

CHAPTER SIX

EXPERIMENTS OR EXPLORATIONS?

Artistic discipline is a way of refusal. Technique in theatre and the attitude that it presupposes is a continual exercise in revolt, above all against oneself, against one's own ideas, one's own resolutions and plans, against the comforting assurance of one's own intelligence, knowledge and sensibility.

— Eugenio Barba

There are experiments and there are experiments. When Isaac Newton formulated the theory of gravity, he rigorously experimented with the rules of mathematics to create a new branch called calculus in order to push forward a disciplined study of nature. When Martha Graham created the experimental dance theatre *Appalachian Spring*, she rigorously applied a whole new set of movement patterns that entirely shaped the discipline of modern dance. Rigour and discipline recur here as common processes of discovery in both new science theories and creative art expression.

However, Isaac Newton's experiments followed rules of a scientific methodology and Martha Graham's experimental dance theatre was all about breaking the rules of a traditional dance theatre performance. What was *Messaging in the Noosphere* doing? Following rules or breaking rules?

A clue that serves to clarify this conundrum is that in a science context, "experiment" is commonly used as an object noun as in "Grover is doing a science experiment." In a theatre context "experimental" is commonly applied as an adjective as in "Ally is undertaking a project in experimental theatre."

Not to say that the noun “experiment” could never be used in a theatrical context. To be fair, if we hear that “Grover is doing a theatre experiment” we might expect the same rules used by Isaac Newton to apply, and they might — especially if he was studying the mechanics of a hidden trap door in centre stage that might prove a safety hazard if not scientifically tested. But we probably wouldn’t expect him to collect precise statistical data on, for instance, the reasons a performer experimentally bursts into song or how an attending audience member might react.

As this relates to my own work, and the purpose of this thesis, I have made the decision to ally myself with the artists’ attitude of rule-breaking, thereby classifying these undertakings as “explorations in experimental theatre.” That having been said, and using my journal recordings as data, I will proceed to explain these explorations, with discipline and rigour, within a loose framework of artistic illumination that follows this general pattern:

- What were the steps and phases of this exploration?
- What did I do consciously and what did I do unconsciously?
- What moments did I feel inspired, and what moments did I feel blocked?
- What were the breakthroughs and Ah Ha (or defining) moments and why did they happen?
- What were the effects of the audience on the exploration?
- What would I evolve for a second attempt at the exploration?
- What did I discover about myself as an artist through this exploration and what tools will go forward from this work?
- What are my insights regarding the thesis question as a result of the completion of the exploration?
- What effect did any readings have on the process?

(Foreman 2002, Creative Process)

MONDAY AND TUESDAY’S EXPLORATION:

“BRING YOUR CELLPHONES AND LEAVE THEM ON”

Exploration Question: What would happen in a theatre if cellphones were embraced rather than banished; if they were a welcome addition rather than a contaminant to theatrical sanctity?

Background

The background behind this exploration had two steps: firstly, at the project’s conceptualization stage, I recognized that the characters in the Noosphere needed to message each other through space and time and they needed a tool or mechanism to drive this idea. I had no doubt from the start that I would accomplish this through the use of hand-held cellphones — they reach anybody, anytime, anywhere. Consciously, I knew that I had a need for a communication device to enable the transition from one scene to the next.

Secondly I exercised my artist’s right to revolt by scripting noisy tinny cellphone ring tones right into the aural, soundscape text of the work. I thought it would be interesting to add an extra element of randomness by suggesting to audience members that they bring their cellphones and leave them on during the Monday, January 19, 2004 and Tuesday, January 20, 2004 performances. Subconsciously, I wanted to break the rules of traditional theatre by seeing if I could integrate the ringing of random cellphones into the general motif of scripted cellphone sounds and usage by the performers that ran throughout the show.

Discoveries and Inspirations

On each of the two days, there were discoveries to be made and observations to draw. On the first day, I spoke with an audience member who admitted that he was “full of anxiety that his cellphone might ring.” He gave the example of a performance he saw at the

Sydney Opera House where a cellphone call in the middle of a symphony “caused the music to go into chaos because they thought it was percussion.” My request to leave his phone on represented a reaction to the Sydney Opera House encounter where, to his thinking, the sanctity of a music hall was violated.

On the second day, a more curious situation occurred. This extract is from the journal writing that chronicled the day’s events:

Flashback 9 1/2 years ago. Paul Andrews magnificent death. The moment of death. The song we sung was Beethoven’s Ode to Joy from the Ninth Symphony. Cel phone today belonging to (my friend) — a known psychic channeler. Scene three, SatanKali being seduced by ASAP. At the moment of her death ... the cellphone rings, loud. Ode to Joy from Beethoven’s Ninth. A message from way beyond the Noosphere? A way my life intrudes on my art? Or a coincidence? A very unexpected result of a very well prepared experiment ... a curious message that came to me from beyond the Noosphere. From the other side. From beyond death.

I remember that the first thought that came to me after I watched my husband die was that I would never be able to talk to him again — and I had always been able to reach him anywhere, anytime on his cellphone — but never again. I am not at ease extracting a meaning from this other-worldly experience but have included the event because it provided me with inspirational thoughts regarding a sense of the Noosphere as a web of divine life.

The cellphone was an audience-contributed content element and because of its randomness, it meant something quite different for me than it did for anyone else. If I divorce myself for a moment from the association with my own experience and personal interpretation of the unexpected sound, I would say the tinny ringtone unintentionally brought a kind of levity to a scene that I had never seen as being humorous.

But what did other people get from this random *Ode to Joy* ring tone? As videotape chronicles, this random sound generated a physical startle response that was especially noticeable by the physical actions of the owner of the phone who twitched, and then giggled. I equate this to the experience of being out in a fishing boat on a beautiful sunny day, enjoying a train of thoughts that ebb and flow until, bang, out of the blue, a fish unexpectedly hits the line and the meaning of the moment totally transforms. Awareness heightens, and focus changes.

Random surprise in the theatre is touched upon by Eugenio Barba as it relates to the “dramaturgy of changing states” and the turbulence that transpires from a shattering of the security of comprehension. Barba explains “turbulence” as engendering vortexes that upset the current of narrative action, and that without these vortexes, the “continuity, rhythm, and narrative risk lapsing into the obvious.” He views this as an embrace of confusion, or a straying from the path or pilgrimage, which, if nurtured, can become “a road which carries us in unimagined directions ... confronting us with new questions and unexpected perspectives.” (Barba 2000, 60)

As a general observation, I would speculate that each person in the audience that day had an unsuspected change in the quality of energy either as a connection with a previous emotional experience with *Ode to Joy*, as was my experience, or a startle reflex altering their comprehension of the narrative flow.

Blockages and Breakthroughs

There were two occasions that I felt blocked in this exploration. As mentioned earlier in this paper, I was hoping for in-kind equipment support from Telus and was unsuccessful so I had to use available telephones rather than pepper phones throughout the crystal arrays with the intention of perpetuating a sensation of HCI enablement. I believe I more or less solved the visual problem by introducing the statue of Shiva as an exotic

telephone installation that allowed a mythological or cosmic connection to the incoming calls. ASAP would also occasionally clip the phone into the crystal array. The combination of these two elements of cellphone position and interaction was not unlike my initial intentions.

Another alteration I made in the script as a result of a blockage issue was the audience participation through cellphone interaction. In early versions of the script, cellphones were positioned beside certain audience mats and would ring during the show. Unless the person answered the phone and passed along the message, the action would not continue. Taking this element of interaction out of the script came about partly because of the shortfall of equipment but also partly because of two other considerations: the discrepancy of audio levels between real rings and recorded rings, and my insecurity about interrupting the flow of the performance.

The concern of cellphone ring volume I now know could be easily overcome by enlisting the service of a phone that had a ring as loud as the above-mentioned *Ode to Joy*. The insecurity I felt about stopping and starting the performance had deeper roots and was something I wrestled with in an even more significant manner in the next exploration, the “choose your own adventure.” The fear of interrupting the show will be discussed further in the next section but suffice to say that in terms of the “bring your cellphones and leave them on” investigation, overcoming this obstacle and allowing the random timing of audience response should bring exciting new breakthroughs for upcoming productions. If I was to remount *Messaging in the Noosphere* I could see incorporating these adjustments due to the confidence I now have in the smooth operation of the computer-mediated multimedia delivery.

Insights about the Thesis Question

Earlier on, I qualified cellphones as having a connection to the Noosphere computer because of their abilities to act as functional computer input devices, especially within the fiction of this production. So how, then, does this exploration support the claim that human-computer interaction offers innovative elements for theatre art? It folds out as a chain of cause and effect dynamics that looks like this. The cellphones enable the messaging. The act of messages connecting with each other ignites Teilhard de Chardin's "technoskin of cosmic consciousness." This in turn electrifies the "rich space" of HCI in which the characters of the Noosphere express themselves and tell their stories. In this exploration, the "rich space" was further electrified by the random addition of an incoming message from outside the scripted experience — the *Ode to Joy* message that followed an established "sound" motif but stirred up the sanctity of the theatre in a momentary vortex of turbulence. A digital media interaction that came as an element of surprise from beyond the walls of the theatre, perhaps from way beyond our realm of existence.

This phenomena reflects back to Richard Schechner's theatre of "spaces within spaces and spheres within spheres." In his enthusiasm for creating and using environmental spaces, Schechner indicates, "The theatre itself is part of larger environments outside the theatre. These larger out-of-the-theatre spaces are the life of the city; and also temporal-historical spaces — modalities of time and space." (Roose-Evans 1984, 110) Whether our outside "messenger" came in from this world or from the beyond, we succeeded in expanding our environment beyond the walls of the Reeve Theatre with the unscheduled *Ode to Joy*.

Taking the Work Forward

As I have explained, this exploration, as defined, has a well-connected relationship with the thesis question as it relates to theatre art and HCI; however, I see there being only a

tenuous connection with the issue of integrated media products or services except as a means to extend the discussion into conceptual plans for future work.

There are several points from this exploration that I will excitedly take forward into integrated media projects, preferably as theatre art and technology intersect with each other. I may be able to use cellphones as interaction devices where theatrical narrative-on-demand can be facilitated by audience cellphone contact. Another idea is to use cellphones as a platform for the delivery of theatre art content in the form of an integrated game. With picture phones becoming commonplace in North America, it's just a matter of time before we catch up to Europe on game and event convergence between handheld devices and other media such as broadcast television.

Readings and References

It is impossible to avoid almost daily bombardment in the media about the scintillating future of mobile telephone program development. For example the *Calgary Herald* (February 26, 2004) echoes my thoughts above in an article, written by Crayton Harrison headlined by the phrase "Powerful phones will make movies." This article discusses the new capabilities of phones that allow consumers to play high-resolution computer games and DVD-quality home movies in addition to accessing other features such as surfing the internet and playing MP3 music files.

To take this information into the realm of imagination, I suppose, in future, if people are bored with a theatre event, they'll be able to download the latest martial arts adventure and watch it on their phones while sitting in a conventional theatre auditorium. I wonder how many Hedda Gablers would assert their pent-up anger and wring the neck of a spectator who dared allow Jackie Chan's whoops and wails to leak from a cellphone into sacred theatre space. That introduces a whole new line of thinking about live theatre

improvisation and technological interruptions that might take the action into an unexpected direction.

The second example is also immediately pertinent. As I was writing this, a call for submissions came in by email from the “Banff Television Festival Cyberpitch Competition,” — a “reading” of sorts. In the call for submissions, it says that development money, sponsored by Bell Canada, among others, will be awarded to a new media project that “pushes the boundaries of interactivity using two to three delivery platforms and media such as wireless, television, and the Internet.” To broadcast industry executives, who know how to follow the money, wireless, cellular media platforms are yet another revenue-generating tactic to attach paid advertising messages to multimedia content.

**WEDNESDAY’S EXPLORATION:
CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE**

In games, we have a chance to enact our most basic relationship to the world — our desire to prevail over adversity, to survive our inevitable defeats, to shape our environments, to master complexity, and to make our lives fit together.

— Janet Murray, *Hamlet on the Holodeck*

How would it feel if there were points when the performance could stop and start, allowing the audience to decide which Noosphere Reality Game they felt like playing next?

When we read books we pick them up and put them down. When we watch TV we flip channels and are interrupted by commercials. Do we need our theatre to run in an uninterrupted fashion?

Background

The steps and phases of this exploration go all the way back to the pleasure I had in the eighties when I discovered how to make simple computer games and puzzles with Hypercard. As I mentioned in the introduction of this paper, the idea of allowing little animations and games to unfold a story in an unpredictable way came as a happy occurrence and one that I took forward into my professional life as a multimedia producer and designer. Making the same kind of interactive experience in the theatre was a natural progression, to my way of thinking, but was harder to do than I thought.

Blockages and Discoveries

The biggest discovery I made in the course of this exploration came in the way of a blockage. I was wracked with indecision about whether I could go through with it. Could I subject the audience to an interrupted, non-linear experience and expect them to get full value from the rhythms and dynamics of the theatre art as I had planned and executed it? What would fracturing the process of unfurling an already complex story do to the narrative dramaturgy and would it matter? And the biggest concern of all was whether the video and soundtrack playing off my Macintosh computer would cooperate or if I would have to make apologies for technical difficulties — an eventuality I had made a conscientious promise with myself to avoid.

I consciously deliberated until the very last moment. I had briefed the performers, I had promoted this “experiment” to the invited audience, yet it wasn’t until I hit the “pause” button at the end of level one’s video/soundtrack that I knew I was actually taking the plunge. I stepped into the centre of the room and addressed the audience with the question “What game would you like to play?” and gave them the choices.

I had a theory that because of the names of the individual Noosphere Reality Games — the Bad Ass Adventure game, the Prosperity game, and the Enlightenment game — the audience was likely to choose them in the order in which they were

intended. Of the eleven spectators in the room, four people chose the Bad Ass Game, four people chose the Prosperity Game, and three chose the Enlightenment Game. When I asked our embedded performer cast member to break the tie, Àngel, who was waiting to make her scripted cellphone call from an audience mat position, spontaneously chose the Bad Ass game which put the sequence of games in exactly the same order as they ran in the show anyway.

So in one way I was cheated of the experience of seeing how my theatre art would run in a non-linear scene configuration but I did discover that the show could start and stop without a dreaded technical hiccup, and that stopping the show, albeit only once and only for a minute or two, didn't seem to ruin the experience for the spectators. The one comment I received about the experience from an audience member was that they wished I'd skewed the results so that they could have seen how it would run out of order. In retrospect, I wish I had done that too.

Another discovery came as a side effect that day. Because this was one of the only shows in which I wasn't operating a camera to collect footage for the documentary film version, I took the opportunity to watch the show as a spectator, watch the audience reactions, and develop a clarity of experience.

In general terms of the production values, the physical, aural, and visual texts were a good match to my original expectations, but the narrative text could still use some work. I discovered that my act of "hosting a gameshow" in this exploration brought enhanced awareness to the three Noosphere Reality Games themselves. Each game was identified as being an integral plot device and was an effective way to profile the ASAP family of Feargod plot narrative, diminishing the complexities of the backstories. If I had another chance to mount this production, bringing the story of the family of Feargod further to the forefront of importance, and defining the characters of the "role players" as they relate to this story in particular, would be a logical course of development.

Breakthroughs, Inspirations and Further Work

I know now that theatre art can stop and start and still be fun, informative and intelligent. My big breakthrough on all this was when I realized that improvisational theatre does this all the time. Making theatre into a game is not new at all — Theatresports has been using this entertainment tactic successfully since the seventies and has extended its franchise all over the world. “Choosing your own adventure” is an activity that Theatresports aficionados undertake with unbridled abandon — expecting the unexpected and taking delight in maneuvering performers into tough situations and then watching them wiggle their way in deeper — audience interaction at its most creative.

What lesson does Theatresports endow on a computer-mediated theatre art game experience? *Human* resources — I believe the key here is the talent and skill of the performers. Quick wit and split-second decision making is characteristic of these improv performers who have the ability to extend a story into a myriad of possible conclusions. Whether the audience is watching the performance in one theatre or in a series of linked theatres around the world, whether they’re voting by a show of hands, or a cellphone-initiated human-computer interaction, utilizing a practice of improvisation will be a way of extending a theatre art game concept into a globally expanded theatre experience.

Of all the explorations conducted through this performance run, this “choose your own adventure” exploration has the widest range of future theatre art research applications. The way that the adventures are developed and then acted out is one consideration pertinent to upcoming productions. Improv could be incorporated as a final performance technique or used as a creative process strategy in rehearsal. In either case, specific junctures in a script could be identified where audience intervention determines interaction, possibly at points of technological interference, much like the Hedda Gabler example in the previous exploration.

Insights about the Thesis Question

How did this exploration further insights into the way that HCI makes room for theatre art? If the audience had actually chosen a path of action that was different than the scripted path, I would have actual results to journal as data. As it was, I was only able to determine that *this* human, interacting with *her* computer was able to successfully pause a linear video/soundtrack without causing technical glitches, conduct a rudimentary survey, and give the audience the experience it wanted — not a significant breakthrough moment, but one that bears consideration nonetheless.

When it comes to the question of how this exploration contributes to innovation in theatre art through integrating media, as much as I hate to admit it, I think the way I used the integrated film media in this show proved to be a mixed blessing when it came to “choosing your own adventure.” In view of the fact that much of the game adventure itself was delivered on the plasma screen and was therefore essential, the fact that the show ran in a totally structured linearity provided very little opportunity for the performers to improvise any changes — especially as it related to changes in pacing. So for this reason, the integrated plasma screen media somewhat hindered the innovation of the theatre art at the performance level.

But to look at the positive side of the mixed blessing, “choose your own adventure” protocols have already been successfully implemented in other integrated media products and services affiliated with this project, notably the Web site and the interactive DVD and will be discussed in upcoming chapters.

**THURSDAY'S EXPLORATION:
STREAMING THE EVENT OVER THE INTERNET**

Feel the Vibe, Worldwide.

— *Slogan, Radio station 98.5, Calgary, Canada*

Exploration Question: Would streaming the theatre out to the world on the Internet make it feel like we created a real-life Noosphere? Could it rise above so much of the flotsam and jetsam on the net to make an artistic statement?

Description of the Exploration

On Thursday, January 22, 2004, the entire show was streamed out to the world as an Internet broadcast. Audiences were invited from the Media Arts Program at the University of Art and Design, Helsinki, and the film program at Bond University in Surfers Paradise, Australia. An e-mail broadcast also went out to members of the EMMEDIA Production Society in Calgary, and several cast members notified friends and family around the world. According to Web download statistics, (see appendix item 4) other audiences had come in as well from Austria, England, New Zealand, and other undefined locations.

Two professional service companies, Wild Horse Entertainment and Jet Stream Digital Media were retained to ensure the quality of the broadcast was first rate and that there would be no dreaded technical glitches. The setup took about four hours, the lion's share of the time being taken up synchronizing the camera audio and video signal with the broadcast hardware, connecting with the University of Calgary's computer network, locating a robust exit stream from the university to the streaming server in downtown Calgary, and hauling equipment and laying down cables.

At just before noon local time, cellular phone contact was made with three venues to test the broadcast stream before the event began. In both Finland (9:00 p.m.) and in Australia (5:00 a.m.) both the audio and video connections were confirmed; however a viewer in Mexico (1:00 p.m.) reported that the audio was in place but there was no video. It was later discovered that this viewer did not have a broadband connection to the Internet and that caused the absence of video because of the enormity of the download on a slow-speed modem connection.

Background

I have been streaming both artistic and professional events on the Internet since 1994. As mentioned in chapter one, the “Pixel Pushers” event was streamed live in several incarnations to an exuberant audience all over North America. Since then, of the six or eight events I have streamed, only my son Austin Andrews’ independent film, *Catastrophe: Jurassic Park With Cats*, was met with as much viewership enthusiasm. The Internet has become a jungle, full of recycled television programming and e-commerce on one end of the cluttered broadband and hackers and culture-jamming activists on the other.

The first step in making sure *Messaging in the Noosphere* found an audience on the Internet was to quietly groom one. Several months before the performance event, the Web site was built, uploaded, and used as a promotional tool for the event and I spent considerable time with both the Finnish and Australian audiences to ensure that they had the local times correct and had the right equipment and communication protocols. In its essence, this was a custom broadcast for a custom audience.

The second step was creating a broadcast environment that resembled, as closely as possible, a television studio. There were no coloured gels installed on the lighting instruments, the actors were briefed on the importance of “projecting” to the camera, and

the audience was warned that the camera operator, namely myself, would be weaving in and out of the scene. Due to the fact that I had to get in close to the actors in order to capture their performances for the small screen, I knew I would be in the audiences' sight lines at times.

Consciously, I knew from the moment we started streaming the show that we had, in our small way, created an actual "technoskin of cosmic consciousness" — a Noosphere among the assembled worldwide viewership. It just "felt" connected. My eye in the lens of the camera became a conduit of perception and I was able to supply a select group of viewers with an experience very much like what our audience was experiencing right in the Reeve Secondary Theatre that day — a globally expanded theatrical event simultaneously experienced by remote audiences through interactions with their computers.

Another conscious maneuver was the method in which I photographed the show so that it could be used for other integrated media needs within this project. As camera operator, I knew that I was able to easily justify being in the audience's line of sight because of the day's exploration and I was able to capture close-ups and good-quality audio because of my proximity to the performers. I used this footage captured for the streaming event as the "master shot" for much of the documentary film — and repurposed the media for several other categories of delivery including packaging, the Web site and the illustrations within this thesis paper itself.

Unconsciously, this process of broadcasting the show for a remote audience coached an extraordinarily connected and committed performance from the actors. Even though I was behind the camera for almost every performance of the event, the results of this particular performance, when reviewed on videotape, were superior to other performances and one theory is that it is due to their awareness of someone actually witnessing their performance and trying to find meaning to their actions from across the

globe — feeling their vibe, worldwide, as the slogan in the epigraph at the top of this section purports.

Effects on the Audience

I have talked to several people in Calgary who witnessed the performance in “cyberspace” and interestingly enough they all mentioned superlative technical work on the part of the streaming service, and the quality of the acting performances.

The group from Helsinki, Finland, said about the “technicalities,” that

Technically everything went smoothly. Really, it was astonishing. The frame rate was excellent and the image was mostly really clear. Only the material on the ceiling monitor was rather blurry and it was, at times, hard to read the texts appearing there, or figure out the other details. There were maybe four encounters when we briefly lost the image but half of those are the blame of our video projector. The sound was on all the time.

About the “substance” they said,

We all had many laughs. Dialogue had some really funny moments and some of the actors had good body language. It must be hard to act both for the proximal and virtual audiences at the same time? It takes a lot of practice, research and experience from everybody involved. You guys are on your way there :) Story structure, that is the five levels is a really nice idea and worked well. Overall impression of it all is really positive.

An individual watching from Australia commented that,

It was somewhat surreal talking with you on the phone, then watching our conversation unfold all over again over the internet feed. The delay was only about twenty seconds, but it was enough to cast a somewhat dreamlike feeling over the whole experience. It helps that the piece itself was very fragmented and felt as though it had been born out of a daydream. I had no idea what to expect but the end product was a fully cohesive and tremendously entertaining (if still

somewhat cryptic) abstract theater piece that would've been a blast to see in person. The quality of the picture looked good even blown up to full screen. The handheld camera work was effective on its own, but used to great effect in that it added another dimension to the piece, giving the online audience a different perspective than the one enjoyed by the live audience.

Inspirations, Discoveries, Readings, and Future Work

There is a remarkable confluence of knowledge flowing straight into this exploration from almost every expert cited thusfar in this thesis. A great meeting in the “academy of the global village” about the powers behind a collective harmonization of consciousness in “cyberspace.” From theatre arts, Eugenio Barba, Richard Schechner, and Steven Dixon, who says

The world wide web is a site of therapeutic catharsis-overload, and constitutes the largest theatre in the world, offering everyone fifteen megabytes of fame.... The computer monitor, rather than representing a Lacanian mirror of misrecognition, operates as an identificatory monitor of empathetic human recognition. (Dixon 1999)

From HCI and computer sciences, there are Ben Scheiderman, and Hewett, Baecker, Card, et al. of the SIGGCH committee who brought it to my attention that the interaction between human and machine leads to a “rich space” of interdisciplinary possibilities. From media and information arts there are Marshall McLuhan, and Robert Pepperell, who said “Technology is the tangible expression of desire motivating human imagination to modify reality,” as well as Nicolas Negroponte, Brenda Laurel, and Janet Murray, who says,

The new digital environments are characterized by their power to represent navigable space. Linear media ... can portray space, whether by verbal description or image, but only digital environments can present space that we can move through. ... We recognize the fruit of all of these developments in our

conceptualization of the digital domain as “cyberspace,” an environment with its own geography in which we experience a change of documents on our screen as a visit to a distant site on a worldwide web. (Murray 1997)

From speculative fiction, there are Philip K. Dick and Arthur C. Clarke; and from theology — the Bible, and the Hindu *Bhagavad Gita*. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin suggests that

Souls are irresistibly drawn by the demands of their innate powers, and still more by the call of grace, towards a common centre of beatitude, and it is in this convergence that they find a first bond that combines them in a natural whole. The paths they follow inevitably meet at the term of the movement that carries them along. Moreover, grace, which introduces them into the field of divine attraction, forces them all to exert an influence, as they proceed, upon one another, and it is in this relation of dependence, which is just the same kind as that which links together material systems, that there lies the astonishingly ‘cosmic’ mystery Behind each soul a wake is formed which draws other souls either towards good or towards evil. (Teilhard de Chardin 1973, 79)

Teilhard de Chardin’s “cosmic mystery” is clearly one of the richest spaces that I discovered being created by the Noosphere and speaks to me loud and clear about souls in our universe that bond with, or without, computer-mediated interaction. Teilhard de Chardin saw this hallowed unity as being the body of Christ. I don’t dispute that but understand it, in my own perspective, as being a place of great peace and fulfillment.

OTHER EXPLORATIONS

It is the world of your own soul that you seek. Only within yourself exists that other reality for which you long. I can give you nothing that has not already its own being within yourself. I can throw open to you no picture gallery but your own soul. All I can give you is the opportunity, the impulse, the key. I help you to make your own world visible. That is all.

— *The manager of the Magic Theatre in Herman Hesse's Steppenwolf.*

There were several other explorations that are worth noting. On Friday, we presented a fully polished and relaxed show among a group of supportive audience members. As I journeled it they “succumbed, were seduced by the action, and allowed a flow of acceptance.” The after-show thoughts progressed from an acknowledgement of the layers in the story and how an audience might see something new every time, to comments on the humanity of the God in the Machine. A well-known Calgary filmmaker who was in attendance questioned the spirituality that might live within technology, agreeing that it was a powerful decision to boil it down to a single, human voice. A drama student countered in the discussion and then amplified her thoughts in an email correspondence,

I believe that spirituality has to live and guide within the technical world. So long as we are spiritual beings we will see and grow spiritually from all elements of our world — and that technology is a unique world, one with an overwhelming sense of power/possibility — an especially vital detail of our world that we can not push aside. I feel that the technical world brings with it a new/evolving approach and response to spirituality bringing with it possibilities and concepts that have yet to be discovered. I feel we should use technology to further beliefs and to most importantly stay open and responsive to what it will give in return.

This young woman’s response flirted with the speculation I imbued into HexaKali’s verbal script that the Godly spirit was “winging its way back into the machine from whence it came.” That in this fiction called *Messaging in the Noosphere*, God was connected to the machine from time immemorial, was exiled into the universe, and was then returned, by HexaKali to find peace — a cryptic message that didn’t come through — becoming the “Achilles’ heel” of this production. Was I the only one who could imagine an omnipotent God in the Machine? Was my own Message in the Noosphere lost in translation?

The final exploration came during two extra shows we performed on January 29, 2004 in collaboration with the “Happening” New Music Festival. Instead of inviting audiences in a spirit of exclusivity, the doors were wide open to anyone who wished to attend. Instead of having a dozen people in attendance, we had over twenty people for each performance, some of them cuddling up two per mat, some of them lying around on the periphery of the Cherubim, and some little people wiggling their ways under the lighting board table. These performances, as it happened, provided the richest mise-en-scène for the film documentary version, partly because the background was rich with bodies and partly because these crowds, comprised primarily of undergraduate drama and music students, were comfortable on the floor, comfortable with multi-modal entertainment delivery, and comfortable with big emotional responses. It was a great way to close a journey of theatre art and technology that was lightly, but significantly, caressed by science.

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There wasn’t a moment in these explorations that I wasn’t buzzing with inspiration. I implemented a Noosphere that was the richest space imaginable for human-computer

interaction on a global level, I was capturing heartfelt performances for integrated media development, my remote audience had gathered on cue, and there wasn't a technical glitch in sight. I knew that I was laying important groundwork for all kinds of future considerations, I was being rewarded with self-perpetuated affirmations about my integrity as an artist, and felt that I was making a contribution to the knowledge of my University and serving my sponsors and supporters well. These explorations held great moments of self-actualization as an artist and as a media professional.