above?*: Maria Chatzichristodoulou

**Block 1**
*Wirefire: A Complete History of Love in the Wires (parts 17–24):* Auriea Harvey and Michaël Samyn
*We Have Always Been Avatars, and Avatars Must Die*: Alan Sondheim
*More/Less Than a Cyberfession: A few theoretical short-(cir)cu(i)ts from Learn to hear through the lies of your eyes*: Miljana Perić

**Block 2**
*ATHEMOO and NetSeduction: Censorship and The Art of Sexting Before Cell Phones*: Stephen A. Schrum
*HEAD SHOT! Performative Interventions in Mixed Realities*: Joseph DeLappe
*So far, and yet, so close: Lessons from Telematic Improvisation*: Adriene Jenik

**Block 3**
*Re-Calling Home!*: ActiveLayers
*Ethernet Orchestra: Networked Intercultural Improvisation*: Roger Mills
*Transmittance — a telematic performance*: Maja Delak and Luka Prinčić

The cyposium is organised by Annie Abrahams, Christina Papagiannouli, Francesco Buonaiuto, Helen Varley Jamieson, Katarina DJ Urosevic, Martin Eisenbarth, Nathalie Fougeras, Suzon Fuks and Vicki Smith.

# Presenter Bios and Abstracts

### Cyberformance? Digital or Networked Performance? Cybertheaters? Or Virtual Theatres? … or all of the above?

**Maria Chatzichristodoulou** [aka Maria X] will give an introduction to cyberformance and the CyPosium, followed by a discussion. Maria is a cultural practitioner (curator, performer, producer, writer), Director of Postgraduate Studies and Lecturer in Theatre and Performance at the School of Arts and New Media, University of Hull, and holds a PhD in Art and Computational Technologies from Goldsmiths University of London. She is co-editor of the volume *Interfaces of Performance* (Ashgate, 2009) and the forthcoming volume *Intimacy Across Visceral and Digital Performance* (Palgrave MacMillan), which follows the Intimacy festival and Symposium that Maria initiated and co-directed in London (2007). She also co-editor of the forthcoming volume *From Black Box to Second Life: Theatre and Performance in Virtual Worlds*, which follows a day of round table discussions Maria initiated at the University of Hull (Scarborough, 2011).

**Abstract:** Steve Dixon, in the preface to his book *Digital Performance* (2007), acknowledges the problematic nature of the term, which is due to the wide-ranging applications of both its elements: 'digital' and 'performance'. According to Dixon, '"Digital" has become a loose and generic term (…) and the term "performance" has acquired wide-ranging applications and different nuances (…)' (p. x). Though the terms remain contested, there is no doubt that the last two decades have witnessed a proliferation of performance practices that unfold not in physical or proximal environments but online, in purpose-built platforms or appropriated virtual environments and worlds. This paper will offer a condensed art historical overview of the newly emergent genre of digital performance (or whatever else you want to call it), focusing in particular on performance practices that develop exclusively (or primarily) online.

### Wirefire: A Complete History of Love in the Wires (parts 17–24)

**Auriea Harvey** and **Michaël Samyn** started their collaboration in 1999. Harvey and Samyn have devoted their lives to the creation of elegant and emotionally rich interactive entertainment. As Entropy8Zuper! they created many websites and internet artworks, such as "Skinonskinonskin", a series of interactive love letters. "The Godlove Museum" which fuses love, religion, politics and sex, and "Wirefire" which was their web-based performance environment. In 2003 they founded independent game development studio Tale of Tales in Gent, Belgium, where they live and work, making genre defying videogames such as "The Endless Forest", "The Graveyard" and "The Path".

**Abstract:** "Wirefire" was an online performance that occurred between July 8, 1999 and January 9, 2003 every Thursday night, at midnight in Belgium. It began as a way for Auriea and Michaël to communicate with one another when she still lived in New York City, USA and he in Ronse, Belgium. Text chat seemed too limited. Video chat too factual. Desiring a communication channel that went beyond mere word and image they built one themselves. Believing in the network and their life that began there, this communication needed to be shared with others who were also searching for a meaning of love. Thus, "Wirefire" was built for: desire, intimacy and an audience.

### We Have Always Been Avatars, and Avatars Must Die

**Alan Sondheim** was born in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania; he lives with his partner, Azure Carter, in Brooklyn NY. A cross-disciplinary artist, writer, and theorist, he has exhibited, performed and lectured widely. In the past year, Sondheim has had a successful residency at Eyebeam Art + TechnologyCenter in New York; while there he worked with a number of collaborators on performances and sound pieces dealing with pain and annihilation. He also created a series of texts and 3d printing models of 'dead or wounded avatars.'

**Abstract:** It's dangerous to consider the virtual as a brave new world; the virtual has always been with us. But the lure now is the supposition that it engenders the potential of eternity, and escape from pain and death. In the meantime, the physical world is the Disaster of the Anthropocene. We must look, with open eyes, at the obdurate nature of the Real, through any means possible. We must accept our own deaths. I will discuss my work in virtual worlds and performance (with the collaboration of others) in this regard.

### More/Less Than a Cyberfession: A few theoretical short-(cir)cu(i)ts from Learn to hear through the lies of your eyes

**Miljana Perić** holds an MA in ethnomusicology from the Faculty of Music in Belgrade. As a student in the Theory of Arts and Media department at the Interdisciplinary PhD studies of the University of Arts in Belgrade, she works on her thesis named *Critical and Analytical Theory and Practice of the Activist Digital Theatre.*

**Abstract:** The basic conceptual structure of the critical textual cyberformance is organized around notions of the cyber-net-confessions as:
(1) an artist statement about her work in the form-of– or sound-like "confession",
(2) performance itself as theatricalising of a confession act, and
(3) questions around issue of con-versation (ie. chat) between performers (derived from the proposed formula of UpStage e-quality: cyberaudience+cyberplayers=cyberformers), which can be viewed, problematized and discussed as element of self-expressive and con-fessional creative processes.

### ATHEMOO and NetSeduction: Censorship and The Art of Sexting Before Cell Phones

**Stephen A. Schrum**, PhD is Associate Professor of Theatre Arts at Pitt-Greensburg. His research area is currently "The Perception of Presence in Virtual Performance," and he has directed virtual productions of "The Bacchae" and "Prometheus Bound" in Second Life (SL). He began teaching with technology in 1993, and his publications include the book, *Theatre in Cyberspace: Issues of Teaching, Acting and Directing* (as editor, 2000); "Theatre in Second Life® Holds the VR Mirror Up To Nature," in *Handbook of Research on Computational Arts and Creative Informatics* (2009), and "Teaching in the Virtual Theatre Classroom," in *Teaching Through Multi-User Environments* (2010).

**Abstract:** This session will recall the production of "NetSeduction" staged in ATHEMOO in 1996. Though only a text-based virtual reality, it caused consternation and efforts of censorship by the moderator of ATHEMOO, who was worried that the frank sexual dialogue would cause offense. (This, of course, assumed that anyone would actually log in and show up for the performance.) Flash-forward to 2012, with cell phone users "sexting" and Second Life avatars participating in consensual "pixel sex." Was text-only more dangerous than full-frontal cartoonage? Or has culture change that makes text-only less powerful, by virtue of their ubiquity in a constantly-texting society?

### HEAD SHOT! Performative Interventions in Mixed Realities

**Joseph DeLappe** is a Professor of the Department of Art at the University of Nevada where he directs the Digital Media program. He has worked with electronic and new media since 1983, in online gaming performance and electromechanical installation. Through description and analysis, DeLappe contextualized an approach to creative activities in computer games and online communities as locations for interventionist performances and/or sites for data extraction for the creation of artifacts. He traced a history of performative agency in computer games starting in 1997 when he first engaged with creating abstract drawings while playing "first person shooters" with an Apple mouse reconfigured as a drawing tool. Since then, he has engaged in a series of performances in online shooter games using the in game text chat that combine aspects of political protest, historical reenactment, and street theater.

**Abstract:** Joseph DeLappe will contextualize an approach to creative activities in computer games as locations for interventionist performances and/or sites for data extraction for the creation of artifacts. DeLappe's presentation will focus on several of his most recent projects engaging in activist oriented performance and internet-based art projects. He will as well discuss "dead-in-iraq" (2006–2011), his 2008 project, "The Salt Satyagraha Online, Gandhi's March to Dandi" in Second Life, "Chatroulette: Discipline and Punish" (2011) and "Taliban Hands" (2012), among others.

### So far, and yet, so close: Lessons from Telematic Improvisation

**Adriene Jenik** is a telecommunications media artist, research professor and Katherine K. Herberger Endowed Chair in Fine Arts at Arizona State University's School of Art. Her works, including "Mauve Desert: A CD-ROM Translation", "El Naftaazteca" (with Guillermo Gomez-Pena), Desktop Theatre (with Lisa Brenneis and the Desktop Theater troupe), SPECFLIC, and Open_Borders (with Charley Ten), harness the collision of "high" technology and human desire to propose new forms of literature, cinema, and performance.

**Abstract:** When improvising across distances (as in telematic improvisation), how do artists utilize the unique properties of distance? What types of performance cues develop within a networked improvisatory environment? This paper draws upon my experience directing improvisational performance projects (Desktop Theater, SPECFLIC and Open_Borders Lounge) to address these and other questions. In doing so, I hope to expand the understanding of telematics performance practice and address not only differences in form and technique; but the ways in which socio-political context, language differences, and time zone shifts can contribute to a critical conversation on improvisation. I will examine long-held notions of the centrality of proximal bodies in improvisation. Though the subject of the live body has been interrogated in relation to technological prosthesis and the residue of the live body has been acknowledged even in its mediated form, much remains to understand.

### Re–Calling Home!

ActiveLayers was formed in March 08 by **Liz Bryce**, **Cherry Truluck**, **Suzon Fuks** and **James Cunningham**. Their work has spanned site-specific networked performance and cyberperformance. They performed in Cherry Truluck's Masters presentation (07), the UpStage festivals of 07, 08 and 10, and Mediatised Sites Performance Festival (08). Works include "The Old Hotel II" (07), "The Old Hotel III" (07), "Calling Home!" (a 3-part project, 08, Part 1: "Getting to Know One Another", Part 2: "Staying in Touch", Part 3: "The Big Get-Together") and "Aquifer Fountain" (10). They have explored various online platforms and contributed to labs in the development of Waterwheel and its Tap interface.

**Abstract:** Using the Waterwheel Tap, the four members of ActiveLayers will chronicle the development of the 3-part work "Calling Home!" created in 2008. We will describe our collaborative process, challenges encountered and how we addressed them, how our diverse backgrounds influenced our processes, the development of the story and characters, the specificities of the three parts and ways in which we tried to engage audiences and challenge the mediums used.

### Ethernet Orchestra: Case Studies of Networked Intercultural Improvisation

**Roger Mills** is a musician, sound artist and writer whose practice and research focuses on networked music performance, sound installation and experimental radio. International performance and production credits includes a Golden Eye award for contrapuntal radio performance "Idea of South" (Sydney), score for BAFTA award winning dance performance "At Swim Two Boys" by Earthfall, UK, and album production and performances with Turkish singer Mircan Kaya (UCM). Roger is currently undertaking a doctorate at the University of Technology, Sydney, where he also lectures in media arts production and sound and music design.

**Abstract:** This paper evaluates two intercultural improvisatory performances by the networked music ensemble Ethernet Orchestra. It examines the creative and cognitive challenges faced by musicians collaborating across distance, and cultural and musical traditions. The multimodal analysis investigates the strategies that musicians develop in action, as they are "thinking of what they are doing, and, in the process, evolving their way of doing it (Schön, 1995). Viewed through a semiotic framework, the analysis focuses on "aural perspective" (Leeuwen, 1999), representation and cross-cultural interpretation in improvisatory dialogues, and the ways in which they intersect during synchronous telematic performance.

### Transmittance — a telematic performance

Transmittance is a project proposed by **Maja Delak** and **Luka Prinčič** but it usually involves more artists. Maja Delak is a choreographer and a dancer. Luka Prinčič is a musician,a sound designer and a media artist. Together (also known as Wanda and Nova deViator) they are an artistic duo who work with a variety of media (performance, sound, video, physical computing, texts, situations) in order to research and reflect the state of contemporary living. Their collaboration started in 2009.

**Abstract:** Transmittance is an experiment of collision of two performative worlds: physical and telematic. Through careful attention to questions and how are they communicated to two-fold online & offline public a locally situated artistic group of performers, visual artists, musicians and computer programmers create a situation of intense non-linear storytelling. In this presentation we would like to trace a personal history of mediated art and non-art that we find referential for our project. We would briefly tap into thematic and methodological approaches present in Transmittance in the context of other artistic online live art — namely cyber-performance — which we tackle here in no way as an exhaustive analysis.