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## Using Media Technologies in the Theatre Process and Media Education Training for the Future Theatre Directors

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### Abstract

The article provides an insight into the role of media technologies in the process of theatre virtualization as a problem of professional media education. The use of multimedia technologies in the theatre is shown on the example of Omsk theatre productions, the teaching of acting skills and theatre studies in Dostoevsky Omsk State University. Substantiating of innovative application of media technologies in educational training of students is made on the basis of international concepts and approaches, implying a number of creative effects and practices in art. For researching separate aspects of the problem there were used pedagogic methods of theoretical and comparative analysis, content analysis of social networks sites. Innovative forms of using media technologies in the contemporary theatre space and relevant media education are established. A number of modern media are revealed allowing to use multimedia art. Special attention is put on performance art, cyber theatre and happening which make possible different levels of interaction with the audience. On the example of Galyorka Theatre character features of using media technologies are substantiated in the immersive performance which creates the effect of full absorption of the audience into the plot. The value of lecturers and students' flexibility is established which is directed to self-training individual readiness in changing media educational environment. Recommendations are given for strengthening educational training of theatre experts, for training specialists in audio and audiovisual engineering in theatre, for preparing subjects some of which are the part of training of audio and multimedia engineers, other subjects may be inserted into curricula of actors and theatre experts as additional option courses.

**Keywords:** media technologies, multimedia theatre, performance art, media educational training, interactive media art.

### 1. Introduction

Using media technologies in the process of performance production is the most important means in the training of modern theatre directors. A technology of virtual worlds which innovative directors are focused on, allows to utilize all sides of human psyche contributing to the synthesis of arts in a theatre process.

The actuality of researching the problem of media educational training of future theatre directors with the use of media technologies in a theatre process is doubtless because active interaction between traditional and innovative styles in the work of theatre directors is evident. Imagination, motor and sensory capabilities promote synthesis of traditional arts and multimedia.

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Due to that integration of implementing media technologies into the practice of production process is becoming more and more progressive. The information technology era made the radical transformations in traditional theater and cinema possible. Thus, the composition of communication technology has also changed. Anis and Fahad came to similar conclusions: “This is the era of technological revolution and it was believed that emergence of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) made communication process simple, easy and fast by converging all the function of other mediums” (Anis, Fahad, 2020: 34). Multimedia technologies in the theatre are the means of interaction between the audience and visual production decoration where text, graphics and sound blend with acting, music and live synchronization of the performance. Seamless blend and mutual contribution allows these forms to be more lively and extensive. Projection onto stage background may turn the performance into virtualized action, overcome plain screen background, create effects of water, snow, rain and so on. Materials of movies and documentaries are often inserted into performances. Using multimedia technologies allows audience’s view to combine stage and screen image which becomes one.

## 2. Materials and methods

For researching the problem the following sources are used: practical experience of experimental activities of Omsk theatres; scholar’s researches published in journals *Theatre Research International* | *Cambridge Core*, *Media Education* and *International Journal of Media and Information Literacy*. Research methods are based on fundamental approaches of Fintan Walsh with the factors studding of the figurative theatrical problem’s solution: “Theatre’s value in reckoning with injury – by observing, enacting or tending to it in the present. This is not solely a psychological or emotional task. h theatre and performance’s response to different forms of trauma – both personal and cultural – and the ways and means by which the unbearable is exposed, represented, memorialized, processed and aggravated” (Walsh, 2020: 3). In the field of media stage images development, various models of staging the performance space are reflected in T. Brejzek and L. Wallen study. “The Model as Performance (TMP) is a contribution to discourses – things said and thing done – conserning the “pre-performance” of scenography and the practices of both architectural and scenographic exhibitions” (Brejzek, Wallen, 2020: 93).

The use of the provisions of media literacy education comes in addition to the previous research of A. Demidov, T. Syrina, A. Tretyakov from the standpoint of a competence-based approach for educators. “The era of globalization and media presents new opportunities for a comprehensive study of various aspects of social life, including a large field of social sciences as education and pedagogical sciences. The mentioned factors and a number of discrepancies served as the starting point for studying the problem of developing a system of digital skills and media education within the organization of environmental education ... and the formation of ICT competence of teachers” (Demidov et al, 2020), development of digital (Syrina, Tretyakov, 2020).

In addition, the current situation has a significant impact on the use of pedagogical methods M. Tselykh on the presence of specific media literacy technologies among students. She believes that “new digital technologies give a variety of opportunities to enhance the preparation of students for this kind of professional activity. The use of new generation of communication and information technologies helps to shape and develop basic knowledge and skills, which are important for adequate research work in education in a fast-changing world” (Tselykh, 2019: 13). Pedagogic methods of theoretical and comparative analysis, content analysis of social networks sites are used for researching separate aspects.

## 3. Discussion

Multimedia technologies allow to form multifunctional character of performances, turning them into the picture of full view of the performance image, its director’s idea. According to A.T. Wellington, “Modern means of virtual technologies’ demonstration and their informational provision allow to implement them into the technical stage of creating a performance, already in the process of rehearsal” (Wellington, 2016). At the same time we cannot but agree with S.V. Aronin that “in main categories of theatre culture changes happen– in reinterpretation of the notions of “dramatic”, “conflict”, “action”, in reinterpretation of the audience and the actor roles in a fact of a cultural dialogue” (Aronin, 2012: 16).

T.V. Astafyeva is also right in this sense that “innovative technological decisions in light, sound, scenery and costumes not only provide spectacularity of images but in the first hand they

help to create and to maintain emotional environment of the performance which seamlessly surround actors and audience” (Astafieva, 2011: 45).

Therefore it becomes clear why “lighting design is acquiring more and more artistic expression. In this case the psychological aspects of the communication problem in the theater are also important, which are similar in a global sense as a compilation of psychological methods that involve “conventional accounts of social reconstruction and of the history of the “social” as an analytical category” (Aitken, 2019: 320).

Directors, competing on the “theatre market” use video projections, electronic scenery with multimedia screens, LED costumes and curtains, many light visual effects, constructive elements and stages with remote control” (Astafieva, 2011: 128). But as we think some spontaneity, vividness of acting and interaction with the audience may disappear, therefore there needs to be special sensitivity in using media technologies.

We may ask a question: in which forms media technologies are used in modern theatre space?

At first we must note, as E.G. Rostovsky states, that theatre space in its modern meaning is a “multicomplex place of interrelated functions which contains in itself both narration and the elements of performance art combining together to form an artificial place (artificial space)” (Rostovskiy, 2014). These kind of transformations give birth to a new kind of synthesis in the theatre – a virtualized synthesis.

We have to admit that media educational training of future directors of the modern theatre is impossible without using the experience of media education. A.V. Fedorov is quite right saying that “a capacity of media culture in the modern educational process is determined by the wide spectrum of human personality development: emotions, intelligence, independent creative and critical thinking, worldview, aesthetic consciousness (perception, skills of art analysis etc), activation of knowledge obtained in the process of studying traditional subjects of human sciences” (Fedorov, 2001: 6).

At the same time, unfortunately, these wide opportunities most often stay unused. But lately it becomes more and more obvious that Russian media educational tradition, by I.V. Chelysheva and G.V. Mihalyova’s opinion, implies a number of “theoretical approaches such as the semiotic, culturological, aesthetic, ethical, sociocultural and critical thinking development conceptions” (Chelysheva, Mihalyova, 2017).

#### 4. Results

The modern theatre using media technologies, sudden opportunities appear for creative discovering the idea and the new drama. For example materials of documentary film and photo documents allow to feel reality and truthfulness of the theatre action (for instance performances of Omsk Lyceum Theatre). Absolutely unbelievable for the motion picture interaction of an animated character and an actor allows to feel the atmosphere of action. It needs to be said that actors in this case are in the immediate interaction with animated fragments. These performance properties allows to use soundtracks, as L. Yeung believes, “to engage spectators ... in the light of a philosophical framework of emotion” (Yeung, 2016: 85).

In this case actors are in the immediate interaction with animated fragments. Color and light decoration of the performance with media assistance in its turn allows to control the audience perception in various forms of light and color images. Video sequence, computer projections and 3D computer graphics combined into one structure often interfere into the stage description space. An artist can substitute an actor now, sometimes even a spectator acts as an actor – a player for himself. According to M.J. McNamara and K. Sheldon, “this unusual combination for the theater includes the phenomenon of history image preserving of the place an archive founded in 1984 with the aim of preserving New England’s moving image heritage” (McNamara, Sheldon, 2019: 181). The viewer’s imagination push the usual limits and becomes effective. In this case, the image is exceptional interesting and based on “exploration the material substratum of the house on-screen is exemplified in his brief discussion of the fictional town” (Rhodes, Conn, 2019: 181).

A problem appears of correlation between multimedia elements and traditional theatre art. Therefore it becomes clear why “due to the unique opportunities of synthesis of various “environments” and multimedia interactivity’s characteristics it becomes possible to model all spectrum of human feelings, allowing computer user a possibility to co-participate in the process of

creation the audio visual space, interacting with diverse data and interactive structure in a dialogue mode” (Dvorko, 2005: 6).

According to S. Dixon, these forms are realized the stage by means of a number of modern media: By the means of multimedia (slide-show, video presentation, recorded and online videos) actor’s group is directed on solving creative tasks.

1. Due to interactive digital media (video projections, 3D effect) the interaction with the audience is increased.
2. Animated, graphic and video content increases and original startling spectacularity of the performance.
3. Technical opportunities for forming theatre images are enhanced by multimedia scenery, light and sound effects, untraditional screens for projections (Dixon, 2007).

Apart from that one has to understand that multimedia theatre is far from being autonomous and it is not just a synthesis of digital technologies with the traditional theatre. There is no doubt that “multimedia format works ... while also generating new patterns of persuasion tied to new visual technology” (Chiao-I Tseng, 2018: 45). New aesthetics implies harmonies, combination of various directions of multimedia art. One of them is the cyber theatre which appears as a “sequence of undetermined action without known ending.

D. Galkin believes that «this kind of art may be seen as a formalized, measured system of communication, balancing on the edge of chaos (entropy) and order... The birth of artificial objective casualty, a source of novelty unpredictability, is becoming possible in this kind of environment” (Galkin, 2009). These features develop also by means of the performance art. In our opinion the traits of multimedia performance art as a form of a modern theatre art, combining classic theatre basics and innovations are its openness, live flow of the circumstances and the very performance. Also as V.O. Petrov writes, “performance implies synthesis of arts in one separate piece of work” (Petrov, 2015: 206). Herewith the level of synthesis, spontaneity and interaction with the audience reaches the highest extent of theatre action in the happening. The proof is in the saying of M.V. Reshetova who thinks that “performance action are planned beforehand and take course following some program. This is their difference from a more spontaneous... happening where the artist is just an initiator of the action involving the audience. Performance art may be called the theatre of visual arts because elements of pantomime, dancing, music, poetry, video, motion picture are included in it” (Reshetova, 2012: 65).

As a result of increased communication with the audience certain multimedia characteristics of performance art appear, distinguished by N.M. Pchelkina:

- “1. By uniting of the forms of different kinds of arts including multimedia with the aim of actualization conceptual playwriting ideas, the audience is involved into the theatre performance;
2. using general images, conditionally personified ... as co-authors of the inner world of the main character;
3. transformational metaphoricalness of the meanings of theatre action, interactivity of the theatre performance, involving the audience;
4. the interaction of actors and digital substitution of real actors by virtual ones;
5. concurrency of the action on the stage in a real time mode;
6. complexity of media elements: during the performance they are revived and pictures-images sound with tunes; video images are intertwined into the action, spirits-allegories who express the feeling of eluding time;
7. shock value and ideas influencing the sensuality of the audience, evoking strong emotional response” (Pchelkina, 2017: 201).

It can be said that it is necessary in the media educational process to provide moderate use of multimedia and performance in the structure of theatre action.

It needs to be noted that a special place in a multimedia art for theatre has the multimedia theatre where stage action, light and sound, various projections, music are closely intertwined in one whole picture. In this case, the main focus is on the Internet. It is assumed that “the Internet not only as a conduit for audiovisual texts and their related discourses but also, regardless of its "content," as a system of technical affordances of media” (Kompare, 2019: 136). These Internet features are also used in the education system, what is claimed by M. Frey as “But none of these prior innovations enjoyed the internet's do-it-yourself generation-and-dissemination dynamics to promote and revile itself, at least since the late 1990s (Frey, 2019: 165).

In modern performances, the main focus is on the expressions of modernism, which position is conformed to N.M. Elcott, B.R. Jacobson and L.I. Serna: “A series of arguments about the critical role that darkness played in early cinema and modernism follow” (Elcot et al, 2019: 175).

The top of this way of using media technologies is the immersive performance, which creates the effect of audience’s full absorption into the plot, this is the theatre of involvement where the audience is a legitimate participant of what is going on. This phenomenon implies the audience going through a number of objects having the form of architecture environment of the action. Herewith as White writes: “extensive environments which audiences explore in order to find the performance, and sometimes to give performances themselves” (White, 2012).

An interesting experiment in this regard was a performance “Promenade” of the “Galyorka Theatre” in 2019. The action of the so called audio performance which could be heard in the headphones of participants-users was accompanied by moving the audience in the space of Lubinskiy avenue and interaction with characters. The latter were actual heroes for Omsk: Egor Letov, F.M. Dostoevskiy, Lubochka and others who helped to get immersed into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Historical truth is important in this kind of performance. This suggests an analogy with documentaries based on the reliability of facts. These occurrences are contained in scenarios that are “historical and contemporary texts related to key trends that trace the evolution of documentary history and form” (Goldman, 2018: 162).

Internet theatre provides even more creative opportunities where the TV screen is changed by the computer screen. The combination of the actual physical space and virtual space takes place then and the basis is the interactive multi-screen “scenery”. At the same time audio engineer makes “editing the tracks of any complexity including multi channel mixing and sound mixing of the music data” (Dvorko, 2002: 29-44). A question arises how media educational training of the future theatre directors should be done to make possible using all above mentioned media technologies?

At first there is a question of lecturers and students’ mobility, directed to the self-training of self-learning individual readiness in a changing media environment.

S.V. Akhmanova and others are right noting that “the growth of teachers and students’ mobility, the increase of online educational forms, the active penetration of media technologies... and, as a result, the continuous growth of new knowledge in all areas of science and technology the issue of developing lifelong self-learning individual readiness in a changing media environment becomes topical” (Akmanova et al., 2019: 12).

In the media educational training of theatre experts of the culture and arts faculty of Dostoevskiy Omsk State University in 4-year degree program there is a training in the following disciplines: computer science (1 course year), internet journalism (2 course year), theory and practice of mass media (3 course year), informational and law provision of culture and arts (4 course year).

Media educational training of the actors of musical theatre of the culture and art faculty of Dostoevskiy Omsk State University is far weaker, there are only two such disciplines: information technology (1 course year) and multimedia technologies in the theatre (2 course year).

At this phase positive and optimistic attitudes in the learning process give good results. This triggers a feature that has been stated by K. Pozsonyi and S. Soulsteinas “teaching with humor has tangible—and intangible—benefits, and media scholars are well positioned to use it” (Pozsonyi, Soulstein, 2019: 152). It is needed to enforce media educational training of theatre experts and to add a number of special disciplines. Also it is important to raise a question about training on the faculty of the experts in the theatre sound and audiovisual direction. Therefore it is needed to make and offer for application in the educational process the following disciplines, a number of which are a part of the training of audio and multimedia engineers. Others may be implemented into the curricula of actors and theatre experts as an additional optional courses (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** Correlation of media educational disciplines of basic specialty “audio engineer” and “multimedia director in the theatre” and disciplines of specialties of actors and theatre experts

№	“Audio engineer” and “multimedia director in the theatre” specialties disciples	Actors and theatre experts specialties disciplines
1.	Psychology of colour perception	–
2.	Direction of the multimedia theatre	Direction of the multimedia theatre
3.	Direction of the radio theatre	–

4.	Multimedia art	Multimedia art
5.	Animation art in the theatre	–
6.	Multimediascenerymaking	–
7.	Cinematography and online acting on camera	Cinematography and online acting on camera
8.	Virtual stage property making	–
9.	Multimedia and audio display of documents in the theatre	–
10.	Modern arts and installations display in the theatre	Modern arts and installations display in the theatre
11.	Audio and audiovisual effects in the theatre	Audio and audiovisual effects in the theatre
12.	Cyber theatre and sound performance	Cyber theatre and sound performance

## 5. Conclusion

1. Multimedia art allows to realize any author's idea, any fantasies of a playwright successfully. Multimedia technologies, accompanying director's activity on the stage of preparation of the performance, allow to create lots of unusual techniques and digital effects on the stage helping to absorb into the world of fantasy or another age, as if helping to get into the future.

2. So 12 media technologies are used in the theatre process: animation fragments and animated characters, video clips, projections on unusual surfaces, soundtrack and light effects, computer effects, multimedia scenery, online acting on camera, photo and video documents display, virtual stage property, installations, 3D-effects, multimedia theatre. Often the audience don't see it on the whole but they get an opportunity to perceive dynamic light installation, to take part in acoustic performance, to discover the plot of the fancy dress action. The effect of the synthesis of various means of synthesized theatre language is expressed in a certain form of multimedia interactive manipulation.

3. Consequently full set of 13 disciplines of media educational specialization also covers the specialty "multimedia director in the theatre" and only three of them (Direction of the radio theatre, Multimedia and audio display of documents in the theatre, audio and audiovisual effects in the theatre) apply to the audio engineer's competence. Here we can also speak about combination of these two specialties. One have to keep in mind that six disciplines (Direction of the multimedia theatre, Multimedia art, Cinematography and online acting on camera, Modern arts and installations display in the theatre, Audio and audiovisual effects in the theatre, Cyber theatre and sound performance) in brief review may significantly update education process of "acting skills" and "theatre studies" specialties.

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