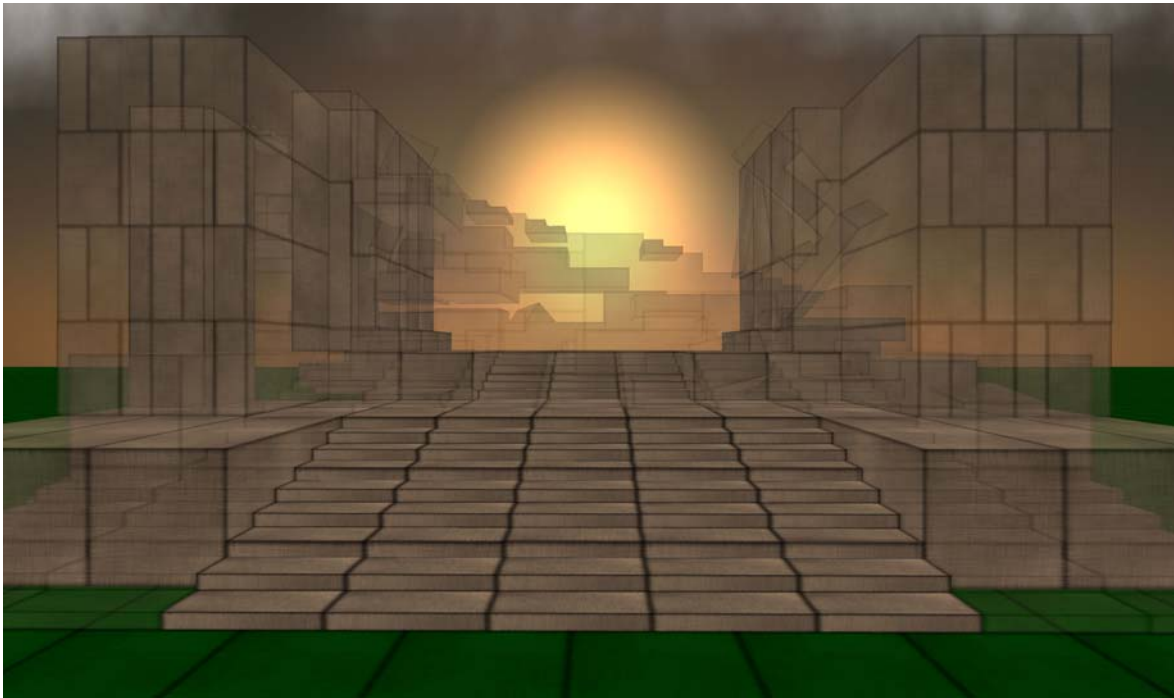


RHYTHMIC SPACE(S)

Michael Takeo Magruder - 2007

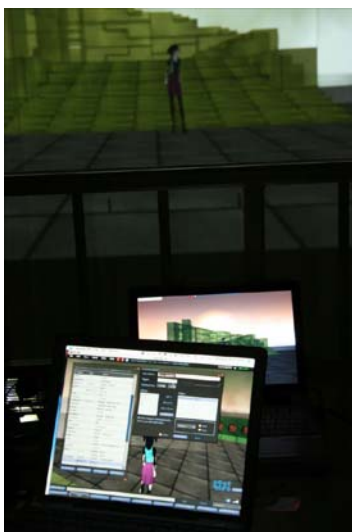
...The second night of the [CyNetArt_07] festival is a special night to remember, and the discussion with the audience after the network transmission [of *Ballettika Internettikka Stattikka*] seemed to reveal some of the contradictions I mentioned earlier. There was admiration for the project and its accomplishment, and there was stunned disbelief, and disillusionment.

So how does one end a night like that? In Second Life?



Time-lapse still of *Rhythmic Space(s)* by Michael Takeo Magruder, 2007, Second Life.

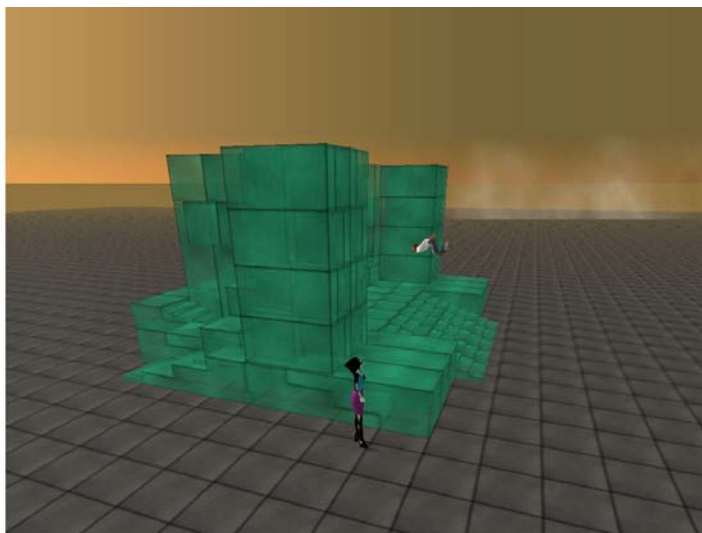
Working away on the laptops all afternoon, Michael Takeo Magruder prepared the public installation of his *Rhythmic Space(s)* project, to be unveiled in a performance (*Meeting Places*) on Sunday, but he had also been previously corresponding with colleagues in Tokyo (conversations between Magruder, myself, and the Tokyo team of the ADAPT network - Association of Dance and Performance Telematics had started a week or two ago) and was willing to invite some visitors into his set. I had suggested to Yukihiro Yoshida and his team mates that it could be exciting to see them appear - and perform spontaneously - within the formally prepared stage setting (3D modelling) of Appia's rhythmic spaces within Second Life which Magruder had worked on for a considerable time. During the evening, Magruder then also invited Ghislaine Boddington, who was visiting the festival and has had prior experience with SL, into the particular space in Second Life to continue chats and preparations.



The audience in Hellerau views the virtual scene as Magruder (left) works with Dumke and Boddington (right).

Somehow I imagined it would be a fascinating counterpoint to have the live Hong Kong intervention performance by two artists from Slovenia followed by the performance avat-aria created by Japanese artists within the German 3D model of Appia's eurythmic Hellerau utopianism, computationally and artistically conceived by a Japanese artist and programmer working in London — in a sense, this is not a Weltbürgertum as much as it reflects the tremendous cross-over transculturalism and trans-discipline creativity we see in the contemporary digital arts and sciences.

I will discuss the **Rhythmic Space(s)** project and **Meeting Places** tomorrow, but end here with a lyrical echo of the late wind dance in Second Life.



Virtual spectators in Second Life watch Gekitora's "wind dance" unfold within the 3D **Rhythmic Space(s)**.

Magruder had opened up his SIM territory in SL for a group of visitors (from the UK) and a group of performers (from Japan). Boddington then worked with Magruder and Yoshida (the Tokyo team also include Mr Kabata and Yukito Obara) on establishing the communications Saturday night and adapting the Japanese dancers to the 3D Appia environment and its orphic ambience, including the enormous sun emanating its glow at the horizon line. At around 22:40, just after Stromajer and Zorman had quietly vanished from the Hong Kong skyscraper, Yukito Obara (SL-name: Gekitora Gackt) appeared in the form of his avatar to enact his orphic-Icarus, whirling himself close to the sun and into the winds of the artificial world of Second Life.

The room where I watched this event (the Seitenbühne Ost) was completely silent. The "wind dance solo" happened in the quiet deadly eye of the storm of colour. Life on the re-imagined 3D digital planet Appia, the set of **Rhythmic Space(s)** - an apparition turning into a 20-minute tumbling flight, quietly repetitive but searing the mind, in its utter simplistic foreign machinimatic beauty, its utter uselessness, its extreme aesthetic purposefulness, its controlled spirited quality and anime-quality. This could not have been imagined in 1912 when Adolphe Appia did his sketches of the sun, and the light of spaces and cascading staircases, and when Dalcroze rehearsed with the dancers for the staging of Gluck's *Orpheus* and *Eurydike*. But we now watch such avatar presence and performance almost as if logical, as if consequential, even though it is not. Anti-gravity, and the fantastical potentialities of the metaverse, are mesmerizing concepts for dreams of flying in space or floating your viewpoint (POV). They do captivate our imagination, just as the old myths of Orpheus and Icarus did.

Johannes Birringer – 17/11/2007

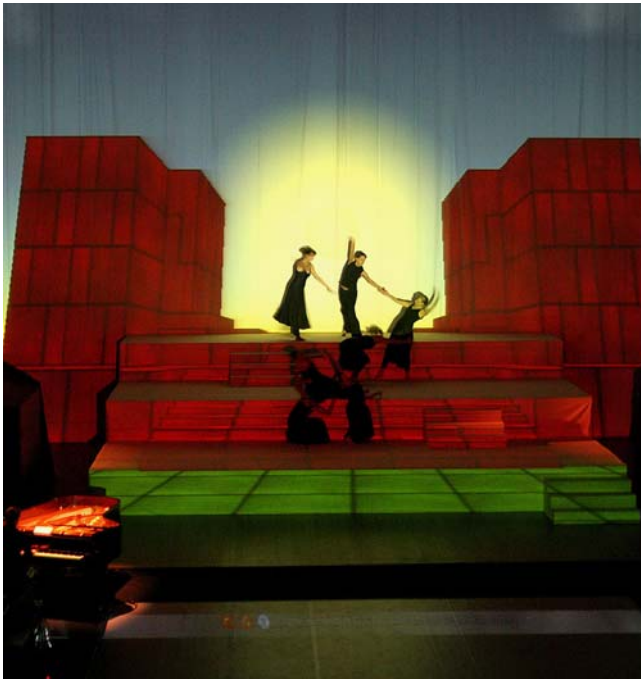
[extracted from CyNetArt_07blog: <http://body-bytes.de/02/?p=520&language=en>]

Sunday afternoon featured **Meeting Places: Art and Science, Performance in Real and in Virtual Hellerau.**

This project is a collaboration between King's Visualization Lab (KVL, King's College London) and TMA Hellerau with the aim of creating a mixed-reality installation that can extend a historical performance design concept (created in the beginning of the 20th century by Adolphe Appia and Emile Jacques-Dalcroze at Hellerau's new school of Eurhythmics) into digital/computational environments and the cyberspace of Second Life.

The performance took place in the great hall at 17:00 and again provided a unique historical moment whose significance one might not be aware of now - and what the future of such experiments will bring we don't know at this point. But in the dance world, and in performance and music culture generally as well as in historical, archaeological and ethnographic research, the computer-assisted 3D modelling/visualization and recreation of material artefacts, sources and architectures is a technologically enabled science. Visualizations of course also find some of their most remarkable manifestations in the medical field and the bio-technologies.

I had seen recreations before (in dance), and remember seeing a large exhibition (sponsored and supported by IBM and the Italian government) at Houston's MFA that recreated the destroyed city of Pompeii constructing computer-generated models of its urban habitats, political, economic and social life-forms as one could deduce them from sources that survived from calculations and approximations.



Scene 1 of **Meeting Places**, based upon Appia's design *The Staircase* - 1909.

Here at Hellerau we witnessed an encounter of the third kind, a world premiere that is not easy to describe. The scientific and artistic research project derived from Magruder's view of Appia's original rhythmic space designs as conceptual explorations of space, not as illustrative plans for possible stage constructions. His reflection on Appia's spatial theories coincided with King's Visualization Lab's start up of the Theatron 3.0 project, which began with the reconstruction of Hellerau in Second Life. The interdisciplinary nature of the project gathered together people with expertise ranging from theatre history and performance to advanced 3D modelling and scripting techniques. For the Cynetart07 premiere, the creative partnership also involved live performance realizations in Dresden composed by Prof. Christine Straumer and seven rhythmic students of the Carl Maria von Weber Music Academy.

The local group of music/rhythm students - Florian Maser, Katarzyna Gorczyńska, Thu Trang Nghiem, Elisabeth Lochmann, Ulrike Spörl, Stefanie Richter & Astrid Eisler - performed an improvised musical choreography inspired by Emile Jacques Dalcroze's gestural sequences (*plastique animée*). These sequences were taken from his writings and sketches, not from of the 1912 production of *Orpheus* here at Hellerau (originally envisioned and realized inside the Adolphe



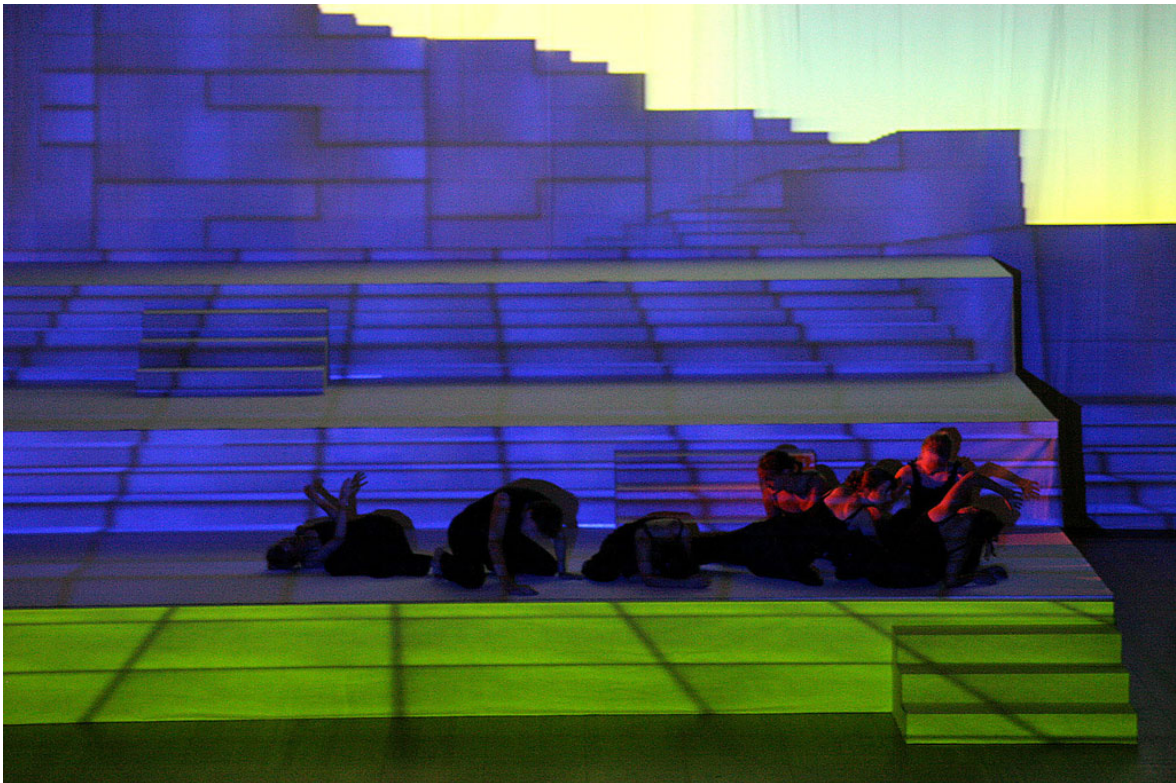
Scene 2 of *Meeting Places*, virtual and physical transformation.

Appia designs for rhythmic spaces), of which no scores or film footage survives, to my knowledge, although here it would be good to consult Richard Beacham (King's College London), whose expertise scholarship guided the project and whose seminal book on Appia paved the way for this partnership with Magruder and Drew Baker (3D modelling and programming). Richard Beacham's book is entitled *Adolphe Appia: Artist and Visionary of the Modern Theatre* (Philadelphia, 1994; *Adolphe Appia - Künstler und Visionär des modernen Theaters*, Berlin: Alexander Verlag, 2006).

Speaking to the dancing musicians, I gathered that they were in fact inspired by the musical ideas their teacher, Christine Straumer, developed with them for finding movement material that corresponded to Appia's drawings and sketches of rhythmicized light and space. The group developed three "Bilder" (scenic pictures), which were named "staircase," "transformation," and "orpheus." these pictures corresponded to the *Rhythmic Space(s)* Magruder had built, and they also corresponded to different colours (red for Part I; blue for Part III, the "transformation" representing the deformation and reformation of the digital space).

Straumer, in turn, improvised on the grand piano and created the improvisational musical sequences after the movement material had been found. Straumer sees her playing as live improvisation, and the music students perceive their dance in the same way, but they are fully conscious of the significance of the spatiality of Appia's vision, the rhythms of space (terrains) and staircases. There are three levels of symmetrical heights (66 cm, 132 cm, 198 cm in height, 8 m in length, 3 m in width), and the scenographic environment was built at the tall end of the Hellerau Festspielhaus, with Magruder's digital set (inside Second Life) projected onto the architecture.

So we were able to see the performance on the very location where the 1912 production of *Orpheus* was created, except that we are now in the real/renovated historical building with Appia's set and scenography digitally created and projected by Magruder. But rather than using VRML or a game engine, Magruder's 3D digital *Rhythmic Space(s)* metaversal environment has been transferred to a large SIM in Second Life.



Scene 3 of *Meeting Places*, based upon Appia's design *Orpheus' Descent into the Underworld* - 1912.

The real musician-dancers performed their Dalcroze improvisation on the real and projected/virtual platforms and staircases of Magruder's digitally re-elaborated Appia set in front of a sinking "Appia" sun which is actually the atmospheric nature environment in Second Life, so I am told. The night before I sat quietly in the studio to watch Magruder work inside Second Life, and noted the slowly, subtly changing colours of the horizon, misty clouds drifting in the distance, surely, I thought, some kind of late night consensual hallucination caused by lack of sleep. Magruder here seems a kindred spirit to Olafur Eliasson, who's *Weather Project* had a strong hyperrealist effect on our perception through the use of powerful, monochrome orange light. He welcomes the natural-artificial oscillations of light (daylight, sunlight, clouds drifting by, the mist in the distance...) in Second Life, and during the presentation he performed some uncanny manoeuvres to transmute the Bilder (scenes) for the musician-dancers, as he was able to make the Appia 3D sets slowly disintegrate and change into different spaces of scenic-rhythmic lighting. A choreography of light and slow mutation, a mesmerizing thing without name.

The exploration here points to the interrelationships between real and virtual worlds, connected through the network and the technologies (positional tracking, motion tracking, etc) that connect physical performance rhythms and motion behaviours of avatars in tele-plateaus and their Second Life versions.

In a post show discussion, Magruder pointed to data in/data out issues that he is examining now, and inspired by the experience of the audience participants in the tele-plateaus (responding to abstract shapes they generated on the floor projections), he suggested that it might be interesting to transfer (simultaneously) the generative algorithms of the motion-tracked tele-performers into a Second Life environment where the performers can see their representations (their "physical gaming" action) as avatars in the virtual environment.

Johannes Birringer – 18/11/2007

[extracted from CyNetArt_07blog: <http://body-bytes.de/02/?p=535&language=en>]

Credits

Interdisciplinary Team:

Michael Takeo Magruder [artistic concept]

Artist and Researcher, King's Visualisation Lab, King's College London, UK
www.takeo.org

Prof. Richard Beacham [academic research]

Professor of Digital Culture and Director of King's Visualisation Lab, King's College London, UK

Drew Baker [3D visualisation]

Senior Research Fellow, King's Visualisation Lab, King's College London, UK

Collaborating Performers:

[*Wind Dance* iteration]

ADaPT (Association for Dance Performance Telematics, Tokyo)
led by Yukihiro Yoshida

[*Meeting Place(s)* iteration]

Rhythmic students from the Hochschule für Musik Carl Maria von Weber, Dresden
led by Prof. Christine Straumer

With:

Thomas Dumke [funding and infrastructure]

Project Director of CYNETart and Trans-Media-Akademie Hellerau

Ghislaine Boddington [dramaturgical support]

Co-Director BodyDataSpace and Research Associate Artist, ResCen, Middlesex University, UK

Prof. Johannes Birringer [theoretical analysis]

Chair in Drama & Performance Technologies, Brunel University, UK