

**Book of abstracts and biographies**

**Live Performance and Video games**

**Appropriations, Inspirations and Mutual Transfers**

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**International Online Symposium**

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This paper proposes to study a particular case of performance play (Pellicone & Ahn, 2017) embedding several spectacular and playful settings: charity marathons of speedrun broadcast in live-streaming on Twitch.tv. We will question the scenographic strategies deployed by performers in this context, and how these can (or cannot) serve as mediation tools for transmitting knowledge, facilitating spectators' entry into the practice, and guiding audience participation.

Speedrun is indeed an example of a gaming practice with a double performative dimension (both competitive, as "display of skills", and artistic): it consists in the attempt of completing a game as quickly as possible (see Newman, 2008; Scully-Blaker, 2016; Barnabé, 2017), which can require efforts to optimize the playful gesture, as well as the exploitation of glitches. The practice is currently analyzed through the prisms of its transgressive (Scully-Blaker, 2014; Hemmingsen, 2020), competitive (Barnabé, 2014; Bézaguet, 2016) or artistic dimensions (Hay, 2020). We can also note the recent work of Sher (2019) and Sher & Su (2019) that focuses on streaming technologies and volunteer work in the context of charity speedrun marathons.

In recent years, it has become increasingly common for speedrunners to use the live-streaming platform Twitch to broadcast their performances as well as their training sessions. For this paper, we will study a specific case of speedrun spectacularization through streaming: the charity marathon Speedons 2022. This event took place from April 15 to 17 and brought together dozens of speedrunners who performed live on stage and on Twitch. Their objective was simple: to finish a game according to a time frame specific to each practitioner, while commentators explained their exploits (haranguing the crowd on the model of sports commentators) and called on the public to donate (raising more than 800 000 euros for the association Médecins du Monde).

This object presents several frames of performativity, which the analysis will unravel: on the one hand, gameplay can already be seen as a kind of performance (Huuhka, 2020: 60), involving the adoption of a "make-believe" attitude (or mimicry; Caillois, 1958: 39). On the other hand, speedrun adds to this play frame another staging of the action by introducing a recording device, an audience and additional rules or constraints that transform the meaning of what is shown. Finally, the streaming marathon is itself a show that responds to certain scenographic conventions: it defines a stage, roles for the actors, and even a narrative structure, fed by commentators with the construction of suspense effects and narrative tension (Baroni, 2007: 95). Moreover, this type of event, as game spectatorship practices in general (Cheung & Huang, 2011; Taylor, 2018), may be interpreted as a tool for "secondary play" (Delbouille, 2018), since viewers can indirectly participate to the performance, influence its development and engage in a potentially playful form of experience.

Thanks to the tool TwitchDownloader, we already recovered the video recording of the whole event, as well as all the chat logs from Twitch in the form of text files (including the messages posted, their time stamp and the pseudonyms of their authors). Based on this material, we will offer a detailed analysis of the event using the streaming analysis methodology proposed by Recktenwald (2017) and drawing on the combined perspectives of rhetoric and mediation studies. Precisely, we will question the rhetorical techniques used by practitioners to make the performance spectacular and how these can be used to serve an important dimension of speedrun as a "community of practice" (Berry, 2008): the mediation of knowledge and the facilitation of spectators' entry into the community. Speedrun is indeed a practice requiring a diversity of skills ("Understand, Investigate, Discover, Plan, Perform"; Koziel, 2019) and the collaboration of the whole community for route planning and glitch hunting. The charity marathon event represents a moment of crystallization of collective intelligence (Jenkins, 2006: 139), during which the spectacle intertwines with the objective of transmitting informational expertise to the audience: what happens on the screen is constantly translated into human language by the commentators, who try to make the gameplay understandable,

but also to underline invisible difficulties, to report the history of the tricks used, etc. How does this didactic posture articulate with the performativity (in this context, making an action readable also means guiding the reactions of the audience to perform collective emotions: telling them when to be surprised, tense, appreciative, etc.)? What does the streaming stage mediate exactly (knowledge about the game or the speedrun? participation to the group? aesthetic interpretation of the performance? etc.)? These are the questions this paper will attempt to answer.

**Fanny Barnabé** is a lecturer-researcher at Epitech, in the Digital Methods for Humanities and Social Sciences lab, and she is a founding member of the Liège Game Lab. Her research focuses on video game narration (to which she devoted the book *Narration and Video Game: For an Exploration of Fictional Universes*), on the different forms of détournement (or remix) of video games (topic of her PhD dissertation), on video game tutorials (that she studied during her mandate as an FNRS Postdoctoral Researcher at the University of Liège, Belgium) and on humor and irony in video game streaming on Twitch.tv. She also studied video game paratext during a one-year research stay at the Ritsumeikan Center for Game Studies in Kyoto (Japan), under the supervision of Professor Hiroshi Yoshida. Mail: [fanny.barnabe@epitech.eu](mailto:fanny.barnabe@epitech.eu)

**Sacha Bernard** is a PhD student in Information and Communication Sciences at the University of Liege and is a member of the Liege Game Lab. His research focuses on digital cultural mediation through the example of speedrun. Mail: [sacha.bernard@student.uliege.be](mailto:sacha.bernard@student.uliege.be)

**Chris Berchild** (Indiana State University): *Video Games and their Place in Live Theatrical Pedagogy*

As the desire to bring real-time interactive technologies into the live theatre sector has flourished, especially during the most challenging years of the Covid-19 pandemic, the integration of video game engines into live production processes has developed as well. This has not only aided in creating areas for experimentation best termed as “video game theatre,” where audiences experience a more immersive and interactive spectacle, but it has also profoundly expanded and altered the fundamental processes of live theatrical process, from dramaturgy, to direction, to design. But how do we teach today’s students—and tomorrow’s theatre artists—to think beyond the fundamentals of Aristotle and Brecht, and consider their Xbox and PlayStations tremendous sites for dramatic inspiration?

This paper looks to examine the use of video games and game engine technology (specifically UE5 and Unity) in Live Theatre from a pedagogical point-of-view. What space does spatial and virtual experimentation have in modern theatrical education? What additional training—both technical and conceptual—does working with video games in the theatrical classroom demand? I intend to discuss the areas for integration of video games into a traditional theatrical undergraduate and graduate education, using my own courses as case studies for the integration of video game structure and theory into the fundamental dramaturgy that underlies most contemporary theatrical pedagogy. While it’s easy to argue for this within a video design context—using the technology to create production visuals—establishing a more expansive approach may be more tricky.

Beginning with critical playthroughs of first-person shooters in a Play Analysis course, the fundamentals of video game theory can be woven throughout a theatrical education—whether the student identifies as an actor, a director, a designer, or a playwright. Finally, the integration of games and video game processes into (under)graduate rehearsal and production work allows for a fully integrated process. I will briefly examine the role of video game theory or technology in each of these contexts, in order to suggest an overall approach to teaching video game theatre as a unique immersive and interactive art form.

**Chris Berchild** is a professor and chairperson of the Department of Theatre at Indiana State University. During his time at Indiana State University, Berchild has worked with numerous emerging technologies in a theatrical context and established the Interdisciplinary Center for Media Technology in the Arts at his home department. His most recent research focuses on the application of video game engines in the live theatre through integration with more established practices and technologies.

**Diane Dufort** (Université Catholique de l'Ouest): *Serious Alternate Reality Games: towards a design framework*

As instances of a constantly evolving concept, games, especially digital games, are increasingly spreading in domains they used to be considered incompatible with. Indeed, they are nowadays used to provide innovative ways to visit museums, to support processes of innovation, for corporate training, or to guide professional practices (etc.). Serious games, in particular, pose new challenges when it comes to designing engaging digital experiences with a “serious” (training, educational, informational, etc.) purpose (Alvarez & Djaouti, 2010).

This contribution addresses a particular type of serious games, Serious Pervasive Games (SPGs), which blur the player’s perception of the boundaries of the game spatially, temporally or socially (Montola, 2005, 2007). In doing so, they blend the game world in the player’s ordinary life. A pervasive game has expanded spatial boundaries if it is not played in a dedicated virtual and/or physical space; expanded temporal boundaries if its game sessions are blended in ordinary life; and expanded social boundaries if there is ambiguity about participants (e.g. actors, players) and non-participants. Among SPGs, Serious Alternate Reality Games (SARGs or serious ARGs) use transmedia storytelling to offer players a highly immersive educational experience. Transmedia storytelling, qualified as “augmented storytelling” by authors such as Mélanie Bourdaa (2016), fragments a story and disperse its elements throughout several media platforms. It leads players to glean narrative contents from media platform to media platform, gradually building links between them. In SARGs, transmedia storytelling integrates the narrative elements of a fictional world in the player’s ordinary world, giving her the illusion to engage in an alternate reality. For example, in *The Miracle Mile Paradox* (2012), players helped antiquities collector Rexford Higgs to build a time-travelling machine in order to counter the actions of a malicious organization. Despite this simple pitch, the game involved 30+ characters, several played by actors, a handful of blogs, websites, social media accounts and live events in the Miracle Mile neighborhood in Los Angeles. This game, by combining elements from theatre arts, live-action RPGs and digital technologies, provided players with a game experience between reality and fiction as well as a new way to (re)explore the Miracle Mile neighborhood in Los Angeles (USA) and learn about its rich history. Due to the porosity of their boundaries and their “serious” dimension, SARGs are complex objects to study and to produce. The latter, especially, requires the work of an interdisciplinary team composed of specialists and non-specialists of games, including theatre professionals (playwrights, actors, etc.) and subject professionals (e.g. educators, journalists, researchers). The team members lack methodological tools that enable them a) to describe and analyse games (Elverdam & Aarseth, 2007; Zagal et al., 2005; Zagal & Bruckman, 2008) in a way that takes into account the wide variety and heterogeneity of media productions used; b) to explore the specificities of SARGs in terms of narration, structure and usage of ICT to blur the boundaries between reality and the game world (Arango-López et al., 2019; Benford et al., 2006; Dena, 2012) and c) to highlight the key elements of a game to guide its design process (Aparicio et al., 2016; Clarke et al., 2017; Suttie et al., 2012).

Indeed, we observed that existing methodological tools, though they contribute to describe various dimensions of SARGs (or SPGs in general) and to establish a common vocabulary between the production team members, are not adapted to the production of SARGs. Most of these tools provide a partial description of games (i.e. only one dimension such as time or space) or are made for specific subgenres (e.g. urban games). Tools providing a complete description were designed to be used in a scientific context with a focus put on precision and objectivity. Therefore, they describe games as systems and not as experiences, meaning that they tend to discard most of the dimensions linked to the player and her individuality (e.g. moves, sensations, emotions) even though a fundamental design principle of (S)ARGs is that players “inhabit the game space as themselves” (Bonsignore et al., 2012, p. 252) and not as digital avatars.

Moreover, one of the main characteristics of games is that they allow players to explore a certain range of possibilities. In video games, this range is usually constrained by the rules implemented within the system. In this regard, SARGs are similar to interactive theatre plays in that the range of possibilities

offered by the game encompass both the physical and virtual worlds, meaning that tools aimed at analysing and designing SARGs need to identify all the dimensions of a SARG and the way each dimension can contribute to the blurred perception of boundaries.

In our contribution, we will introduce a collaborative design framework that aims to describe SPGs, and especially SARGs, as experiences. In the first part, we will define essential notions around SARGs such as transmedia storytelling and media convergence and highlight the similarities between SARGs and similar types of experiences such as interactive theatre. Then, we will provide a comparative analysis of existing solutions. Finally, we will describe the first level of our framework and how it can be used both for analysis and design.

**Diane DUFORT** is Associate Professor at the Université Catholique de l'Ouest, member of the CHUS lab (Centre Humanités et Sociétés) and associate member of ELLIADD (Edition, Littératures, Langages, Informatique, Arts, Didactiques, Discours, University of Franche-Comté). She is currently working on Serious Pervasive Games, i.e. games which blur the player's perception of the boundaries of the game, created with a serious purpose (educational, informational, etc.). She particularly studies the use of these games in the educational or cultural sector.

**Julien Feyt** (University Jean-Monnet-Saint-Etienne): *Repeat After Me: Performance between gamification and cartography*

During this presentation I will remain how performance and video game interact each others. Sometimes artists (Forest, Stelarc) use virtual space to perform. They create and control an avatar to lead a walk or ask views to do specific actions. Otherwise performance becomes a video game's extension or translation. Several rules become a protocol to lead an action. Blast Theory created location based game *Can You See Me Now?* (2003). In this performance, online players navigate on a 3D city map and interact with performers. All participants can see their opponents location on screens (mobile devices or computer) and talk with walkie talkie. The first ones use their keyboard to control and move their avatar to hide or escape to runner which try to catch them.

*Repeat After Me* (Feyt & Goullier-Lhomme, 2017) uses some video games codes (point of view or character control). We developed this performance during *Cart'Expé* (Expérimentation et cartographie pluridisciplinaire) initiated by Karen O'Rourke. It was a part of PALSE IPEm (Programme Avenir Lyon Saint-Étienne Image et Perception Embarquées) working group *Spatialité, urbanité, cartographie et numérique*.

Each performer wears earphones to ear and follow instructions. A voice guide them to re-enact a walk in another place (partitions) and record it with a wearable camera. In another protocol (dual) two actors begin their action in the same place (airport, museum or train station) and it stops when one of them go outside. Each performer share oral instructions to force their opponent to change directions. In this situation they both try to control their opponents and their own directions. Voices instructions replace joystick or other controller.

These two protocols can be defined as labyrinth with invisible and moving wall. Actor earn experience and awareness of his environnement. It also reveals power relationship between opponent. An actor control the second but this relation can be reversed.

**Julien Feyt** is PhD candidate in the Department of Arts at Université Jean Monnet. Under the direction of Pr. Karen O'Rourke, he is writing the thesis *Self surpassing: To perform through the use of digital technology*. His research focuses on the interactions created between tool and body. It first refers as the body as a primary tool, then using mechanical or digital tools. He constructs his argument through the analysis of craftsman, sportsman and artist.

**Georges Gagneré** (University Paris 8): *Directing avatars in live performances*

Character, Controls and Camera, more often known as the 3Cs of game development, describe the key factors that organize the relationships between the inputs of the player and the reactions of their character on-screen. I propose to focus on the two first terms of the equation in the perspective of performing arts. I would first explore some tools and methodologies used in videogame industry to combine motion capture and artificial intelligence and build characters. The increasing part of virtual production using videogame engines tends to reorganize the collaboration between the performer, the director and the computer artist in the production process, making the previsualization stage as a sort of augmented performing stage.

I will then explain how realtime previsualization tools allow a close collaboration between a performer wearing a motion capture suit and a director when directing an avatar on a mixed stage and how it impacts the perception of interactions on stage for both the artists and the spectators. I will give examples of research-creation projects using Epic Games Unreal Engine 5 videogame engine.

**Georges Gagneré** is a stage director, digital artist, and researcher. He has been working with the platform [didascalie.net](http://didascalie.net) since 2004 and has put together a number of performances and research-creation projects bringing together theater institutions and research laboratories. He is also a senior lecturer on the Image Numérique et Réalité Virtuelle (INREV) team at Paris 8 University. <http://gagnere.fr>



**Jacques Ghoul-Samson, Jean-Michel Denizart** (University of Toulon): *To stream, a performance between YouTube and television*

The video game streaming, mostly through the dedicated platform Twitch, is a practice that is undeniably occupying an increasingly prominent position in the video game landscape (Jones & Liu, 2017; Levoine & Louessard, 2019; Taylor, 2018). This position can be found both in the marketing dimension of the industry, where streaming is used by editors as a promotional tool for their titles, and in the daily practice of gamers, who share and exchange around their favourite games.

In a previous work, we were interested in the complex relationships that link the streamers working on the same game (Ghoul Samson, 2022). Going beyond the simple register of competition, it happens that they deploy original strategies aiming at increasing their respective audience by allying themselves, thus being able to cover different categories of viewers. In the framework of this communication proposal, we will focus our attention on the form that these temporary alliances can take. It is interesting to note that the different streamers adopting these strategies can - individually - conceive radically different content. They must therefore manage to agree and compose around a common editorial line around which they will be able to meet and make their spectators converge. To reach this balance, streamers draw their inspiration from two main registers: YouTube and television (especially talk shows). By drawing from these repertoires of popular culture, or more precisely from these physical communication spaces transformed for the occasion into mental communication spaces (Odin, 2016) streamers engage in a "performing play" (Pellicone & Anh, 2017) that seeks to mix and assemble cultural references with the help of various "discursive introducers" (Odin, 2016), this to make coherent a priori heterogeneous gathering.

To support our proposition, we will rely on a qualitative study conducted with French speaking streamers and an analysis of their content. We will be interested in the way they conceive this content, choose the references on which to base it and take on the role of animator to conduct this performance specific to video game streaming while ensuring the smooth running of the communication process.

**Jacques Ghoul-Samson** is an associate professor in Information and Communication Sciences at the University of Toulon and a researcher at the IMSIC laboratory since 2021. He defended a thesis in Information and Communication Sciences in 2019. His research focuses on interactions conducted in digital spaces, online ethnography, and video game industries. He also has a particular interest in the nature of the boundary separating physical and digital space as well as video game streaming.

**Jean-Michel Denizart** is an associate professor in Information and Communication Sciences at the University of Toulon and a researcher at the IMSIC laboratory since 2018. He defended a thesis in film studies in 2017 and taught as a contractual and temporary doctoral student in the Sciences, Arts and Techniques of Image and Sound (SATIS) department at the University of Aix-Marseille after obtaining his master's degree there. He was also a studio and live sound engineer before devoting himself to research and teaching.

**Aria Giacona** (University of Houston): *Virtual Mask: Isekai as Performance*

This paper seeks to examine the Isekai genre of anime as performance through identity and performance studies. It will explore the deeper implications the genre presents and possibilities isekai might offer to us in understanding VR technology.

The term Isekai means “different world.” Within this genre, the protagonist is transported to a fantasy world, often inspired by video games, in which they either gain specifically needed skills, or previously useless skills become their greatest asset.

Upon entering the Isekai world, the protagonist comes to embody multiple identities: their self in the virtual world, and their self from their reality.

Existing scholarship primarily focuses upon arguing that Isekai is a form of escapism. However, there is a dearth of literature concerning what is being performed by this specific type of escapist fantasy, which ignores several aspects of the performance such as setting and characterization, and the role of identity and community, which play a large part in the genre’s greater narrative.

As such, this paper will conduct an in-depth analysis, of one Isekai animation (*How Not to Summon a Demon Lord*), underpinned by identity and mask theory, to assess how performativity is present within the Isekai genre.

Ultimately, I hope to contribute to the conversation on how an individual functions as an ‘anime’, or avatar, self, which is connected to the idea of virtual self, through this exploration of performativity in Isekai.

**Aria Giacona** is a M.A. Theatre Studies student at the University of Houston. Their love of theatre began with Japanese theatre back in 2016 and is still inspiring their research. Currently, they are researching virtual YouTubing, virtual reality, and other ways that video games can be seen and utilized within theatre and performance art.

**Victor Inisan** (University of Rennes 2): *Unreal Engine in the theater: new challenges for the lighting designer*

If lighting consoles have been equipped with dedicated programs for a while (e.g. Cobalt), more and more softwares tends to compete with traditional consoles. DLight is perhaps the most popular in France, but it has been followed by other softwares with specific applications (simple ones, like QLC+ ; multimedia, like Millumin and QLab ; optimized for specific OS, like Lightkey or DasLight) : using ENTTEC type boxes or nodes, they allow to convert a USB or ArtNet signal into DMX, the traditional light control protocol. However, even if these softwares are convenient for simple installations, the control mode is less comfortable than a console: that's why it seems unlikely that they will disappear in favor of softwares.

Consequently, the latter have specialized in one type of application: 3D visualization. The simplest ones (Chamsys), which are mainly used to place lights, have indeed been replaced by complex models (Capture or Wysiwyg), closer to architecture softwares (e.g. Sketchup) or plans (e.g. Autocad): they also allow a control on dedicated consoles (ETC Eos, and especially the GrandMa consoles).

This high quality visualization deeply transforms the profession of the lighting designer, who can work on softwares outside the rehearsals: it has become very popular in the event industry, governed by tighter timeframes than those of the theater. Nevertheless, it must be recognized that even if the projector libraries and the capacities to work on maps are qualitative, in fact these softwares are not extremely efficient for the visualization itself - so that it is difficult to create a realistic environment for the light that is projected in it.

So why not turn to video game engines, which provide much better visualization ? Not only is the rendering quality far superior, but they also allow us to simulate an entire live scene, unlike traditional theater software where this feature is restricted to the light. Unreal Engine has recently taken this step by creating a DMX plug-in that allows to control lights from the game engine: this bridge between video games and theater is a gold mine for lighting designers who want to work with a real visualization software. To what extent do the possibilities offered by Unreal Engine reshape the work of the lighting designer, who can simulate the entire production in coordination with the director ? To what extent can it be a tool for aesthetic freedom for emerging theater companies that have little access to theaters ? Would it be possible to simulate an entire show before realizing it on stage ? How does this bring the profession of lighting designer closer to that of the stage director ? This is what this contribution intends to explore, by putting in perspective examples on Unreal Engine with the challenges of the lighting designer's job today.

**Victor Inisan** is a PhD in Art and ATER at the University of Rennes 2. As a graduate of the ENS of Lyon and the University of Lille, he has spoken at several events in France and abroad (University of Padova, Fondazione Cini, University of Tartu) about the dramaturgy of light and the cinema of David Lynch. He has also written for specialized magazines (*Supernatural Studies, Horizon/Théâtre, Opium Philosophie*) and regularly works as a critic of live performance in various media (*France Culture, I/O Gazette, AOC, Détectives Sauvages*).

At the same time, Victor Inisan is a playwright, director and lighting designer. After an initiation in the writing department of ENSATT, he wrote *C'est moi Guy* and *Papa congèle*, which were selected by various reading committees (CDN de Caen, Manufacture des songes, Texte en cours, Autre Chose est Possible). Between 2017 and 2020, Victor Inisan also created two shows within the Groupe Le Sycomore (*Éclairage Public, Au revoir mon amour*) before creating his own theatre company, UltraComète. As a lighting designer, he collaborates with Frédérique Aït-Touati (*Comment s'en sortir sans sortir*), Lawrence Williams (*L'Empire de l'oubli*) and Julien Avril (*Effondré.e.s*).

**Margarete Jahrmann** (Universität für angewandte Kunst Wien): *Ludic Performances in Hybrid Assemblages*

The concept of assemblage allows the connection of art, scientific approaches, and socially relevant action. In hybrid game assemblages, in prototypes of ***Experimental Game Cultures***, we focus on the conscious change of established dynamics (of world) of the game - in ludic arrangements between human and non-human actants. The goal in Ludic Art is a critical reflection on the social impact of games and at the same time the prototypical development of innovative game concepts and approaches. And the Expanded narration in "anim/ation" – belebte Materie und Spiel - artistic play is the experimental testing and subjective experience of possibilities of the world. The Ludic as a participatory process can show us new forms of future society, politics, and empathy. By transforming systems of rules, ambiguity as a quality in play, a new understanding of the global challenges of our time can emerge.

**Margarete Jahrmann** has been a professor of game design at the Zurich University of the Arts since 2006. In 2019 she was appointed professor for the Artistic Research PhD Program at the University of Applied Arts Zurich. In 2020 she starts at the Zentrum Fokus Forschung as head of a research project on "Neuromatic Game Art" at the University of Applied Arts and curates Ludic-Society Soirees in Vienna. She lectures at international conferences and participates in exhibitions on research, neuroscience, game design and art.

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**Josephine Machon with Munotida Chinyanga (Middlesex University): 'It's (not) only a game'... some game-changing potentials of game-based theatre**

This closing keynote will survey some of the potentials of game-based theatre including the significance of play as a device for short and long-term community in the live performance experience. An introductory overview will touch on the work of two leading practitioners in this field, Coney and ZU:UK, to identify dramaturgical approaches and aesthetics and to contextualise a discussion of State of the [Art] Collective's multilevel, multiplayer, *How To Build [The City]* (September, 2022) as illustration. State of the [Art]'s work is shaped by an 'antidisciplinary' fusion of intercultural physical storytelling and gamified narratives within the relational aesthetics of multimedia clubbing. In the evolution of this ongoing project, the tools and mechanisms of online-gaming have been interwoven with long-established gaming protocols of choose-your-own-adventure literature and board games, along with the spectacle and fun of populist gameshows. This improvisational combination, played out across the online realm, public spaces and theatre studios, foregrounds team-participation within stage interaction as a *show* of in-it-togetherness. In so doing, it engages *communitas* through immersive performance. Given this, this keynote will consider how this type of gamified theatre practice contributes to imagining alternative futures, where collective responsibility and care-taking lies at the heart of individual risk-taking, outcome and reward. Munotida Chinyanga, Co-founder and Co-artistic director of State of the [Art] will join for the Q&A discussion.

**Josephine Machon** is Associate Professor in Contemporary Performance at Middlesex University, London. She is the author of *The Punchdrunk Encyclopaedia* (Routledge, 2019) *Immersive Theatres: Intimacy and Immediacy in Contemporary Performance* (Bloomsbury, 2013), *(Syn)aesthetics: Redefining Visceral Performance* (Palgrave Macmillan 2009, 2011) and has published widely on experiential, immersive and interactive performance. Her current practice-based interests investigate the role of the audience-participant in immersive experiences and involves partnerships with leading immersive practitioners, including Punchdrunk International, Lundahl & Seidl and ZU-UK. Her broader research interests address the audience experience and the creative intersections of theory and practice in performance. Josephine is Joint Editor of the Palgrave Macmillan Series, Palgrave Studies in Performance and Technology, which includes her co-edited collections alongside commissioned titles. She is on the Editorial Board for the International Journal of Performance Arts & Digital Media (IJPADM) and Body, Space & Technology (BST), a journal of the Online Library of Humanities Library (OLH).

**Munotida Chinyanga** is a multidisciplinary practitioner creating work through multimedia Direction and Sound Design. She's Co-artistic Director of the international arts collective, State of the [Art]. She has a Masters in Theatre Arts focusing on Multidisciplinary practices, Sonic Art and International Collaboration. She has worked with leading UK venues including The Young Vic, The Gate Theatre (A Small Place, 2018), Pleasance Theatre (Ali and Dahlia, 2019), and the Oxford Northwall.

**Cason Murphy** (Iowa State University): *No Longer “Merely Players”*: Porting the Elements of Theatre into Video Gaming

“New forms are what we need. New forms are what we need, and if there aren’t any, then we’re better off with nothing.”

—Anton Chekhov, *The Seagull*

Live theatre, much preferring the creative spirit of practical effects, has never been an early adopter of digital technology. However, this pandemic has forced our collective hands—and technology has become a critical theatrical tool in a way it never has been before. In place of old geographically-based theatre companies, communities and practices have been relocated and recreated across new platforms.

One of the more curious combinations of exploring a new form has been that of theatre and video gaming. Gaming emphasizes collaborative forms of social interaction, even while players remain in physical isolation for long periods of time, while also offering an escape from the stresses of the outside world. It should be no surprise then artists engineered ways to connect with audiences pivoted from the physical forums of theatre venues to the virtual forums of gaming co-op modes, chats, and channels. For this presentation, I will examine a trio of case studies of theatrical events that have built on tenets of immersive theatre and integrating concepts of gaming—including Celine Song’s *The Seagull on Sims 4* on Twitch; Tenderclaws’ *The Under Presents: Tempest* on Oculus; and Sam Crane’s experiments with Shakespeare in live lobbies of Grand Theft Auto Online—to better articulate the complex ways theatremakers and audiences together have been redefining the boundaries of theatrical presentation, all while leveling some of the inherent barriers to access that exist in the former model.

By doing so, I hope to outline a new framework of, as Susan Bennet urges us, “viewing the theatrical event beyond its immediate conditions and to foregrounding its social constitution” to envision the future of this new form.

**Cason Murphy** is an Assistant Professor of Theatre at Iowa State University, with his M.F.A. in Theatre Directing from Baylor University and his B.A. in Theatre Arts from UCLA. He is a rising voice in the field of “critical reinterpretation of the theatrical canon,” with special focus on contemporary approaches to the works of William Shakespeare. He has presented his scholarship at national and international conferences, and published in prestigious journals including *Theatre Topics*, *Theatre Journal*, *Theatre Annual*, *Shakespeare Bulletin*, *Multicultural Shakespeare*, *Theatre/Practice*, and *the Journal of Film and Video*.

**Britta Neitzel** (University of Düsseldorf): *Performances in Videogames*

Spectatorship in videogames. Who's looking at whom – or what (or where to)? The verb to perform has a wide range of meanings. In the German language, these meanings are slightly differentiated by the expressions a) ausführen und b) aufführen. a) is referring to an act conducted according to a certain pattern or order: to perform a task. b) encompasses the idea to do something with spectators or onlookers in mind. While a) is surely found in videogames – players perform tasks in or the game (in case they adhere to the game's rules) and the computer performs the programme – b) on the other hand, is mainly found in artistic performances. They are done to show something. In my talk, I like to present situations in (video)games in which spectators are addressed as well and link that to the apparatus of the particular game.

PD Dr. **Britta Neitzel** (Heinrich Heine Universität Düsseldorf) is a research associate at the Institute for Media and Cultural Studies. She is currently preparing the publication of her habilitation thesis *Studies on Games*. Her latest publication is *Filmische Moderne. 60 Fragmente* (ed. together with Oliver Fahle, Lisa Gotto, Lars Nowak, Hedwig Wagner, André Wendler and Daniela Wentz) Bielefeld: transcript 2019.

**Mike Sell** (Indiana University of Pennsylvania): *Yes, But . . . : On Performance and Videogames*

The relationship between videogames and performance is diverse, multifaceted, and always-evolving. As both theoretical concepts and media, videogames and performance emerged concurrently in the 1950s and have been shaped by similar historical conditions. Describing the nature of the relationship between videogames and performance is one of my goals for this keynote. I will attempt to offer a useful description of that relationship, but I will also raise questions about that description—that's the other goal of this keynote.

In general, I'm wary of historical accounts and theoretical framings. A significant part of my scholarly work has been dedicated to describing the ways historical accounts and theoretical framings exclude, erase, and distort—and identifying who or what is doing the excluding, erasing, and distorting. The victims of such exclusion, erasure, and distortion vary. They might be particular individuals or material practices, media, creative communities, or disciplines.

While prejudice and privilege are often the motivation for such exclusion, erasure, and distortion, it can often be the result of overconfident assumptions about our object of study. Exploring and exposing those assumptions is vital to understanding the relationship of videogames and performance. Do we understand what a videogame is? What they were or might have been? What they might or will be? We should answer those questions with a resounding, "Yes!" But we should expect to hear an equally resounding, "But . . ." in response.

It is the dialogue between "yes" and "but" that will generate the most interesting and significant understandings of videogames and performance.

Prof. **Michael Sell** (Indiana University of Pennsylvania) is Professor of English and faculty member in the Graduate Program in Literature and Criticism. He is interested in playful literature, especially in interdisciplinary approaches to videogames, board games, and tabletop roleplaying games. He is fascinated by how games and players tell stories and communicate and complicate values. His latest book is *Systemic Dramaturgy: A Handbook for the Digital Age* (Southern Illinois University Press, 2020) with co-author, Michael M. Chemers.



**Miguel Sicart** (IT University Copenhagen): *Playing Bits: Play and Performance With Computational Agents*

In this talk I will introduce the idea that playing as a form of performance is a way of relating to and entangling with computational agents. Drawing on the concept of playfulness proposed by Maria Lugones and extending it with Richard Schechner's ideas on play and performance, this talk argues that playing is a way of creating relations with computational agents. Using examples from videogames and digital playthings such as voice assistants, this talk will describe the risks of entangling playfully with computers, and how a different technological future can be glimpsed in playful performances with software.

**Miguel Sicart** is Associate Professor in the Department of Digital Design and Head of the Center for Digital Play at the IT University of Copenhagen. He is the author of *The Ethics of Computer Games*, *Beyond Choices: The Design of Ethical Gameplay*, and *Play Matters* (all published by the MIT Press).

**Isabelle Starkier** (University of Evry): *Differences of Games: When theatre encounters escapegames in video conferencing*

Theatre a tool which unites inhabitants of a city, is facing to-day an audience who is expecting less to see acting than to play in a real context of associative individualism-to play videogames with many people but alone at home through a screen. Thus theatre had to question itself again about its participating functions, and shift from the involved spectator reacting through his identification to the characters, to the spect-actor acting himself through his joy stick. Interactivity or interaction with the actors made us create escape-theatres with videoconferences on screens, using an everyday communication tool diverted into a tool of game. But what game is it about ? As in the video game, characters sticking to their identified power, if they are not literally “acting” , are acting in helping to build the narration, and acting on the cast. The words, the actions, the attitudes of the characters are thus obliged to readjust through a new canvas- even if you can 't call that a performance “play with us to help us play” could be one of our motos for these escape-theatres – coming back so to the primary function of the comic illusion and also to the federative function of an audience playing together within the same story. So we shall question the difference of posture of spectators and actors in this new form of “videastic” theatrical performance – where the visio tool is not a mere medium any more but also a new technological tool contributing to a new artistic form

Former student of the ENS, an associate of modern letters, lecturer HDR in theatrical studies at the University of Evry, **Isabelle Starkier** is also a director, actress and company director. She works on the link between theory and practice, bringing together her stagings (about forty), her work as a company-in-residence and her research on otherness as well as theater in the heart of the city. Last plays: *Le bal de kafka*, *L'homme dans le plafond*, *Le bourgeois Gentilhomme*, *Un gros grand gras Gargantua*, *Le tango des étoiles errantes*, *Boxing Shadows*, *Scrooge*..She built with her company, during Covids'time, new theater performances called : “escape-theater”.

**Larry Switzky** (University of Toronto): *Who (and What) Performs in Video Game Theatre?*

This talk examines a recent sampling of theatre that incorporates video games or that absorbs the structures, conventions, mechanics, and affects of video games. In these productions, video games and video game elements—ambassadors of an art form that “crystallizes agency” (Nguyen 2020)—provoke a referendum on latent and renewed possibilities for agency in theatre. In particular, video games/gaming structures query the relative agential impoverishment of theatre compared to a cultural surround of activity and overactivity (see Kalb 2011), what agency we want and can have in theatre, and who and what gets to act. This talk will frame video game theatre in relationship to (and apart from) recent scholarship on theatrical participation, particularly through the terms and concepts that video games offer to discussions about the porous relationship between spectatorship and performance, such as metagaming (Bolux and Lemieux 2017) and ludopolitics (Mitchell 2018).

**Lawrence Switzky** is Associate Professor of English and Drama at the University of Toronto-Mississauga. His writing has appeared in *Modern Drama*, *TDR*, *Theater*, *SHAW: The Journal of Bernard Shaw Studies*, *Canadian Theatre Review*, *Opera Quarterly*, and in numerous published collections. His current research examines the place of theatre within the history of mass computation and artificial intelligence. He is the co-editor (with David Kornhaber) of the quarterly journal *Modern Drama*.

**Roundtable:** “Theatre artists and game designers : creativity and interplay”

The roundtable is intended to bring researchers and artists together to talk about mutual inspiration in a slightly freer format. How do artists deal with the issue of technology? What adjustments are theatre directors and game designers making on the technical and aesthetic level? How does the theatrical universe feed into the creation of video games and vice versa? On the one hand, we want to discuss how theater creators are inspired by today’s digital game culture. On the other hand, we want to debate how performative video games can be. Performative playing or live game design on streaming platforms like Twitch can also be discussed.

**Participants:**

**Mia Consalvo** (Concordia University, Montreal)

Mia Consalvo is Professor and Canada Research Chair in Game Studies and Design at Concordia University in Montreal. She is the co-author of *Real Games: What's Legitimate and What's Not in Contemporary Videogames* (2019) and *Players and their Pets: Gaming Communities from Beta to Sunset* (2015). She is also co-editor of *Sports Videogames* (2013) and the *Handbook of Internet Studies* (2011), and is the author of *Cheating: Gaining Advantage in Videogames* (2007) as well as *Atari to Zelda: Japan's Videogames in Global Context* (2016).

Mia runs the mLab, a space dedicated to developing innovative methods for studying games and game players. She's a member of the Centre for Technoculture, Art & Games (TAG), she has presented her work at industry as well as academic conferences including regular presentations at the Game Developers Conference. She is the Past President of the Digital Games Research Association, and has held positions at MIT, Ohio University, Chubu University in Japan and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

**Susanne Kennedy** (theatre artist, Berlin)

Director Susanne Kennedy responds to the new balance of power between bodies, technical objects and machines with an aesthetic that is beyond the human. Distorted by masks, playback dialogue, doppelgängers and multimedia, the actors confront the audience with a post-humanistic subjectivity.

Born in Friedrichshafen, Germany in 1977, Susanne Kennedy studied direction at the Hogeschool voor de Kunsten in Amsterdam. She debuted on the Dutch stage with a series of productions of pieces by Enda Walsh, Sarah Kane and Elfriede Jelinek, as well as the experimental soap opera *The Hideous (Wo)men* (2013). In 2011 she invited Johan Simons to work with the ensemble at the Munich Kammerspiele. Productions of the film material *They Shoot Horses, Don't they?* (2011) and Marieluise Fleißer's first play *Fegefeuer in Ingolstadt* (Purgatory in Ingolstadt) (2013) ensue. The director sets Fleißer's small-town life in a box on stage, in which the actors gradually atrophy into sculptures behind their masks, as in an installation, making the stereotypical and deformed quality of language tangible. It is a procedure that Susanne Kennedy taps into in *Warum läuft Herr R. Amok?* (Why Does Herr R. Run Amok?) (2014), based on the film by Rainer Werner Maria Fassbinder and Michael Fengler.

For her production of *Fegefeuer in Ingolstadt* Susanne Kennedy was named “young director of the year” by the magazine *Theater heute*, and awarded the 3sat prize. *Fegefeuer von Ingolstadt* and *Warum läuft Herr R. Amok?* were chosen to be staged for the *Theatertreffen* of the Berliner Festspiele in 2014 and 2015.

In recent years she has started to work together with the visual artist Markus Selg. They created several plays and installations together. *Coming Society* was their first collaboration at the Volksbühne Berlin in 2019 and *ULTRAWORLD* the second in 2020.

### **Michael Goodchild** (theatre artist and manager, Lausanne)

Michael Goodchild grew up in the Valais (Switzerland) before leaving to study at University of Lausanne, then at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin in philosophy and art history. He quickly joined the team of several festivals such as the *Fête du Slip* or the *Festival de la Cité*, both in Lausanne (Switzerland). He is also involved in the worlds of art and since 2014 has been involved in the contemporary art exposition *artgenève* and at *Palexpo*. Within this framework, he organized about ten exhibitions of sculptures and performances by national and international artists in the public space of Geneva, collaborating in particular with Lionel Bovier and Balthazar Lovay. Beyond the visual arts, his interests are drawn towards a transversality in the arts and the linking of scenic and plastic forms. It is in this sense that he participates in the project *Homo Solaris* as a dramaturge, signed by Christoph Burgess. He is a founder and member of the company RGB Project which created in November 2021 its first immersive performance “Brainwaves”.

### **Mary Flanagan**

Mary Flanagan has a research-based practice that investigates and exploits the seams between technology, play, and human experience, exploring how data, computing practices, errors / glitches, and games reflect human psychology and the limitations of knowledge. Interested in the ways technologies can adopt or represent biases, Flanagan uncovers the underpinnings of technological systems to make them more apparent. Her approach involves both onscreen space as well as physical spaces, objects, and actions, moving away from the screen to foster reflection regarding familiar relationships to the everyday. She sees the computer as a collaborator and pursues collisions with aleatory events, chance operations and glitched code. Flanagan has exhibited internationally at venues such as The Guggenheim New York, Tate Britain, Museu de Arte, Arquitectura e Tecnologia Lisbon, the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona, Hyundai Motorstudio Beijing, NeMe Arts Center, Cyprus, LABORAL Centro de Arte y Creación Industrial, Spain, Museum of Fine Arts Cologne, and the Whitney Biennial of American Art. Her work is featured in public and private collections, including The Whitney Museum and ZKM | Zentrum für Kunst und Medien Germany. She is the Fairchild Distinguished Professor of Digital Humanities at Dartmouth College and lives and works in Hanover NH and the city of Houston TX.

## Organisers

### **Théo Arnulf**

PhD Candidat - University Paris 8

**Réjane Dreifuss** has worked as a dramaturge and project manager for the theatre company sonimage. Together with the author and director Igor Bauersima, she has written and directed theatre plays under the pseudonym Réjane Desvignes, in which digital technologies played a crucial role in the creation of narratives. Since 2016, she has been researching the influence of digitalization on theater, with a particular focus on the generation of new narrative forms. She is lecturer and researcher in the Department Performing Arts and Film at the Zurich University of Arts.

<https://sonimage.ch>

<https://www.zhdk.ch/en/person/rejane-dreifuss-216268>

**Simon Hagemann** is a lecturer in communication at the IUT of Saint-Dié-des-Vosges (University of Lorraine) and an associate researcher at CREM (Centre de recherche sur les médiations). He also holds a doctorate in theatre studies (Université Sorbonne Nouvelle-Paris 3). His work focuses on video games, theatre and media innovations and he is currently working on the representation of AI in science fiction video games. He is the author of *Penser les médias au théâtre, des avant-gardes historiques au théâtre contemporain* (Paris, 2013) and collaborated on the publication of *Scènes numériques. Digital Scenes. Critical anthology of artists' writings and interviews. Critical anthology of artists' statements and interviews* (Rennes, 2022, ed. Izabella Pluta).

### **Izabella Pluta**

Researcher in performing arts (PhD in theatre and cinema), theatrical critic and translator, associated researcher in Center of Theatre Studies and in Laboratory of cultures and digital humanities (University of Lausanne). She has been granted advanced research fellowship Fernand Braudel IFR - Marie Curie Fellowships at Université Lyon 2 and ENSATT (2013-2014) et Directeur d'études associé (DEA) at several laboratory's spaces in France such Atelier Art/Science or Studio Fresnoy. She is the author of *L'Acteur et l'intermédialité (L'Age d'homme, 2011)*, she coedited with M. Losco-Lena a special issue of "Ligeia" journal: "Théâtres Laboratoires" (January 2015), also "Metteur en scène aujourd'hui – identité artistique en question?" with collaboration of G. Girot (PUR, 2017) and recently "Salle d'attente de Krystian Lupa" (Antipodes, 2019). She accomplished several research internships (e.g. at Institut d'études théâtrales of Université Paris 3, Département Théâtre et Département Hypermédia of Université Paris 8), work in practice observations (with Robert Lepage, amongst others). She edited a collective book of artistic manifestos "Scènes numériques. Digital Stages" (PUR, 2022). ([www.izabellapluta.com](http://www.izabellapluta.com))

## Scientific Committee:

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**Izabella Pluta** (Dr, Université de Lausanne, Centre d'études théâtrales)

**Hélène Sellier** (Dr, researcher and narrative designer at The Seed Crew)

**Host (online)**

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**CREM, Université de Lorraine** (France)

**GameLab UNIL-EPFL, Université de Lausanne, Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne** (Switzerland)

**Association Theatre in Progress** (Switzerland)

